

Berks holds dairy herd health school

BY ROBIN PHILLIPS
Staff Correspondent

LEESPORT — Seven veterinarians teamed up last week to conduct the first Herd Health School in Berks County at the Agricultural Center at Leesport. To the 55 dairymen attending the two-day program, their repeated message was: "Work out a herd health program for your own farm and get it done right."

Dr. Harry Hutchinson, PSU extension veterinarian, began the program with "the economics and importance of health care." "Base your costs on a per cow basis," he told dairymen in considering the costs of a health care program. He listed several practices that belong in every herd that can directly bring a dairymen extra returns. The include:

1. Worm pastured heifers, at least twice a year.
2. Vaccinate everything for IBR, PI3, and Lepto at least once yearly.
3. Give calves three quarts of colostrum at birth (Holstein).
4. Keep your somatic cell count under 300,000.
5. Have your veterinarian examine every cow after calving.
6. Trim feet.
7. Review records.

He went on to discuss the most serious herd health problems and the health records a farmer should be keeping. "Try to consider what you can do to prevent diseases," Hutchinson stressed. "They cost us a lot of money," he continued.

Hutchinson advised dairymen to keep individual health cards for each cow in the herd. Work sheets, heat expectancy charts, breeding charts, DHIA records, and mastitis records can all be utilized to save hundreds of dollars each year in a herd. Hutchinson also stressed getting a proper diagnosis on a problem before wasting dollars on the wrong treatment.

Emphasizing the same practices, Dr. Lynn Sammons, Willow Creek Animal Hospital said, "don't use drugs to bail you out. We should be preventing disease conditions." Sammons spoke on the "Dairy Herd Health Cabinet"

Dust-free, dry cabinets, which will not freeze or overheat the drugs, should be used. Treatment records and proper identification of treated animals should be strictly maintained. Sammons also reported on the recent FDA agreement to permit veterinarians to continue to use the drugs needed to maintain the health of your livestock only if a client-doctor relationship is maintained throughout the treatment period. Dairymen will face stiff fines and a possible jail term if these guidelines are not followed. Prescription drugs MUST be used with the veterinarian's knowledge and approval. This recent tightening of the rules came about because of the increasing residues found in meat, milk, and eggs. According to Sammons chloroamphenicol and spectinomycin are the two "biggies" that the government is clamping down on.

Dr. Dennis Hoshall, Oley, discussed proper calf and heifer management. For the calf he stressed seeing that it gets the right amount of colostrum, adequate nutrition, and proper

housing. "It's just so important it makes all the other calf problems easy," he stated concerning proper calf management.

"Let your veterinarian know what you've been using," Dr. William Francisco, R1 Barto, advised on his discussion of vaccines and drugs. He stated that an advantage to using vaccines is that there is no withholding time for milk. He also stated, "it doesn't mean that you won't have problems but it will give you an edge."

The second day of the program was enhanced by the demonstration on foot care by Dr. Dave Nirschl, Willow Creek Animal

Hospital. Using actual feet obtained from a butcher shop, Nirschl explained proper foot care and abnormalities.

His general recommendations included:

1. Check a lame cow as soon as noticed.
2. Don't try to pull up a cow's hind leg when heavy with calf.
3. Have head and neck of cow well restrained, not with a nose lead, but a rope halter or in a stanchion.
4. Place the cow in an area where there is good footing.
5. Have good lighting available.
6. Keep tools sharp. (hoof knives, hoof nippers, flat and rat



Vets participating in Berks dairy herd health school include, from the left, Drs. Dennis Hoshall, Oley; Larry Hutchinson, Penn State; Mark DeWitte, Shillington; and Lynn Sammons, Willow Creek Animal Hospital, Leesport.



Dairymen Fred Bohn, left, Swatara Dairy; and Dean Hartman, Scattered Acres, discussed their health programs at Berks school.

tail files).

Dr. Mark Dewitte, Shillington, discussed mastitis and various treatments and preventions. "Treatment of chronic mastitis is most effective at drying off," he stated. He stressed protection of the teat canal and the following preventative measures:

1. Prevent physical injury to the teat end.
2. Guard against chapping, sunburn, and freezing.
3. Use only approved teat dips.
4. Have milking machines in good operating condition. Use recommended milking

procedures. Do not overmilk.

A panel discussion was also included in the session. Fred Bohn, Swatara Dairy, and Dean Hartman, Scattered Acres, were the dairymen on the panel along with the veterinarians, Drs. Dewitte, Hutchinson, and Nirschl. Dairymen were encouraged to ask "questions you always wanted to ask your vet but didn't want to be charged for."

The school was sponsored by the Berks County Extension which also provided notebooks and copies of each session for the participants.

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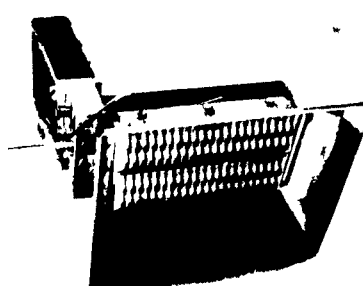
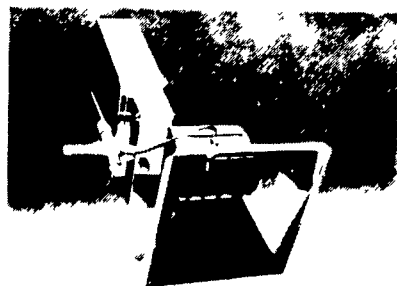
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