

Guss answers 'What's new in dairy goats'

BY PAT KAUFFMAN LANCASTER — "The dairy goat industry is at least 30 years behind the cow industry." With these words, Sam Guss summed up his thoughts on finding a proven herd sire.

"The problem is that no one knows where the good sires are. While the great does can be found on their milk production, the great sire may be in some back yard," Guss continued. He emphasized the need to use classification as well as more modern techniques to determine genetic potential.

Guss was in Lancaster recently to address the Dutch Country Dairy Goat Association. His topic, What's New in Dairy Goats, included discussion on research and advances in dairy goat husbandry.

On the common problem of abscesses, Guss noted that recent research clearly indicates that the organism which causes the abscess can penetrate normal skin and produce an abscess in as little as 6 weeks. He noted that there is a newly developed blood test, that when ready for general use could do alot to stem the transmission of the disease at goat shows and exhibitions.

Guss emphasized sanitation as the strongest method presently at disposal to stem disease problems in dairy goats. Young animals, he stated should never be housed with adults. "In Johnnes Disease, abscesses and coccidiosis, if the kids are taken from their dams at birth, only about 10 percent will become infected. At least for the first four months, the kids should be housed separately."

He noted that the feed and water facilities of the animals should at no time be subject to contamination from fecal droppings. This one area of concern could be the one where the most gain could be realized. Parasite cycles could be controlled more readily by limiting initial infection than by chemical warfare.

Guss noted that the good goat veterinarians are not always where you would expect to find them. He cited several examples where the goat owners found an advantage in taking their animals to small animal vets rather than the large animal veterinarians. "A vet that sees only dogs and cats finds a goat a pleasant diversion and will often take extra time and effort to see that the proper methods are used," he offered.

When questioned on specifics in controlling parasites, Guss stated that pasture rotation at 2 week intervals along with a drug worming program conducted at 2 week intervals rather than the more common 1 month interval seemed to be most effective. He cited Sudan grazing during the early morning and evening hours and alfalfa grazing during the dry hours of the day as probably the most effective use of pasture for goats.

In feeding goats to reach

their genetic potential, Guss invited the crowd to make use of their locally successful dairy farmers. He noted that a ruminant whether sheep, goat or cow is fed as a ruminant. And that with the great strides made in the formulation of dairy feeding programs, the goat owner would be wise to find someone who practices challenge feeding or equally advanced feeding techniques and learn them from him.

The one area of caution Guss noted was the feeding of urea. When feed containing urea gets damp, goats will not like the smell of ammonia it releases and will not eat it. In addition, he noted that many times goats are fed higher proportions of grain than cows per body weight and that goat owners would be more likely to run into urea poisoning.

Beet pulp was cited by Guss as a good substitute for silage. Silage he noted is difficult for the goat owner to acquire, and often goats will not eat it.

On the specific topic of coccidiosis, Guss noted that if accurate samples were taken from goats in all herds of 5 or more animals, he would expect virtually all herds to show some evidence of coccidia. While the organisms are common, the damage they do is largely limited to young animals. Crowding, dampness, and

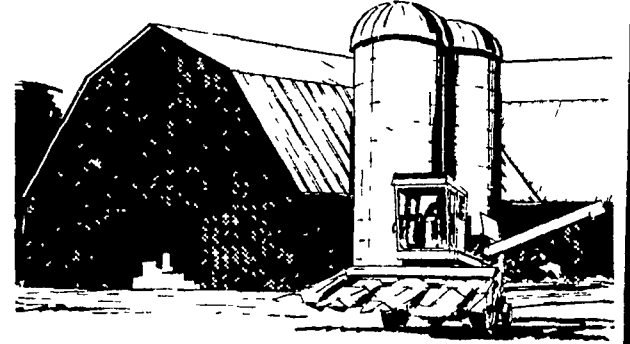
contamination coupled with the stress of weaning are the culprits here.

Noting recent problems with animals bringing sore mouth into a herd when they return from a show, Guss recommended a program of vaccination. "Sore mouth causes a horrible mastitis in lactating animals if any virus finds its way into the teat end," he stated. He cautioned the group to be extremely careful when giving the vaccine as it can cause a very serious disease in humans.

In managing problem deliveries, Guss told the group that while most vets are under the mistaken impression that waiting is the preferred course of action, he has found that the cervix closes quickly in a goat and the result can be not only dead kids, but a dead goat. "If you notice a bubble and discharge in the morning, don't let the doe go until noon," he warned the group.

While he listed a group of wormers which look promising in the future control of internal parasites, Guss lamented that they have not yet been cleared by the government.

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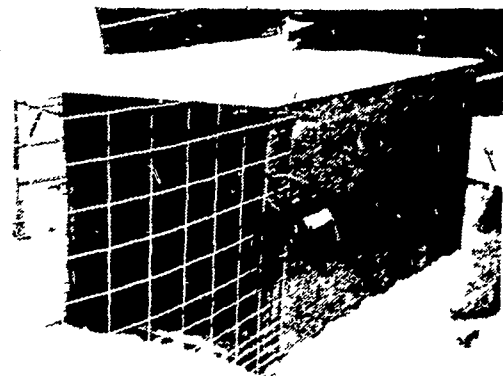
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