



What You Should Know About Swine Health

by Glenn Shirk
Lancaster Extension Agent

Editor's note - This is the ninth in a series of articles on swine health. This article emphasizes the value of utilizing diagnostic facilities properly. It is written by Robert E. Graybill, D.V.M., Lancaster.

Using of Diagnostic Facilities
Many times an accurate diagnosis of a swine health problem can be established on the farm by experienced clinical observation or by using a necropsy (autopsy) of representative animals. Other times these observations lead only to a differential diagnosis so additional aid is needed by the laboratory to make the final determination.

An accurate diagnosis is very

important since many diseases exhibit similar symptoms and clinical signs. Occasionally, several diseases are present simultaneously, making a definitive diagnosis difficult.

Since diseases are reportable and can lead to a quarantine, an accurate diagnosis becomes extremely important in the containment of a contagious disease. This would affect breeding herds as producers attempt to sell sound, healthy animals, whether it be to a neighbor or for interstate shipment.

Many medications and most vaccines are rather disease specific. Unless we are certain of

the disease to be treated, medication will be used that will either be of no benefit or will provide little effect on the disease conditions. Therefore, economic conditions stipulate the necessity of an accurate diagnosis.

Diagnostic labs also are important for routine testing for Brucellosis Validation and Qualified PRV Free Herd, status — monitoring herd health to assure necessary quality when breeding stock and feeder pigs are sold. Routine surveillance of slaughter sows and boars is a valuable lab service to monitor herd status.

Most lab diagnostic "failures" result from farmers sending non-representative specimens or from sending animals that have died hours before presenting them to the lab, especially in warm summer months. Many bacteria and viral diseases are heat sensitive and don't survive for a long period after the animal dies.

In some health-related problems there is a nutritional or environmental problem rather than a disease-causing problem. This dictates that an on-site evaluation be done before blaming some

exotic disease as the causative agent and then expecting the lab to find it.

Many times the stage of the disease has effects on the diagnostic tests and additional samples may need to be submitted for a complete evaluation and

diagnosis.

We are fortunate to have access to an excellent lab facility at Summerdale and should not be reluctant to utilize their knowledge and diagnostic aids whenever a diagnosis is in question or needs to be verified.

State reports cattle increase

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania farmers had 2,100,000 cattle and calves on hand Jan. 1, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service. This is a five percent increase from the January, 1981 level of 2,000,000 head.

The Keystone state's calf crop for 1981 is estimated at 850,000, up six percent from the 1980 crop. All cows that have calved at 977,000 were six percent more than a year ago. Milk cow numbers at 730,000 were two percent above last year. Beef cows at 247,000 were 24 percent

above a year earlier. Milk cow replacement heifers 500 pounds and over, at 307,000 were 12 percent above last year, while beef cow replacement heifers at 44,000 were 12 percent above last year.

Other heifers 500 pounds and over at 42,000 were down 16 percent. Steers and bulls in this same weight category numbered 275,000 and 44,000, up five percent from last year. All calves under 500 pounds numbered 411,000, two percent above January 1, 1981.

All U.S. cattle and calves on January 1 totaled 115.7 million head, one percent above a year ago and four percent above January 1980.

All cows and heifers that have calved, at 50.4 million head, were up two percent from 49.6 million a year ago.

Beef cows, at 39.4 million head, were two percent above last year and milk cows, at 11.0 million, were up one percent from last year.

Other class inventories on January 1 and their changes from last year are as follows: all heifers 500 pounds and over, 18.3 million, up three percent; beef replacement heifers, 6.62 million, up eight percent; milk replacement heifers, 4.53 million, up four percent; other heifers, 7.19 million, down one percent; steers 500 pounds and over, 15.5 million, unchanged; bulls 500 pounds and over, 2.62 million, up three percent; all calves under 500 pounds, 28.9 million, unchanged; all cattle and calves on feed January 1, for slaughter, 10.6 million, down eight percent.

The 1981 calf crop is estimated at 44.7 million, down one percent from 1980 but five percent above 1979. Calves born during the first half of the year were estimated at 71 percent of the annual total.



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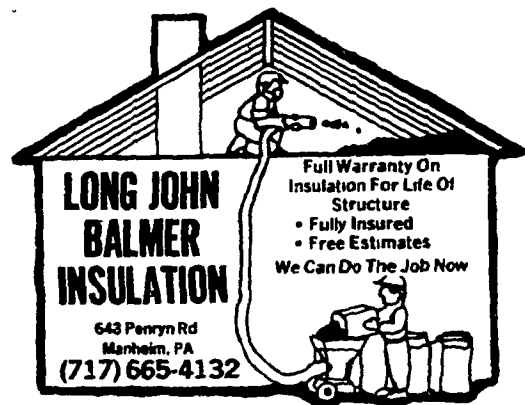


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