

## Beef Briefs

by  
**John Comerford**

Penn State Beef Specialist

### National Dairy-Beef Symposium

A national symposium will be held in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in February that will focus on the feeding and management of the Holstein steer.

The symposium is scheduled for February 13-15, 1991 at the Penn Harris Inn and Convention Center.

This seminar is conducted by commercial producers and university personnel in five states in the Northeast. The production and merchandising of Holstein steers for beef has been a growing industry in this region in the past couple of years. One estimate is there will be almost 30,000 dairy-beef steers produced in Pennsylvania alone this year.

This production system has some distinct differences with veal production, and in fact tends to complement veal production on some farms. Specific program topics will address all facets of production, including everything from implant strategies to evaluating feeding contracts.

To some, it may appear this program may be recycling information that appeared about 10-12 years ago in the name of "Tender Lean" and others.

While some of the details of that type of dairy-beef production are still valid, we have attempted to make this program an updated approach to this type of cattle feeding. There has been a substantial amount of work done with dairy beef production in this region and elsewhere recently.

We have just concluded a two-year study at Penn State where we

were attempting to find a forage/protein source combination that would result in efficient gains and increased carcass value over some conventional Holstein feeding systems. Our results contained some surprises with, for example, the increased carcass value we got with those steers on fishmeal and alfalfa haylage. A more complete discussion of our results, as well as from trials at Cornell and Minnesota, will be presented.

For further information about the program, contact me at 313 Henning Building, University Park, 16802.

### Probiotics for Feedlot Cattle

A recent educational program conducted by Dr. Gabriella Varga, assistant professor of Dairy and Animal Science at Penn State, described the efficacy of probiotic products in feedlot cattle.

The bottom line is that these products have not been very thoroughly tested in an objective study, and their response is highly variable.

A small study we conducted at Penn State with a probiotic gel for the first 28 days in the feedlot in crossbred and Holstein steers indicated there was a consistent increase in dry matter intake for the first 28 days on feed, and this increase was seen regardless of breed type or the diet provided for the steers.

Average daily gains also tended to be higher for the treated cattle (.24 pounds per day), but this should be expected because of the increased feed intake soon after entry into the feedlot. Feed efficiency was reduced for treated calves, but, again, this would be expected with cattle adjusting to

the feedlot.

It should also be noted there was little or no sickness in these cattle during this time. This is probably a key to the economic effectiveness of these products. That is, as the level of stress and stress-related problems increase, so should the effectiveness of probiotic treatments.

Our problem in making a general recommendation about their use is the lack of scientific studies on probiotic use. Our results were similar to those in a Nebraska study, but we have little additional information available.

The economic value of probiotic products will depend on their ability to relieve stress-related problems. In our study, the treated calves did not have any advantage over the untreated ones when the steers were evaluated for feedlot performance over the entire feeding period.

Secondly, the products themselves will vary widely. As pointed out by Dr. Varga, there are thousands of strains of lactobacilli, for example, and only a few have been identified as effective as a feed

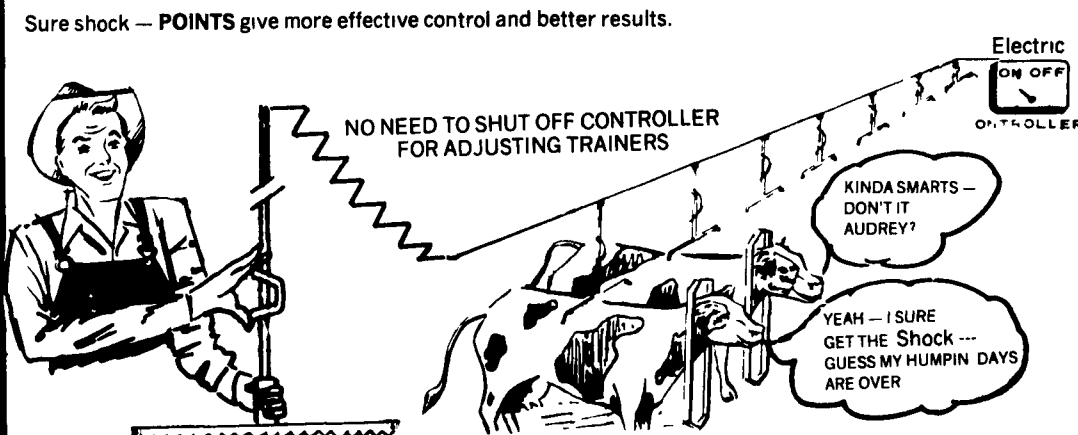
additive.

Some general conclusions about the use of probiotics in feedlot cattle are as follows:

- They may be economically effective for use in highly stressed cattle.
- Some producers have found them useful for treating individual steers that are off feed.
- Use a product that has some information to support advertised results.
- Select a product that will be supported by the seller.
- Producers starting dairy-beef steers have found them to be effective.
- The effects may only be subtle and short-lived in nonstressed cattle, so the economics may be prohibitive.



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