

# MEDICINE AND MANAGEMENT

By CARL TROOP, VMD



## Facts on twisted stomachs

Those in the dairy industry who are always bragging about the "good old days," have one definite item in support of their contention. Twenty years ago nobody had ever heard of a "twisted stomach" or "displaced abomasum" (DA). But nobody is quite sure whether the condition did not exist or that it existed but nobody knew what it was. But one fact is certain; the incidence of displaced abomasum in many parts of the country is drastically increasing every year. The incidence of displacements this Summer is particularly alarming. The problem is that very

little is known for certain as to the cause or predisposing factors, but lets examine what is known and try to provide any information which might be helpful.

The abomasum is the fourth stomach of the cow and is the one which is the culprit. Displacements can be left (LDA) or right (RDA). The abomasum is not necessarily twisted but more frequently just displaced to the left or right of its normal position. Movement of food through the abomasum is impeded, gas builds up, and the cow goes off feed.

There are two main classes of theories as to how the displacement occurs. One is mechanical, that is the abomasum is forced into its abnormal position, usually during or shortly after calving. The other theory is that the abomasum itself loses its muscle tone and is no longer able to maintain its place in the cow's abdomen, migrates to its new position, and becomes trapped there. Lately there is more leaning towards this theory, for in most displacements the cow also has failed to clean, or even if she has cleaned often has a metritis (uterine infection). This may indicate that the uterus also has a lack of muscle tone and is unable to expel that which it should normally be able to expel. The question as to why remains to be solved.

Frequency of displacements has a definite cycle. They are lowest in Spring and early Summer, high in late summer, medium occurrence in Fall and early Winter, the incidence increasing into late Winter and early Spring. Then as cows hit the pastures in Spring the occurrence almost miraculously stops for a while. There is much difference between farms themselves. There are some

farms which have never experienced a known displacement. Then there are others with equal numbers of cows which will average six to eight displacements every year. Generally, ones which feed the finer chopped forages (silage and haylage as opposed to long stem hay) and feed large amounts at the least number of feedings. But there are exceptions.

Displacement almost always occurs near calving time, so clients who have asked how to eliminate the problem of displacements have been told simply just to not breed the cow back. More serious recommendations are in the line of a feeding program which will best reduce the chances of displacement.

The dry cow should have a fibrous ration, including at least six to ten pounds of dry hay. Grain should be fed only to dry cows receiving fair to poor forage, but the better program is to feed high quality balanced forage so no grain is necessary. Even if grain is fed it should be limited to four to six pounds per day.

Keeping the fresh cow "on feed" while increasing grain intake presents a management challenge. Some helpful hints all of which are important:

1. Keep cows from becoming overconditioned "too fat" during the dry period.
2. Use only the most highly palatable feeds.
3. Provide dry hay free choice.
4. Include some bulky ingredients in the early post calving grain ration (beet pulp, bran, oats, etc.).
5. Avoid highly acid silage, at least the first week or two.
6. Treat "off feed" conditions promptly.
7. Allow the cow to remain active or only limited restraint before and after calving.
8. Do not make abrupt changes in ration in early lactation.

which is very important not only in displacement reduction, but also rumen function, increased ration digestibility, production, and profit is to stretch the feeding time of the animal across as much of the day as possible. Instead of placing the animals entire ration in front of it at only two separate feedings, great benefits can be reaped by feeding three, four, or even five times per day. Doing this with the finer portions of the ration (grain) will be the most noticeably beneficial, but will be of benefit with any portion of the ration by helping to even out the fermentation load in the rumen.

The last two weeks before calving bring the cows onto grain gradually up to about 12 to 20 pound, depending on size and expected production. After calving increase grain feeding by only one to two pound daily. The rate of increase must be carefully controlled. Proper feeding is critical during this period. One other feeding management program

Displacement therapy by surgery is highly successful, but the greatest success is prevention. Time, production, and profit is lost for every cow which must go under the knife. A common sense feeding program can help, but will not be a 100 per cent answer for many herds. Hopefully new research will shed new light on this growing problem.

## Egg producers invited

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued an invitation for noncertified egg producer organizations, associations, or cooperatives to apply for certification in order to participate in nominating American Egg Board members.

