

Lower SCC By Overall Management, Not Just Treatment, Says Specialist

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Berks Co. Correspondent
LEESPORT (Berks Co.) — The best way to fight mastitis is to manage your way out, not treat your way out, said a Penn State Extension dairy science specialist.

Steve Spencer spoke on ways dairy farmers can lower their somatic cell counts at a recent Dairy Day seminar held here in the Berks County Agriculture Center.

Spencer advocated this course of action because, he said, mastitis is virtually impossible to eliminate once it has infected a herd.

Dairy farmers have a greater incentive to lower their SCC because, as of July 1, the standard will be reduced from 1 million to 750,000 SCC.

But more than government regulation as an incentive to lick this problem, a high somatic cell count reduces milk production, said Dr.

Steve Ford, a farm management specialist with Penn State Extension. This is because the cow with mastitis uses energy she would normally use in producing milk to fight off the infection.

These days, too, Ford said, many dairies pay a premium for milk with low SCC. So there's more money to be made when this problem is kept under control.

Spencer explained that mastitis is caused by two types of bacteria — contagious and environmental. By far, the contagious varieties — streptococcus agalactiae, or strep ag, and staphylococcus aureus — are the most common and difficult to eliminate.

These are the bacteria that cause high SCC, he said.

"When these organisms invade the udder, SCC goes up," Spencer said.

And since most dairy farmers

must contend with mastitis, Spencer gave several useful pointers in managing it.

Post-dipping with a germicide will do the most to controlling contagious bacteria, he said.

"There's no other practice that comes close to controlling mastitis than with post-dipping," he said. This practice will control mastitis by 50 percent, he said.

The next best practice is culling cows with staph aureus, he said.

"It's very final, but a good, stiff culling program has a lot of merit," he said, especially if the cow has mastitis in all four quarters.

"That's a road cow," he said.

If a cow with mastitis produces a lot of milk, segregating her from the others and milking her last and with her own equipment may be a way to manage her infection.

Keeping stalls, milking equipment, and udders clean is another

important way to fight these infections, he said.

"It's awfully hard to fight a mastitis problem with dirty cows," he said.

Predipping of teats aids in fighting environmental bacteria, such as streptococcus non-agalactiae and coliforms.

Dry treating is better for controlling staph but not for the environmental bacteria, he said. Back flushing, studies have shown, also has been disappointing in fighting contagious organisms and is no help in fighting environmental ones, he said.

Spencer also noted that nutrition plays a big part in keeping cows healthy.

"If they aren't fed right, this lowers their resistance," he said. "Healthy cows are well-fed cows," he said. Farmers should be sure cows have selenium in their diets.

Cows should be prepared properly before they are milked, he said.

Keep regulators clean and well-maintained. And keeps cows' udders dry before putting the machines on, because water creates a favorable environment for bacteria.

He noted that SCCs can't get too low. In Denmark, he said, the maximum SCC is 250,000 and in Italy it's 200,000.

In his talk, Ford discussed the costs farmers incur fighting mastitis as opposed to culling and replacing cows.

For example, in fighting mastitis, farmers pay for medicine, veterinarians, discarded milk, labor, and early replacements.

According to a study he did, the estimated cost of treating a cow with mastitis vs. replacing her was (Turn to Page A43)

Cumberland Extension Holds Annual Meeting

CARLISLE (Cumberland Co.) — The Cumberland County Cooperative Extension Association held their annual meeting last week and re-elected Rosemarie Peiffer, New Cumberland, President, and Stephanie Chertok of Carlisle, Secretary. Dr. Eugene Hoefert of Carlisle was elected Vice President. Rosemarie Peiffer, President expressed the appreciation of the Board to the retiring Directors including Owen McCulloch and Richard Smith of Newville; Ronald Souder and Lynn Wingert of Mechanicsburg; and Chris Renner of Carlisle. Margaret Smith of Newville, and Wayne Baker of Shippensburg, received the A.A. Raudabaugh Memorial Award in recognition for their leadership and services to the community.

President Peiffer welcomed the newly elected directors including Kendra Byers, Gretchen Naugle,



Margret Smith, left, also received the A.A Raudabaugh Memorial award from Rosemarie Peiffer, president.

and Larry Yorlets of Carlisle; and Roy Snoko and Galen Karper of Shippensburg. Extension program highlights included: 4-H Science



Wayne Baker received the A.A. Raudabaugh Memorial Award from Rosemarie Peiffer.

Program - Jamie Glennon and Andrew Rook; Senior Issues - Marg Malehorn; Master Gardener Activities - Kathy Wolfe; and IPM

Programs - Alan Michael. "Agriculture in Poland," a presentation by Larry Yager, Penn State Area Marketing Agent proved to be a very interesting and educational program. Larry just returned from a six-month educational assignment in Poland.

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