

Agway holds dairy meeting

SMOKETOWN — James Pullins, Feed Sales Manager, Distribution Services, welcomed the 300 plus farmers to the annual Agway Dairy meeting on February 4, at the Good and Plenty restaurant. Pullins told the capacity crowd about Agway's strong commitment to the dairy and livestock industry that is supported through their Enterprise salespersons, forage testing, dairy specialists, local stores and research and development. The speakers at the meeting were from the various departments in the Agway support system. Dr. Darwin Braund, Director of Dairy and Livestock Research and Development, spoke about the research being done on Agway's research farm outside of Syracuse, NY. One of their recent findings was the relationship between protein and the reproductive performance in dairy cows. They determined that after all other routes have

been explored in solving a reproduction problem, it is beneficial to balance a ration for the various protein types. Dr. Lew S. Mix, Director, Farm Management Research and Development, explained the current herd buyout program and offered a list of potential savings sources in the cost of producing milk. He urged the group to investigate ways of reducing costs if they plan to produce milk in 1987. Art Barnard, Director of Marketing for American Farm Products explained the mechanics of the forage preservation products which Agway currently handles. All of the preservation products are designed to maximize the value of the forages by reducing nutrient losses. Allen Cornman, Regional Dairy and Livestock Specialist reported on dry cow and heifer management. He stressed the importance of keeping heifers coccidiosis free and the role of Rumensin in a heifer management

program. Cornman focused on dry cow conditioning as a critical factor in determining the necessity and amount of grain to be fed. He also talked about the effect of feeding dry cows has on milk yield and composition. Dr. Kendall Dolge, Manager of Nutrition and Quality Assurance completed the day's program by elaborating on the various feeds Agway currently offers. He also spoke on Agway's dedication to quality control and pointed out that \$730 thousand a year is budgeted for this to insure their feed has and does everything they claim it will. He illustrated Agway's role in a farm's feeding program by comparing the situation to a barrel. This barrel, he said will only hold as much as its lowest stave. Agway completes this barrel with its quality feed, reliable enterprise salesmen and the research team that backs up the system. This whole picture has made them a constant leader in the agricultural community.

Retained placenta preventable

Scientists at the University of Maryland say they have found a way to prevent dairy cows from retaining fetal afterbirth following induced calving. When the technique is developed for all calvings, it could spell a savings of millions of dollars for dairy producers. The problem, also called "retained fetal membrane syndrome," is a national one that occurs in up to 30% of all natural births of dairy calves and in 90% of all births that are deliberately induced. Researchers estimate that the problem causes a \$15-million-a-year loss for the nation's dairy industry. Researchers Timothy S. Gross and Walter F. Williams injected expectant heifers with a synthetic corticoid called "dexamethasone" 5-7 days before the cows were scheduled to give birth to their calves.

A synthetic corticoid is a man-made drug that produces a response in the cow's body to inflammation. The drug induces calving within 36-48 hours, according to Gross, who will receive his Ph.D. in animal sciences this spring. Within one hour of birth, cows in the experimental group received an injection of "prostaglandin," a naturally-occurring fatty acid compound that helps to regulate body functions such as reproduction. Cows in a control group were given saline injections instead of prostaglandin. Of those cows in the experimental group, only 9% suffered from retained fetal membrane syndrome, while 91% of those untreated cows in a control group fell victim to the syndrome. "When a dairy cow retains its placenta, or fetal membranes, the tissue starts to rot inside the animal and that causes uterine infection and a loss of milk production," Gross said. "The cow then requires the attention of a veterinarian. That not only means increased medical costs, but it usually means that antibiotics are necessary. And anytime you introduce antibiotics to a dairy cow, that cow's milk cannot be sold for human consumption," he said. "But most important, retained placenta means you cannot get that animal back into its normal breeding cycle, which is critical for dairy producers who want to keep their animals pregnant as much as possible to maintain optimum milk production," he added. Gross's work is especially good news to dairy farmers for one other reason -- improved management. After additional testing, the experimental procedure could help farmers induce calving without the recurring problems of placenta retention. The ability to induce birth is useful to farmers, says Gross, because often several cows are due to calve at the same time. And usually that time occurs naturally in the late evening or very early morning when a farmer is not present to lend assistance. Before the procedure can be adopted industry-wide, it will require more testing. "It (the procedure) has some limitations right now," says Gross. "If the cow gets the injection of prostaglandin more than one hour after calving, it will still retain its placenta. And under those circumstances, a farmer would have to be very quick to see a birth and get an injection into a cow before an hour went by."

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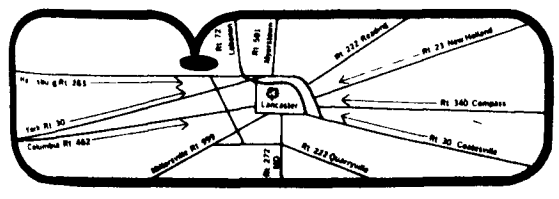
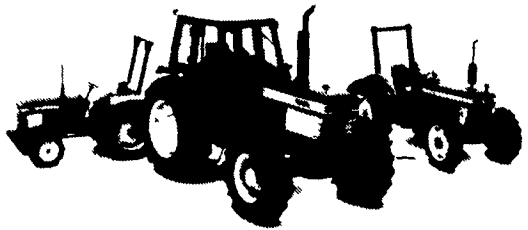
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