

Eradicating Johnes Disease Demands Industry Effort

A symposium on Johnes disease was sponsored by Livestock Conservation Institute, the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Agriculture, and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. It was held in Madison, Wisconsin on November 11, 1988.

Johnes disease, caused by Mycobacterium paratuberculosis, is a disease found in ruminant animals. The disease is most frequently a problem in dairy cattle.

The disease can be spread transplacentally to the fetus, at birth, and through contaminated water and feed. It is extremely rare that the diseases can be transmitted through semen, according to Dr. Robert Whitlock, School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Pennsylvania.

"The organism is shed in the manure in large numbers by infected adult cows, especially those with clinical signs. This shedding causes extensive contamination of the environment, including the calf and the cow's udder. Once the bacteria are ingested, they multiply slowly over many months in the lower intestinal tract, causing the intestine to become thickened. Once thickened, the intestine absorbs nutrients and water less effectively, resulting in diarrhea and certain death unless the cow is sent to salvage before that time," Whitlock said.

"There is currently no treatment for the disease," said Whitlock.

A point that was stressed during a panel discussion was that improved management techniques such as better sanitation methods, for example, were necessary, to lower the incidence of Johnes disease.

Another message that came through, during the panel discussion was that the industry has to work together to solve this problem. The producer has got to want to do something about the disease instead of being afraid to admit he/she has it, because the economic losses are great if we do something about it, but even greater in the long run, if we do nothing.

Walter Stemler, of Mid-America Dairymen Inc., and member of the LCI Executive Committee, encouraged producers to go to their milk cooperatives and recommend that a resolution be put forth to develop a national Johnes disease control program. Stemler was one of the meeting participants that commented during a panel/audience discussion.

"There is no way there will be a federal regulatory program for Johnes disease until the industry demands it," said Dr. Diana Whipple, National Animal Disease Lab, Ames, Iowa.

If we could get the whole industry involved, we can work to solve this problem, according to Dr. Sarah Hurley, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

USDA PROVIDES NEW SERVICE

USDA-APHIS is now providing a new phone service (Voice Response Service) that provides the caller with information on regulations for specific states, as well as emergency notices. To call, you must use a touch-tone phone, dial 1-800-234-8732.

This system was developed to supplement other sources of state

import requirements. Forty-three states have made their rules and regulations known to the System.

State information or changes in regulations should be reported to the National Center for Animal Health Information Systems, 555 S. Howes, Suite 300, Fort Collins, CO 80521. (Journal of the American Veterinary Association, Nov. 1, 1988)

HOLLAND EXPERIENCES BRUCELLOSIS OUTBREAKS

Outbreaks of brucellosis on two farms in southern Holland have required the destruction of 220 dairy cows. The infection was first detected in a cow imported from Germany which suffered an abortion. Six-hundred-twenty-five cows in Limburg, southern Holland, are already reported to have been destroyed this year as a result of the disease. (Animal Pharm, September 23, 1988)

IOWA ALLOWS IMPORTATION OF FEEDER PIGS FROM WISCONSIN WITHOUT FURTHER TESTS

An order signed by Dale Cochran, Secretary of Agriculture and Land Stewardship for the state of Iowa, allows for the importation of feeder pigs of Wisconsin origin into Iowa without further tests on these animals or the breeding herd of origin.

These animals must be identified by ear tags, be accompanied by an approved certificate of veterinary inspection showing the permitted number and will be quarantined to the farm of destination until slaughter.

This order went into effect November 8, 1988.

MASSACHUSETTS VICTORY MAY BREED COMPLACENCY, Editorial by

John H. Lang, President

Before we are finished basking in the euphoria of the resounding defeat of the Humane Farming Initiative in Massachusetts, we need someone to jerk us back to reality. Let me play that role.

The major danger we face now is complacency. The margin of victory was so great that it will seem to the casual observer that the victory was easy. The livestock industry -- a multi-billion dollar industry -- failed to provide adequate financial resources to Massachusetts to fight the initiative. It was, in fact, only the heroism of Massachusetts farmers, desperate to save their farms and their way of life, that motivated them to undertake the campaign they did. Every farmer in the state must have been at a voting center on election day, personally lobbying for the defeat of the Humane Farming Initiative.

Yes, we did win, but the livestock industry took a major risk in not providing Massachusetts farmers with the resources to undertake an adequate conventional publicity campaign to back their grass roots campaign. We may not be able to muster that level of farmer commitment in a future challenge.

