

Lancaster Dairy Day

Rabies Poses A Serious Threat To Dairymen In Pa.

LANCASTER — Rabies, the disease has received its share of press recently thanks to the law which went into effective Feb. 13. The law requires all dogs and cats, with the exception of barn cats, to be vaccinated. The passing of the momentous date has not quelled concern for the ramifications of the disease to livestock.

Producers attending the first day of Lancaster County dairy days quizzed Dr. Lawrence Hutchinson, Penn State extension veterinarian, on the disease.

"I think that most everybody has heard that rabies is on its way to Lancaster County. We've had a lot of rabies in Southcentral Pennsylvania in the last three, four years. It's been an epidemic. Up until last year it was pretty much west of the Susquehanna River. We have it in Dauphin County and we can suspect we'll have problems in Lancaster County" Hutchinson said.

"It's a scary disease because it's fatal to almost every animal that contracts it," he said. Hutchinson suggested ways that dairymen can be "rabies-wise." Top on his list

was vaccinating barn cats. "Unfortunately barn cats are the most susceptible, the most likely of the domestic animals to pickup rabies."

"If you're going to keep cats I think you should have them vaccinated. They are a risk to you, your children, and your cattle."

He recommended vaccinating cattle for rabies only if the immediate area has high levels of the disease. Prior to vaccinating, he cautioned, the producer should discuss the decision with the local vet who is aware of the individual circumstance.

The typical cow with rabies appears dull, depressed, dopey, unaware of surrounding and may or may not beller. When a female does beller, it may sound like a bull or make other unusual sounds, Hutchinson said. Sexually mature animals appear in heat at abnormal times for excessive periods. Animals have difficulty swallowing and sometimes produce excess amounts of saliva.

Furious rabies is uncommon. Dumb rabies are more common, he added. Some of these signs

could also indicate other diseases, Hutchinson explained.

Rabid animals are generally not a threat to other animals, he said. However, Hutchinson cautioned, workers could be contaminated through a skin opening by the infected animal's saliva.

He recommended shooting any rabies-suspicious wild animals but not destroying the head. The body should be turned over to authorities to be checked for the disease. Authorities should be called for any other animal, including dogs and cats.

BVD

Bovine Virus Diarrhea does not necessarily cause diarrhea — previously considered a major symptom. "Today we have a lot of animals that have BVD that don't have diarrhea. But they do have one or the other of these types (cytopathic or noncytopathic) and very often it affects their reproductive cycle," Hutchinson said.

He listed early embryonic death, weak calves and abortion as main signs of the disease.

The noncytopathic type is



Sharing the podium at Tuesday's Lancaster County Dairy Day were Louis Moore (left), Joseph Hlubik and Lawrence Hutchinson, Penn State extension specialist.

"really a little treacherous little guy," the Penn State vet said. This type of virus exhibits no signs in the infected animals and perpetuates the disease in the herd by causing the animal to be a silent carrier.

"We're realizing it's a significant cause of some of our reproductive problems that we've experience but couldn't explain

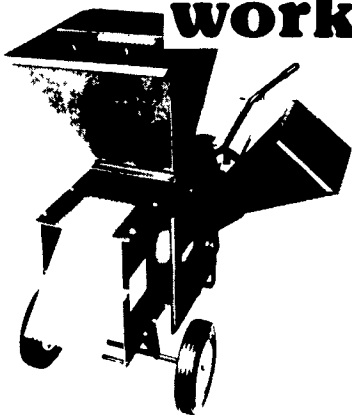
before."

Immunity

Animals deficient in zinc, copper, selenium, manganese and fat-soluble vitamins do not mount a good immune response when vaccinated, Hutchinson said. However, there is "no evidence that we can produce a better im-

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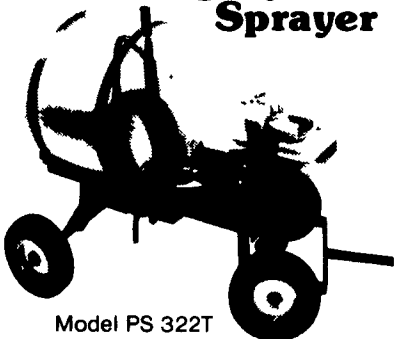
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