

Milk Producers: Here's How To Control Drug Residues

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EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) —

One key ingredient to help ensure milk quality and keep residues out of the tank is to establish a good veterinarian relationship. In the long run, producers can protect themselves from problems in the future, and prevent outcries from haulers, processors, and consumers.

To help producers ensure milk and dairy beef quality, a special Quality Assurance Program was recently begun. Established by a committee made up of members of the American Veterinary Medical Association and the National Milk Producers Federation, the program helps dairy farmers manage the procedures involved in the use and application of drugs through a special Ten Critical Control Point Program.

All 58 pages of the 10-point program were scrutinized on Tuesday night at Ephrata High School during a special meeting of the Ephrata Area Young Farmers Association with the help of Dr. Walter K. Trumbaure, a local veterinarian.

Trumbaure said that he knew of two instances where drug residues were found in the tank, and what happened.

Both were caused by "departures from the normal routine," he said.

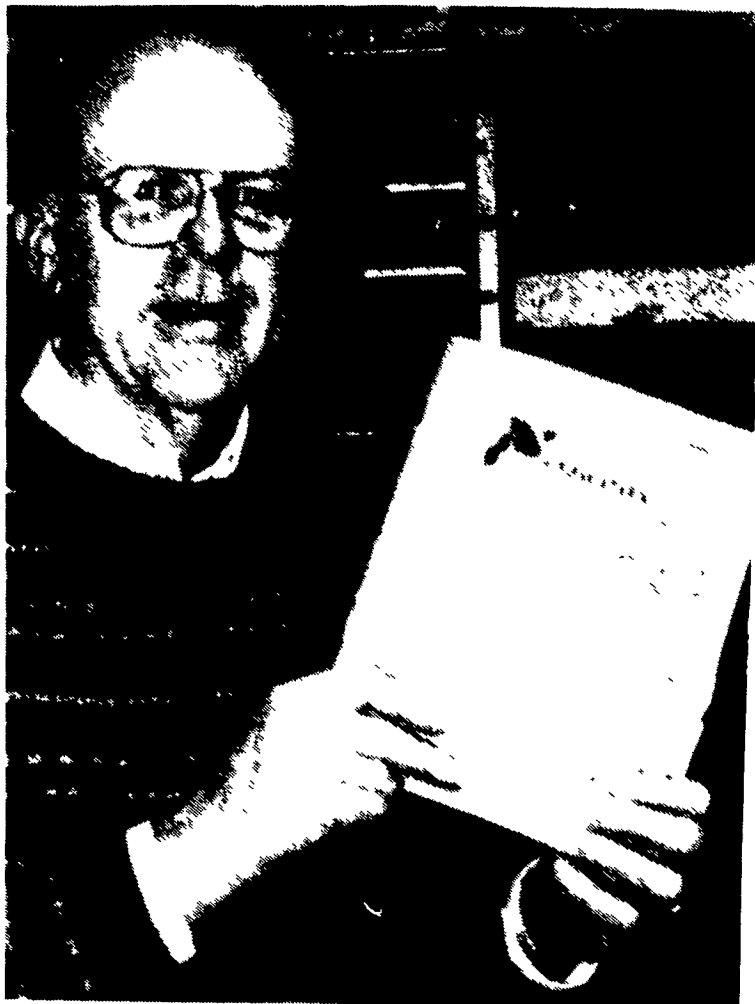
"I think you all have your routine for the treated animal," he told the 30 producers present. "You either milk her last or use a cheater pale or separate pale. When you break the routine, that's when it happens."

In one case, a producer placed a dry-tested cow on antibiotics with the milking cows, and the milker was put on by accident.

In the other, a known, tested cow was accidentally placed in with milking cows. The milker was put on. The milk was going through the pipeline, and the workers decided to unhook the pipes nearest the tank, hoping to stop the flow of the tainted milk. It didn't work.

In both cases, the producers should have tested the tanks to determine if there were antibiotics present, using several commercially available testers.

