

# Calf certification to begin 4th week

BY JACK HUBLEY

LANCASTER — At the end of its third week, the veal calf certification program is receiving nearly unanimous veal industry support, from the farmer to the packer, says USDA assistant deputy director Dr. M.A. Waguespack.

Instituted by the USDA's Food Safety Inspection Service on June 4, the calf certification program is an effort to eliminate the use of sulfa drugs in bob veal calves.

Commonly used to treat pneumonia and scours, sulfonamide withdrawal times are generally too lengthy for use in bob veal calves which are slaughtered during the first few weeks of life.

Known throughout the packing industry as "green gut" animals, veal calves with sulfa residues are easily recognized when butchered by the green discoloration of the stomach.

According to Penn State extension veterinarian Dr. Larry Hutchinson, the undesirable side effects of consuming sulfa-treated veal can include allergic reactions in hypersensitive individuals, and a build-up of resistance to antibiotics which may decrease their effectiveness when used in the treatment of disease.

A survey this week of a number of Pennsylvania livestock auctions and packers tends to support Waguespack's assessment of the program's success. In fact, the most common complaint registered by processors and auctions concerns the program's voluntary status.

"I think the program is a good thing," says Chester Reed of C.M. Reed Sons, a meatpacking firm based in Intercourse, "but it ought to be a law or be eliminated altogether. Packers have to cooperate and buy only certified calves because the testing (of uncertified animals) takes the best part of 24 hours. That ties up our coolers too long."

Reed maintains that those markets refusing to participate in certification penalize packers by effectively eliminating themselves as a source of calves.

Saul Kaplan, president of I. Kaplan Inc. of Olyphant, agrees. One of the country's largest processors of veal, Kaplan believes that the answer to drug residue control lies in complete cooperation between farmers, auctions and packers.

"We're not buying any uncertified calves," Kaplan stresses, "and we'd like to see full cooperation from the auctions."

Mike Petruzzi, a Kaplan buyer also feels that the program's voluntary basis is a mistake, and that auctions refusing to participate are not being fair to the farmers.

"I've seen whole pens of 25 (uncertified) graded calves go for 25 cents (per pound). Nobody buying uncertified calves is going to be willing to pay market value," Petruzzi says.

Scott Yokum, manager of Penns Valley Livestock in Centre Hall, is also well aware of the price difference spawned by the certification program.

"I tell farmers they'll get twice as much for their calves by certifying them," Yokum says, "and so far no one's refused."

Like many others, Yokum would like to see the USDA either "on the boat, or off" with regard to certification. He also expressed his concern that the "boat" is not leak-proof. Yokum noted that on some larger farming operations, drug-treated calves may occasionally be accidentally certified. He also stated that farmers sometimes find it difficult to be available to sign certification papers when livestock haulers arrive for pickup.

Since the program began, Penns Valley has been separating uncertified calves and marking them with a plain, manilla ear tag.

Though the auction's commission rate has not been raised because of the extra paperwork and handling, Yokum says that it may be necessary to do so in the future.

After deciding to identify all certified calves with a permanent plastic ear tag, New Holland Sales Stables began passing the cost onto the sellers through a 50-cent fee. Abe Diffenbach, co-owner of the auction stresses that the fee barely covers the cost of the tag itself.

Diffenbach acknowledges that the program is working better than he thought that it would, and he voices his support.

"We don't want anybody eating meat from 'green-gut' calves," Diffenbach asserts. "It's for the protection of the consumer, and it helps to keep the buyers in business. I haven't heard any complaints from my packers," he adds.

Walt Keister reports that about 90 percent of the calves coming to his auction in Middleburg are certified. Despite the added expense associated with separating animals and processing the paperwork, he feels that the program is going smoothly at Keisters.

"A farmer with calves to sell would be foolish not to certify them," Keister says.

At Lancaster Stockyards, Ken Smoker reports that buyers and sellers have been responsive to the program.

"During the first week, we sold some uncertified calves," Smoker says, "but since then all of our bob veal calves have been certified."

Smoker finds farmers to be very cooperative, and states that auctions refusing to certify have been inadvertently driving some of their buyers to Lancaster Stockyards.

Smoker foresees certification to be a trend that will gradually spill over to all forms of livestock going for slaughter in future years.

But Dr. Waguespack emphasizes

that his agency's certification program was only designed as an "emergency interim rule", to be phased out when the problem is determined to be under control.

Waguespack stressed that auctions not participating in the program are penalizing themselves and farmers by limiting the buying clientele to non-packers.