The 18-member Board administers the Egg Research and Promotion Order authorized by the Egg Research and Consumer Information Act of 1974. The initial two-year term is nearing completion for nine Board members and their

alternates. Certified egg producer organizations, associations, or cooperatives soon will be asked to submit nominees to fill these memberships.

Organizations wishing to be certified should contact John C. Pierce, director, Livestock Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250 as soon as possible for certification details. Completed applications for certification must be received by September 15, 1977, Pierce said.

## Enfield chairs Md. ag comm.

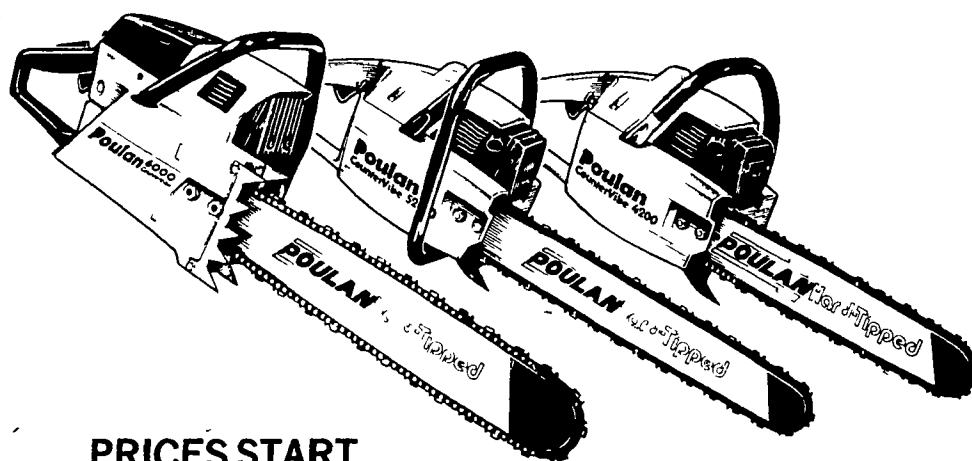
ANNAPOLIS, Md. - Leon B. Enfield, a Knoxville, Md., dairyman, has been elected chairman of the Maryland Agricultural Commission at its reorganization meeting. He succeeds William H. Kleinwachter, of Preston, Md., who has served as chairman for the past two years.

T. Allan Stradley of Chestertown, Md., was elected commission vice chairman. He takes over the post that has been held by Harry C. Walter of Hughesville, Md.

In other Commission news, two new members have joined the group following their appointment by acting Governor Blair Lee. They are William I. ("Billy") King of Irvington Farm, Gaithersburg, Montgomery County; and Harry Black of Thurmont, Frederick County. Both men will serve three year terms on the 17-member commission.

Members of the commission are appointed by the Governor. The group serves as an advisory body to the Maryland Department of Agriculture. All major Maryland commodity interests are represented

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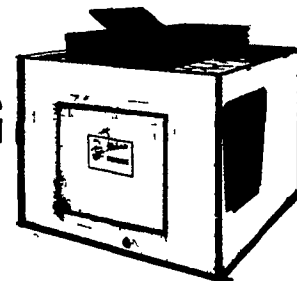
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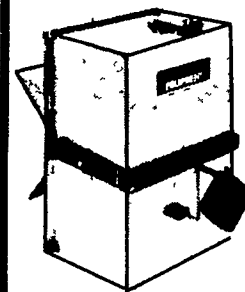
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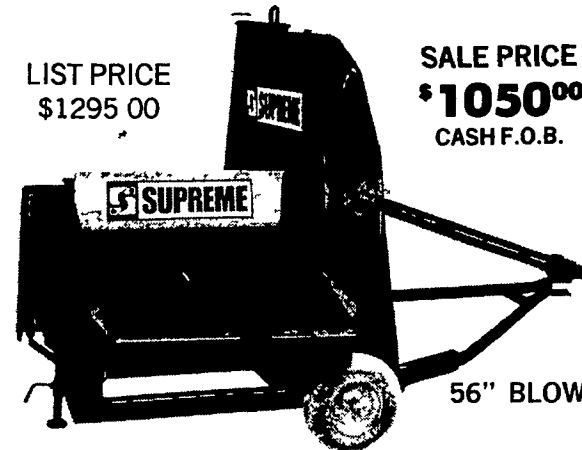


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