One farmer at the meeting admitted they were pushed to get the milking done on time, and the cheater pale was pushed aside and the milker accidentally put on. The tank was contaminated. "I find the hurrier I go, the behinder I get," he



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told the other farmers.

In most cases of residue problems in milk, Trumbaure said it is only a perceived problem in the mind of the public, not a real problem.

"Consumers have been increasingly concerned about what they eat, and the news media has been printing reports that the food they eat is tainted with drug residues," Trumbaure read from a statement about the 10-point program. He commented, "There are very, very few instances in human medicine where reactions have occurred to residues of drugs in milk and meat. There are some, but they're very few."

Many times, according to the report, residues end up in the milk

for the following reasons: poor treatment records, treated animals not identified, recommended withdrawal times not followed, drugs used in an extra-label manner, and lack of veterinarian advice, especially when using extra-label drugs.

What the program is all about, according to Trumbaure, is maintaining the public's confidence in the food supply.

"The public is frightened and the press overemphasizes it," he said. "Every time you hear about a residue or something bad in the food supply, the farmers get bad press."

By following the 10-point program, producers can stop the bad press and protect themselves from

liability.

The 10 points are:

1) Practice healthy herd management. Investments in disease prevention are more cost effective than treatment, and include proper milking management, good hoof care and trimming, calving cows in a sanitary environment, and proper vaccination. Preventive herd health management practices are critical for profitable milk production and growth, improved animal health, decreased costs and milk discard, efficient drug use, and reduced potential for milk and meat residues. "The idea here is to do things that help minimize treatment," said Trumbaure. The less producers rely on drugs, the less likely they will have to worry about drug residues.

2) Establish a valid veterinarian/patient relationship. The veterinarian should know you and your cows well enough to be able to prescribe the best treatment. If you're going to use a drug extra-label or prescription drug, said Trumbaure, legally you can't do that unless you have a valid vet/client relationship. The vet is responsible for regulating the health of a herd, has to have sufficient knowledge of the herd, and must be able to continue follow-up health management. If using drugs in extra-label manner, according to the veterinarian, the use is not technically legal — it's not sanctioned by the FDA, except when the immediate survival of the animal is at stake. But it often puts much of the onus, he said, on the vet.

3) Use only FDA-approved over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription drugs with veterinarian's guidance. OTC drugs are those that producers can buy at the store, take home, and use on the cattle, and are labeled such. Prescription drugs are those with a caution label that are only to be administered by a licensed veterinarian. According to Trumbaure, "extra-label" means using the drug for a condition or reason not described on the label, a dosage form not on the label, or administering the drug by a different route. One "extra-label" use of a drug is using aspi-

rin on lactating cattle. "There are people who are allergic to aspirin," he said. "If you give a cow aspirin, it may say on the label what the dosage is for cattle and horses. It doesn't say anything about lactating cattle and extra-label use."

4) Make sure all drugs you use have labels that comply with state and/or federal labeling requirements. OTC drugs must have name of the drug, active ingredients, directions for use, withholding/withdrawal times, and name of manufacturer or distributor on the label. Prescription drugs must have the same, but also the name and address of the dispensing veterinarian and the caution statements.

5) Store all drugs correctly. On the certification, producers can get docked if the drugs aren't stored correctly. "You know what you're going to use it for, but the milk inspector doesn't," said Trumbaure. Non-lactating and lactating drugs must have separate shelves. Exceptions are topical drugs. Also, keep in mind that some drugs are perishable, and must be refrigerated. Producers who store drugs in the house and away from the herd proves "to the milk inspector that you're hiding something," he said. "It's proving to me that you're using drugs you don't know how to use and that's why you're hiding them."

6) Administer all drugs properly and identify all treated animals. The important point, according to Trumbaure, is to make sure the treated animals are labeled, using either leg bands or paint sticks.

7) Maintain and use proper treatment records on all treated animals. This point is "the most difficult," said Trumbaure, because it emphasizes keeping written records, which some farmers find hard to do. Records must be kept to show treatment dates and times, diagnosis, dosage, route of administration, person who administered the drug, withdrawal times for milk (hours) and meat (days), and residue test information, including test used, day, time, and results.

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