

New milk test

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penicillin is found in the milk it is considered violated—no matter how low the level, it's adulterated milk and can't be sold."

When asked what the time element of the new testing methods will entail, Fouse said there is not an appreciable difference between the old method of testing and the new methods. "They still take several hours and can't be done on the farm."

He pointed out the new 'stearo' test requires a different organism, or medium, along with additional equipment.

"The new test requires incubation of the sample plate at a higher temperature. As far as the new organism needed for the test goes, we're concerned the necessary culture may not be available in sufficient quantities by July 1," Fouse said. "There are only two manufacturers of the medium—Disco and Penicillin Assay, Inc.—and neither of them are based in Pennsylvania."

As a result of the concerns, Fouse said there have been several meetings nationally with the executive board of interstate milk shippers to organize a request to FDA for a deferment in the effective date. He indicated the request to FDA has been made.

"Whether or not the July 1 date will be postponed until more sufficient supplies of the needed culture are available, I'm not in a position to say," Fouse said.

He added that PDA is proceeding under the assumption it will not be changed. On Tuesday, Fouse said he met with 50 laboratory personnel from across the state and reviewed the testing procedure, which he said is not much different than the old method of testing.

One drawback of the test, said Fouse, is that the results are after the fact.

"The universal sample that is taken at the farm to

test for milk fat, brucellosis, added water, bacteria, and antibiotics may not show up the drug problems until after the milk has been mixed with milk from other farms in a bulk milk hauler's tanker or even worse in a silo.

"This results in tremendous losses, and the farmer whose sample was in violation receives a stiff penalty—suspension. That's pretty heavy but doesn't compare to the losses when the whole silo has to be thrown out. The producer's lack of care is greatly magnified."

Fouse noted that certain milk cooperatives have established their own controls, and levy monetary fines equivalent to the amount of milk lost. A similar penalty system has been suggested to PDA, he said, but administration would be difficult.

The Milk Sanitation Chief said they have people working on a quick screening test where the results would be ready within 5 minutes, but none have been reliable to date.

What can a producer do to avoid problems? According to Fouse, just being aware of the more sensitive test will be a help.

"Producers will have to be more careful in keeping treated cows' milk out of the bulk tank.

"If one quarter of a cow's udder is being treated for mastitis, none of her milk should be offered for sale. Tests show that antibiotics from the treated quarter get into the bloodstream and affect the other quarters.

"We are also concerned that the warning labels on a lot of antibiotics do not call for a long enough withholding time, but this has not been confirmed."

If these precautions are followed, Fouse said he felt the new test would not create too many problems for producers.

Milk haulers are concerned that producers on

their routes may not share PDA's concern.

One independent hauler said that problem herds will have to be straightened out and the producers educated on the proper use of antibiotics.

Otherwise, he said, there may be hold-ups for hours which will really put the haulers behind schedule.

"If the farmer's milk fails the first test, I understand there will be a 4 hour incubation wait until the more sensitive test verifies or discounts the presence of antibiotics. Then if the sample fails, my whole load has to be dumped out in some manure pit."

The hauler added he feels the problem is in the quality control of the testing. "The least variation in methods can make a heck of a difference in the results."

In summing up his feelings, the hauler said a producer is going to have to be "super particular about antibiotic usage. Routine treatments, like infusing cows to rebreed right away, will have to be cut out—or there'll be a lot of milk dumped at the farm."

The hauler said he felt the producers would see the need to be careful, rather than lose 3 to 4 days of milk production from a cow.

Milk Marketing, Inc. members are already getting a taste of the new, sensitive test. And, according to a spokesman for the Co-op, a lot of the members are "not too happy with the zero treatment tolerance."

He said they are finding more care is required in making sure the cows are getting unmedicated feed, and that when they buy animals, they weren't pumped full of medication. He added the withdrawal time is also proving to be a problem for many producers who need to treat cows.

John Althouse, supervisor of the laboratory at Milk Marketing, explained the Co-op is running the new test along with the old test to work out any transition problems. He commented that the new test does find a few more samples with

Ladies day out reservations due Tuesday

ALLENTOWN — Region I PFA Ladies Day Out will be held Tuesday, July 15. The event will be hosted by Lehigh County at the Holiday Inn West, Allentown.

The day's agenda begins with registration at 9:30 a.m. and speakers starting at 10 a.m.

Florence Thomas, National AFBF staff woman

will discuss the farm wife's role in promoting agriculture. Nellie Crawford, state women's committee chairperson will give an overall view of the year's activities. A group of paramedics will give a discussion of first aid.

Entertainment for the luncheon will be the Red Rose Four Barber Shop Quartet.

If sufficient reservations are received, a bus will be run for the Lancaster County group. Cost for the luncheon and the bus will be \$7.50.

For more information or for reservations contact Marian Brenneman 717/653-2413, Becky Wivell 717/426-1303, Linda Kreider, 717/284-2242 or Ruth Newcomer 717/872-2646. Deadline for reservations is July 1.

CHEESE

antibiotics that the old test would have missed.

When asked if he felt this amount of penicillin that is detected by the 'stearo' test (detects amounts to .005-.008 percent of a unit) but was missed by the 'subtilis' test (detects amounts to .05 percent of a unit) was significant for the consumer, he said he doesn't feel the old levels were a problem and that the new test wouldn't do anything for the consumer.

"The new testing will be a

problem, especially when all the states begin to enforce the FDA regs, because the spore is hard to get now," Althouse said. "I think that's going to hold things up."

Will FDA grant a deferment because of the appeals from government groups and milk co-ops alike? It looks like producers, manufacturers, co-ops, laboratory personnel, and government officials will have to wait until Tuesday to find out.

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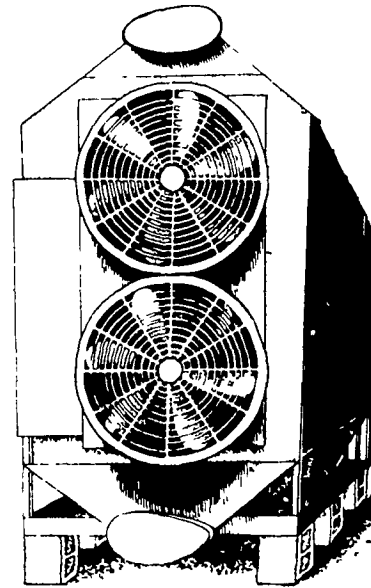
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