

Brucellosis

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precaution of cleaning any areas on the farm likely to become contaminated, and keep them "clean," advises Dr. Becton. Wear gloves when assisting an animal during calving or one that aborts, and scrub well afterward. Also, avoid drinking raw unpasteurized milk or eating any of its by-products.

Beginning with the accelerated eradication program, made possible by additional funding by Congress in 1954, the national program to wipe out brucellosis made steady progress until 1971. Since then the trend has reversed. Some of this increase may be attributed to greater efficiency in finding infection, but there has been an increase... substantial enough to cause alarm. Livestock industry leaders, as well as state and federal animal health officials, voiced concern. In

December 1973, a national meeting was called in Washington, followed in early 1974 by a series of regional meetings in six other cities.

From the meetings came a renewed commitment by government and industry to see the job through. Industry representatives called for certain practical adjustments in the program. But virtually all remained solidly behind the goal to eradicate brucellosis and opposed to a mere control effort.

Despite increases of brucellosis, the livestock and dairy industry has realized great savings from the cooperative state-federal eradication campaign. Losses from lowered milk production, aborted calves and pigs, and reduced breeding efficiency have decreased to about \$20 million annually. Such losses today would amount to an estimated \$400 million annually without the eradication program.

Today's program is based on detection of the disease through surveillance measures, investigations of infected herds, elimination of infected animals by slaughter, and vaccination of replacement calves to increase their resistance.

In response to the need for continuous and inexpensive screening of dairy herds, the brucellosis ring test (BRT) was developed for national use in 1952. Subsequently, the procedure called market cattle identification (MCI) was developed for screening beef herds. This involves testing of blood samples from identified cattle going to slaughter or at first point of concentration. Some

states require testing of all cattle upon change of ownership.

Testing cattle when sold at the market is, by far, the most effective means of screening beef herds. This greatly improves trace-back efficiency and aids control over negative exposed cattle in market channels.

Specifically, this type of surveillance requires that all eligible cattle - whether sold to slaughter or to a farm as breeding stock - be blood tested for brucellosis at the first assembly or marketing point after leaving the farm or origin. Eligible cattle includes all cattle, except steers and spayed heifers, that are 24 months of age or older and any younger females showing evidence of pregnancy, or of having aborted or calved normally.

So far, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee have initiated first-point-of-concentration testing of all eligible cattle. In so doing, these states have at least doubled their surveillance of beef cattle - an effort greatly needed in problem areas.

Some 99 percent of U. S. cattle are now free of brucellosis. States with little infection want to prevent reintroduction of the disease. They recognize that most of the remaining infection is concentrated in a few southern states.

Illinois recently placed restrictions on feeding and breeding cattle coming into that state from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee. Iowa has announced testing and quarantine requirements for cattle from ten high-incidence states (adding Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas) plus three neighboring states (Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska)

which have no special plan for handling cattle from high-incidence areas.

"I expect we'll see more of these embargo actions as additional states gear up to attain 'zero infection' in their cattle herds," says Dr. Becton, "I think we'll also see more states working to

assure better coverage in the testing of market cattle. Most authorities agree, if we're going to eliminate brucellosis we must strive to test all cattle entering trade channels. Such an effort ultimately depends on the cooperation of everyone who owns or handles cattle."

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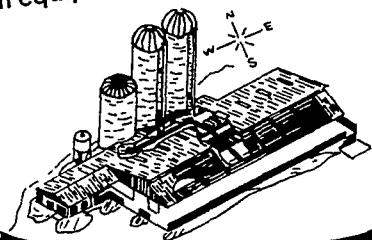
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