



Dairy Pipeline

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Displaced Abomasums

A number of dairymen have indicated they are having more displaced abomasums this fall, and I don't pretend to have all the answers to their problems. However, their problems did encourage me to choose this topic for this column.

As you probably are well aware of, DA's are most prevalent shortly after calving and are generally more of a problem with older cattle. However, I've been hearing more dairymen complain about heifers having DA's this year.

There are a number of theories as to the cause of DA's. Sometimes, there is a lack of smooth muscle contractions around the abomasum. These contractions are necessary to help gases escape. This could also be one of the benefits of exercising cows. If the gases cannot escape the stomach may float up into an abnormal position.

A number of factors may contribute to the inactivity of the smooth muscles and the lack of abomasal contractions. Some people think this is caused by a lack of calcium. However, before you start increasing the calcium content in your dry cow rations, remember that excess calcium can cause milk fever. So, the message is, be sure your dry cow rations are properly balanced.

Histamines caused from the consumption of improperly fermented feeds and aflatoxins from

moldy feeds can also affect smooth muscular contractions; so will excess acid production in the rumen. Aflatoxins could have been a problem in some of our feeds this year as a result of this summer's drought.

Gases in the stomach and acid production in the rumen could be the result of feeding dry cows too much grain or too much corn silage, not acclimating dry cows to grain 2-3 weeks before calving, feeding fresh cows too much grain too soon after calving, feeding large quantities of grain at irregular times, and failure to buffer the rumen.

Large voids are created in the cow's body cavity after calving; this is accentuated if there is a lack of rumen fill due to cows being off feed.

What To Do

To help prevent some of these problems--

1. Feed dry cows some long-stemmed, digestible forage such as grass hay, and limit the intake of finely chopped forages and corn silage.

2. Properly balance the dry cow ration.

3. Feed good quality feeds free of molds and products of abnormal fermentation.

4. Acclimate dry cows to grain feeding about 3 weeks before calving and limit their intake to about 6 pounds per day.

5. If the lactating ration contains NPN or elevated levels of nitrates, acclimate dry cows to

these feeds about 3 weeks before calving. Cows can utilize NPN and tolerate higher levels of nitrates if exposed to them gradually.

6. To minimize acid formation in the rumen, avoid feeding large slugs of grain at any one feeding. It is better to feed smaller quantities at more frequent intervals. For lactating cows a guideline is to offer cows no more than about 8 pounds per feeding.

7. Buffer the rumen by offering cows some hay or haylage before feeding them grain. As cows chew the hay crop forage they'll produce lots of saliva, which is an excellent, free and palatable buffer. The goal is to have a buffer in the rumen to quickly "neutralize" the acids produced from the digestion of grain. Another alternative is to add buffers to the ration.

8. Avoid pushing too much grain to cows too soon after calving. The main goal should be to get fresh cows to consume lots of good to excellent quality forages. This will encourage good rumen function which in turn favors better digestion, better appetites and greater dry matter intake. That should provide good rumen fill, good muscular contraction and minimize the accumulation of acid in the rumen.

9. Keep feeds fresh and keep mangers and water bowls clean to entice appetites. Minimizing stress on cows will also help. There are many forms of stress that affect cows at calving time including: infections, the act of giving birth, heat, uncomfortable and unsanitary surroundings, the social pressure of being exposed to new herdmates, new surroundings, new routines, new feeds, etc.

There is no guarantee these practices will prevent any DA problems you may be having. Nevertheless, they still deserve consideration as good general herd management practices,

whether DA's are a problem or not.

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Sheep Producers To Vote On Pennsylvania Referendum

HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania sheep and lamb producers will vote January 9-23 on a proposal to establish a marketing and research program, state Agriculture Secretary Boyd E. Wolff said today.

Under the proposal, sheep and lamb producers would contribute 25 cents for each animal sold, Wolff said. The money would be used for promotion, education and research activities determined by a marketing board composed of affected producers.

"The provision for producer control of the program is in keeping with Governor Robert P. Casey's pledge to place the reins for all commodity marketing programs in the hands of the producers," Wolff said.

Wolff called for the referendum, provided for under state law, after hearing testimony from lamb and sheep producers in August. It will mark the first time that Pennsylvania sheep and lamb producers have voted on a state marketing program.

Wolff said the department will mail ballots and copies of the proposed program to approxi-

mately 3,800 producers statewide.

Producers who fail to receive a ballot and a copy of the proposal may call the department's toll-free number, 800/AG-PENNA. The material is also available in Room 303, Bureau of Market Development, at department headquarters, 2301 N. Cameron St., Harrisburg 17110.

Eligible voters are owners of sheep and lambs that were born within the state and those whose animals were born outside Pennsylvania but have been in the state for 30 days or more.



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