

Livestock Notes

BEEF EXPO EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The 1992 Pennsylvania Beef Expo, March 26-29 at the Penn State Ag Arena, promises to be the best one yet.

The Expo is a joint venture of the Pennsylvania Cattleman's Association, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, and The Pennsylvania State University's Department of Dairy and Animal Science. This third annual Expo has been extended an entire day to accommodate a very successful youth program on Sunday.

An educational symposium is on the agenda for Thursday, March 26. A proven highlight of the annual Expo, this year's symposium will be no exception, focusing on vaccination programs for beef cattle.

Outstanding guest speakers will address such topics as why vaccines sometimes do not work, how the environment of the animal will effect the response to a vaccine, vaccination programs for cows and calves, the economics of a health program, injection site tissue damage in the carcass, and consequences of extra-label use of drugs.

The Expo program will continue on Friday with the Performance-tested Bull Sale and the Pennsylvania Polled Hereford Association Sale in the evening. On Saturday, four other state breed associations will conduct their sales, including Angus, Salers, Charolais, and Simmental.

The program concludes on Sunday with a full day of youth events, including steer and heifer shows. Mark your calendar today and call your local extension office early next year for registration information.

IMPLANTS IN DAIRY-BEEF CALVES

A preliminary summary of our work with implants in young dairy-beef calves indicates there is probably no advantage to using a second implant in the calves up to 18 weeks of age.

In a recent trial, we implanted the calves with one of two different implants on day two after arrival in the barns (three- to seven-days of age), and another group on both day two and day 32 with one of the two implants. The results so far indicate no sufficient advantage to the second implant, but a single implant on day two will increase performance of the calves by about 10 percent over controls.

Although there was a slight amount of variation in the type of implant that was used (zeralenone or progesterone + estrogen), it will probably not be a significant factor.

LAMB MARKETING BILL PROPOSED

According to the American Sheep Industry Association (ASI), lamb marketing needs help. While

higher retail prices indicate an increased consumer demand for lamb, wholesale prices have dropped by 20 percent or more. Live prices have dropped as much as 41 percent in the last three years.

Part of the problem, according to ASI representatives, is inadequate reporting of prices of lambs, wholesale, retail, boxed lamb pelt, and offal sales. The USDA now provides prices only for wholesale carcasses and some live lambs. Since the wholesale price is basically set by the Northeast region of the United States, it reflects only about 30 percent of the lamb market, according to Peter Orwick, director of government affairs for the ASI.

Senator Al Simpson (R-WY) has proposed that the USDA establish a lamb price and supply reporting service which would mandate that the USDA expand its reporting dramatically. In addition to various live, carcass, wholesale, and by-product sales, the USDA would also monitor sheep and lamb inventories, price and supply relationships between retailers and breakers, and information on the import and export of sheep by categories (including cut, carcass, box, breeder stock, and sex).

Simpson's bill was co-sponsored by 10 other Senators and will likely be paired with the Dairy Bill. If passed, the bill could be in action by late summer of 1992.

"HEALTHY" MEAT SALES UP

Sales of "healthy" meats — those marketed as low fat, low salt — increased dramatically between 1986 and 1990, and are expected to increase through 1995, according to a recent report in the "National Provisioner." The study notes the

retail sales for healthy processed meats rose from \$0.5 billion in 1986 to \$10.1 billion in 1990.

The study concludes that consumers are moving away from weight loss attempts on short-term diets and instead are eating healthier meats which fit into a long-term goal of weight control and a generally more healthful life style.

The healthy meat demand has had an impact on the school lunch program as well. For instance, the standard for ground beef purchases by the USDA for the school lunch program now includes bids for low-fat (less than 10 percent fat) ground beef.

Low-fat ground beef (LFGB) will require different handling than conventional hamburger in the school cafeteria setting. After testing some of the LFGB products earlier this year, the USDA found positive acceptance of the product among school children. It is interesting to note that schools are reimbursed by the USDA on the basis of how well the students consume products which are purchased by the USDA.

Based on research partially supported by checkoff funds through the National Live Stock and Meat Board, the USDA has conducted evaluations of several types of products as reflected in their revised standards. Several bids have been accepted at a wide variety of prices.

Several new LFGB products are on the market at retail. Monfort (Conagra) has introduced a product called "Healthy Choice" which is only 4 percent fat and is made with oat flour and beef stock. Keystone Foods will soon introduce a frozen quarter pounder in the range of 6 percent fat.

This trend to lower fat processed

meat products has affected the price of some meat cuts, and high-fat beef and pork trimmings are currently selling at extremely low prices. For instance, regular pork trimmings (50 percent to 55 percent fat) are selling wholesale at 16 cents/pound and 50/50 beef trimmings are less than 40 cents/pound. On the other hand, very lean trimmings are at or near historically high prices.

The meat industry has traditionally blended higher fat products with low-fat products, many from cull dairy cows or imported meat, to increase the value of the fatter trimmings. In this way, imported meats have actually increased the value of domestically produced meats.

Processing practices are changing and, if the trend continues, will put further price pressures on the higher fat products. Fat cannot currently be removed economically by hand, and more research should be done on removing the fat mechanically. Thus far the only mechanical removal of fat involves a mild heating process which is unacceptable for some uses of the low fat meat products.

If the price spreads between lean and fat meats continue to widen, packers will soon be able to pay premiums for leaner animals. To some extent, this has already occurred in the pork industry. Ultimately, the market will force the prices for lean market animals to reflect their value.

CURRENT CONCEPTS ABOUT CHINESE PIGS

Considerable interest and debate was generated when announcements surfaced that several million dollars would be spent to quarantine, import, and maintain in the United States strains of

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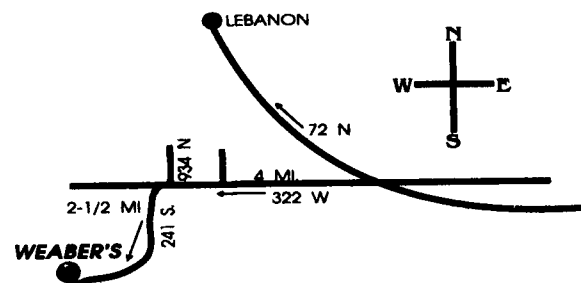
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