"A large percentage of non-certified calves going to slaughter are being condemned," he said, "so the only buyers who can profit by purchasing uncertified calves are those raising fancy veal,

(slaughtering at 14 to 16 weeks allows ample time for drug withdrawal) or looking for replacement heifers, or raising their calves as feeder steers.

"Our objective is to reduce the incidence of violative drug levels in the calf population," Waguespack summed up. "We're currently monitoring samples on a monthly basis, and when the desired level is reached we would like to phase out the program. I foresee the certification continuing for one or two more calving seasons," he predicted.

## \$500,000 made available for floral crop research

WASHINGTON — Federal researchers and the national florist industry will share costs and cooperate in a special effort to improve and develop new floral crops and help boost U.S. exports.

Announcement of the new government-private sector research effort came today from Terry B. Kinney, Jr., administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research Service, and Vincent P. Adamo, president of the SAF (Society of American Florists) Center for Commercial Horticulture.

They said the floral industry will provide \$250,000 and USDA will match that amount in grants to support the research over the next five years.

Kinney said scientists will do the initial research at the USDA agency's Florist and Nursery Crops Laboratory at Beltsville, Md. The scientists will work on fresh flowers and flowering and foliage plants, including species not now found in this country.

"Florists comprise an industry of mostly small firms without researchers and research

facilities," said Kinney. "They face increasing foreign competition."

About 30,000 of the country's growers, wholesalers and retailers and affiliate organizations are represented by the floral industry's national trade association. In 1982, the industry grossed \$6 billion.

Kinney said the partnership could lead to further cooperation for the systematic introduction of new floral crops in the United States.

Howard J. Brooks, the agency's national program leader for horticultural crops, said the Beltsville laboratory will first conduct research on evaluating the growth and flowering of a diverse range of plants.

Beltsville researchers also will assess domestic and foreign varieties for their insect and pest resistance and their adaptation to tissue culture and micropropagation for quicker and greater production of plants.

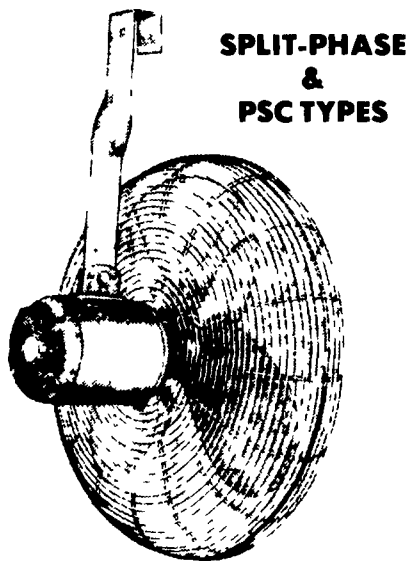
Next, USDA researchers and florists will evaluate potential new crops in their regions and report results to Beltsville, Brooks said.



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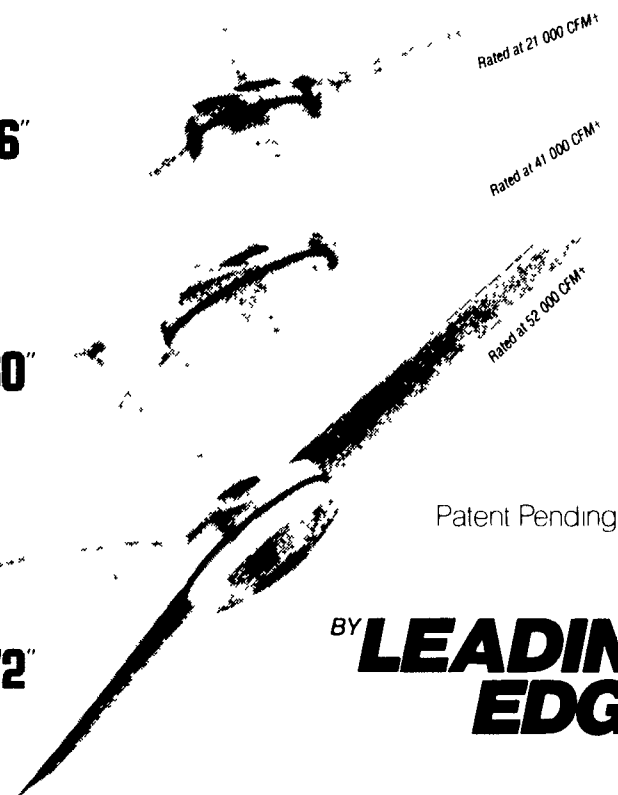
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