There certainly are plusses to the Massachusetts victory. It confirms to legislators and regulatory officials that support for sweeping animal welfare regulation is not broad. This victory gives us breathing room to address the more substantive issues of livestock

welfare including the development of effective training programs on livestock handling for livestock managers and employees, the support of livestock behavioral research, and the use of that knowledge in the development of better livestock handling systems, equipment and techniques.

The defeat of the Humane Farming Initiative in Massachusetts was not the rejection of the need to treat livestock humanely. Instead, it recognizes that producers do handle their livestock humanely, and that humane livestock handling practices should be based on research and not on philosophy or theology, or the need to keep the funds rolling in to pay the salaries of highly paid animal rights organization executives.

REPORTS OF LYME DISEASE INCREASE

Lyme disease has been reported with increased frequency on the east coast, in the midwestern states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa and Indiana, and in the western states of California, Nevada, Utah and Oregon, according to University of Wisconsin researcher Dr. Elizabeth Burgess.

"The disease has been found in a total of thirty-nine states", said Burgess.

Lyme disease gets its name from the city that it was first recognized in the United States in 1975 - Old Lyme, Connecticut. The disease can cause serious ill-

ness in humans and animals if not diagnosed and treated promptly. It is often difficult to diagnose since some of the symptoms could also be signs of other diseases, according to Burgess.

Lyme disease is transmitted by the bite of a deer tick (Ixodes dammini), which is found in the midwestern and eastern coastal states. In California and other western states, the vector is the western black-legged tick (Ixodes pacificus). The ticks are most frequently transported by the white-tailed deer or the white-footed mouse.

The bacterium that causes Lyme disease is a spirochete called Borrelia burgdorferi. The parasite can be excreted in the urine of mice, dogs, horses and cows. Livestock can be infected with the organism by ingesting a substance or licking an area contaminated by the excrement of a

host animal.

Lyme disease has been frequently diagnosed in horses and has been detected in the urine of dairy cattle.

"It has been shown in dairy cattle that the organism can be passed through the placenta to the unborn calf," said Burgess.

This organism can cause abortion, still births, and birth defects. The symptoms of Lyme disease include lameness (which may be intermittent), poor appetite, and fever. In humans, a rash may be noticeable. If diagnosed in the early stages, the disease can be treated with antibiotics in both humans and livestock.

Vaccines are currently under development, but research is in the early stages. A vaccine is not expected to be available for three to five years, according to Burgess.

Farm Calendar

(Continued from Page A10)

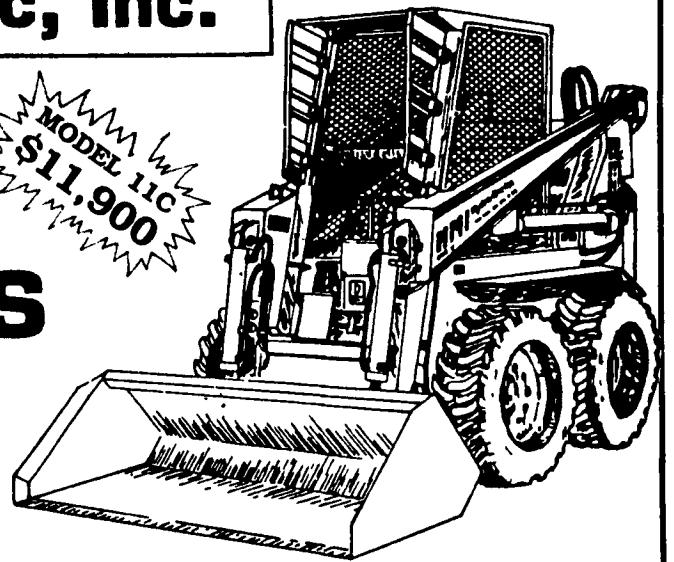
Replacement Nutrition School, Jan. 19 through 26.
Delaware vegetable Growers Annual Meeting, Sheraton Inn, Dover.
Saturday, January 14
Franklin Co. Annual Holstein

Meeting, 7:15 p.m. Savoy Restaurant, Waynesboro.
New Jersey Holstein Association Annual Meeting, Watchung View Inn, Bedminster, NJ.
Junior Holstein Convention, Sheraton Inn, Batavia, NY.

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