

# Changes In The Pennsylvania Brucellosis Program

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre) — Dr. Yoxheimer, from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, recently explained two major changes concerning the state's brucellosis program. First, the state will no longer provide vaccine to the veterinarians. Veterinarians will have to buy vaccine from pharmaceutical companies. They will still receive \$1.00 from the state for every calf they vaccinate. Second, the state will no longer send record cards to the farmers. Vaccination records will be given by the veterinarian to the farmer. The state will still keep records of all brucellosis vaccinations which will include the calf's ear tag number and the tattoo number. It is hoped that these changes will not discourage vaccinating calves for brucellosis.

Brucellosis is a serious, contagious disease with few visible symptoms. It can cause abortions, retained placentas, or can lower the conception rate in cattle. Brucellosis can also be contagious to man. Farmers should protect their herd from this disease. Buy animals from brucellosis-free herds. Isolate any new animal from the rest of your herd for a period of 30 days and have it tested for brucellosis. Calves need to be vaccinated between the ages of 4 to 8 months.

For economic reasons, it is recommended that farmers continue to vaccinate their calves for brucellosis. The loss of many calves, some to be used as replacement stock, and the increased breeding costs are economic losses that are seen immediately after an outbreak of Bang's. Increased veterinarian costs and decreased milk production must also be considered. For those who are selling breeding stock, failure to vaccinate calves could mean a lower selling price or even stop the sale of cattle. Proof that cattle were

vaccinated prior to shipping is required by many states and some foreign countries.

## Milk Flavor Improves In 1988

Samples of objectionable flavor declined more than five percentage points from 1987. There was a 40% improvement since 1982 when 36% of the samples were of objectionable flavor. Almost 80% of the 2,211 samples purchased from stores in Pennsylvania were of acceptable to excellent flavor in 1988. Rancidity declined to a level of 218% of the whole milk samples. This was a 15 percent drop from 1987.

Improvement was due to action by all segments of the dairy industry. Steady improvement was seen

in the bacterial quality as more than 90% of store purchased samples were acceptable to excellent. Challenges remain in the milkfat composition of whole milk, as over 217% of samples contained less than 3.15% milkfat.

The program continues in 1989 with the financial support of the Pennsylvania Dairy Promotion Program and the Pennsylvania Association of Milk Dealers.

## Herdlife

We hear a lot about herdlife, especially from those who say that breeding to high PD bulls and using high index cows as bull mothers will result in shorter lived and thus less profitable offspring. Little or no data are presented to support such claims except for an

occasional testimonial about an individual cow that lived for twenty years even though her parents had large negative breeding values.

Recently, a joint study by the USDA and the University of Maryland provided some substantial information. Research on almost 300,000 Holstein cows found that herdlife changed but little for cows calving over a ten year time period from 1966 to 1976. Animals had to have the chance to calve eight times. Therefore the picture is not yet complete for cows with a first calving after 1976.

Herdlife was defined as the number of months between the date the cow had her first calf and

the date she left the herd. Yearly averages for herdlife ranged from 38.0 to 39.7 months. The overall average was 38.4 months.

Adding 38.4 to Pennsylvania's average age at first calving (27 months) indicates that the average cow leaves the herd at about five and one-half years of age. Long herd life is a desirable goal but several good management practices can work against it. For example: lowering calf mortality results in more replacement heifers that will need a stall. In order to make room a decision to cull older and poorer cows will shorten their herdlife. Culling older cows as animals (either raised or purchased) with better genetics enter the herd gives the same result.

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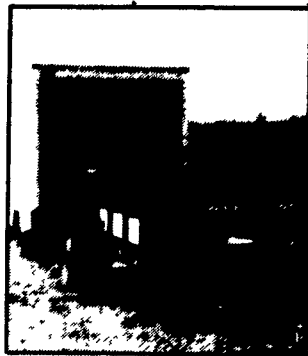
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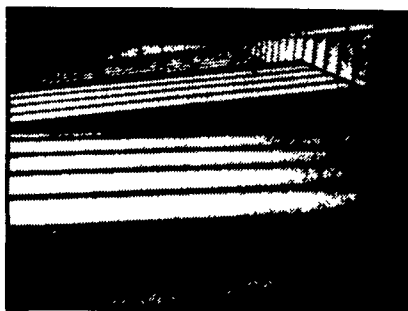
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