

Garner Speaks At Berks Dairy Day

READING — Sub-clinical mastitis is an invisible thief that robs dairymen of thousands of dollars every year, according to Dr. Charles Gardner, a veterinarian and farm columnist.

"A cow with a somatic cell count of 600,000 produces three pounds of milk a day less than she would if her cell count were at 150,000," Gardner told a group of about 100 dairymen Wednesday at the annual Berks County Dairy Day. Gardner, a graduate of the Cornell School of Veterinary Medicine, has a practice in Ackermanville, Pa.

Dairy Day is sponsored each year by Berks County Extension. Gardner's appearance at the educational event was sponsored by the Agribusiness Lending Department of Meridian Bank. Meridian also used the occasion to formally launch the "Ag Letter," a quarterly publication which will go to farmers and agribusinessmen in the 10 counties of Southeast Pennsylvania.

Gardner said sub-clinical mastitis -- the kind that can't be seen -- costs dairymen much more than the diseases clinical form, which is readily evident in milk from afflicted cows.

"A realistic goal for a somatic cell count is 150,000," said Gardner. "Herds do achieve this goal, and your herds can, too. If your cell count is 300,000, you might think you're doing a pretty good job, and you are."

"But each cow is giving you a pound and a half less a day than she would be producing at a cell count of 150,000. At a cell count of 600,000, your cows are producing three pounds less a day than they could be."

In a 60-cow herd, Gardner pointed out, three pounds of milk per cow per day translates into \$7,200 a year.

Gardner asked his listeners to call out the causes of mastitis. They responded with: Stress. Bacteria. Equipment. Injuries. Weather. Environment. Even "people" were listed as a cause.

Gardner raised a laugh -- one of many -- when he said, "It's been said that mastitis is a disease of people that shows up in their cows."

Mastitis can be triggered whenever bacteria enter the teat canal, he said. Damp weather, dirty housing and poor sanitation in the milking parlor can all contribute. He told the dairymen they should wash their cows' udders with clean towels -- one towel per cow. Udders should be dried after they're washed and before the milkers are attached. He advocated

a pre-milking teat dip in herds with mastitis problems, and a post-milking dip in all herds.

He also stressed the importance of keeping milking equipment in top working order.

Gardner's mastitis talk was one of two he gave on Wednesday. He also talked about the use of animals records. Other speakers for the day, and their topics, included:

Clyde Myers, Berks County Agent - Health management of dairy herd replacements.

Dr. Larry Hutchinson, Penn State Extension Veterinarian - Vaccination programs for today's dairy herd; New respiratory diseases.

Dave Swarts, Chester County Extension Agent - New tax law considerations for the dairy herd and crop farmer.

Dr. Lynn Sammons, Willow Creek Animal Hospital - What is really the problem.



Dr. Charles Gardner, center, was a guest speaker at Wednesday's Berks County Dairy Day, held in the Berks County Agricultural Center. Gardner's appearance was sponsored by the Agribusiness Lending Department of Meridian Bank. With Gardner are Meridian lenders Douglas Darling, left, and Blaine Fessler.

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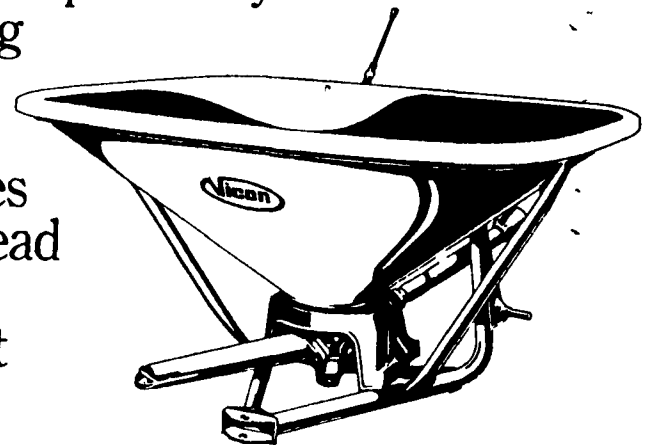
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