

Milk Is A Biological Product

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NEWARK - Del. — Milk is a very important food and the source of dairy products.

It is a biological product secreted by mammals under a variety of external and internal conditions and hazards. Milk is not manufactured by the simple addition of certain purified, chemically defined substances that then can be listed on a label of ingredients.

Because of milk's biological nature and source, precautions must be followed to ensure that milk and dairy products are completely wholesome, entirely safe in contents and free of contaminants and adulteration.

Milk as it is produced by dairy animals and harvested by dairy farmers will normally contain a number of bacteria and related microorganisms and cells.

These can be both beneficial and harmful. But the harmful ones are eliminated by mandatory pasteurization of all milk in the United States processing plants before being bottled for sale to consumers, unless the producer and processor have a special license to produce raw milk under very strict and frequent health inspections.

Drug residues, which are the result of treatment against various

disease problems during lactation, are not eliminated by pasteurization.

Infections can and will occur as they do in any living animal. But drug residue levels in milk and dairy products are regulated and monitored by the Food and Drug Administration.

So far, the dairy industry has cultivated a public image that milk is rigorously monitored and drug-free. In this way, the industry has been able to avoid the disastrous public scares that plagued the apple and grape producers.

Safety of dairy products is of paramount importance to the consumer and, therefore, to the industry. Dairy producers must continue to assure the consumer their products are safe. Of primary importance for this assurance is the willing commitment of dairy farmers and their veterinarians.

The University of California Veterinary Research and Extension Departments in Tulare and Davis have developed a 10 Critical Control Points and Procedures program to enable implementation of the national Milk and Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Program.

It is designed to be a self-control program of the dairy industry. Also, in order to educate the public, they have developed a producers manual and 10 videotapes on procedures. These are

available from the Milk and Dairy Beef Quality Assurance Program, 801 Shakespeare, Box 497, Stratford, Iowa 50249.

The 10 Critical Control Points are:

1. Practice a healthy herd management, because it is more economical to prevent disease than to treat it. A herd evaluation manual covers mastitis prevention, housing and sanitation, nutrition, reproduction, vaccination and parasite control, introduction of disease, newborn calves, replacement heifers and steers, and performance trends.

The most costly disease on U.S. dairy farms and in other countries is mastitis. This infection costs the United States \$2 billion annually, an average of \$180 per cow per year. The combined result is a 30 percent reduction in milk produced, and the expenses associated with culling, discarded milk, death, treatment, veterinary expenses, reduced value of milk cows and increased labor.

For every case of clinical mastitis identified, approximately 15 to 40 cases of subclinical mastitis

rob the dairy farmer of milk production and income.

Calf mortality percentages translate into increases in replacement costs. Reproductive failures cost U.S. dairy farmers an average of \$116 per cow per year. For every day open (that is, bred but not conceived) 120 days after calving, the dairy farmer loses \$2 per cow per day. And repeat breeders eat up additional costs.

2. Establish a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship. The veterinarian must label all prescribed drugs with the proper withdrawal times and additional caution statements.

3. Use only FDA-approved over-the-counter or prescription drugs with veterinarian's guidance. Without consistent drug use, especially in the early stages of disease, much of the treatment cost may be wasted. Dairy farmers should be trained by the veterinarian in early recognition of diseases, which should result in decreased morbidity and mortality. Drug overuse or ineffective drug use, especially after calving, must be avoided.

4. Make sure all drugs you use have labels that comply with state and/or federal labeling requirements, including extra-label drugs.

5. Store all drugs correctly, separating drugs for lactating animals from those for non-lactating animals.

6. Administer all drugs properly and identify all treated animals.

7. Maintain and use proper treatment records on all treated animals.

8. Use drug residue screening tests. On-farm tests are powerful tools, telling farmers when it is safe to market milk and meat from treated animals. Dairy farmers are encouraged in their use, although it must be recognized that all tests have certain limitations and the observing of proper withdrawal times is imperative to avoid useless testing. Different tests apply to different drugs. It is important to know the sensitivity of the test relative to the maximum legal level of drug residue allowed. No one test will detect all drugs.

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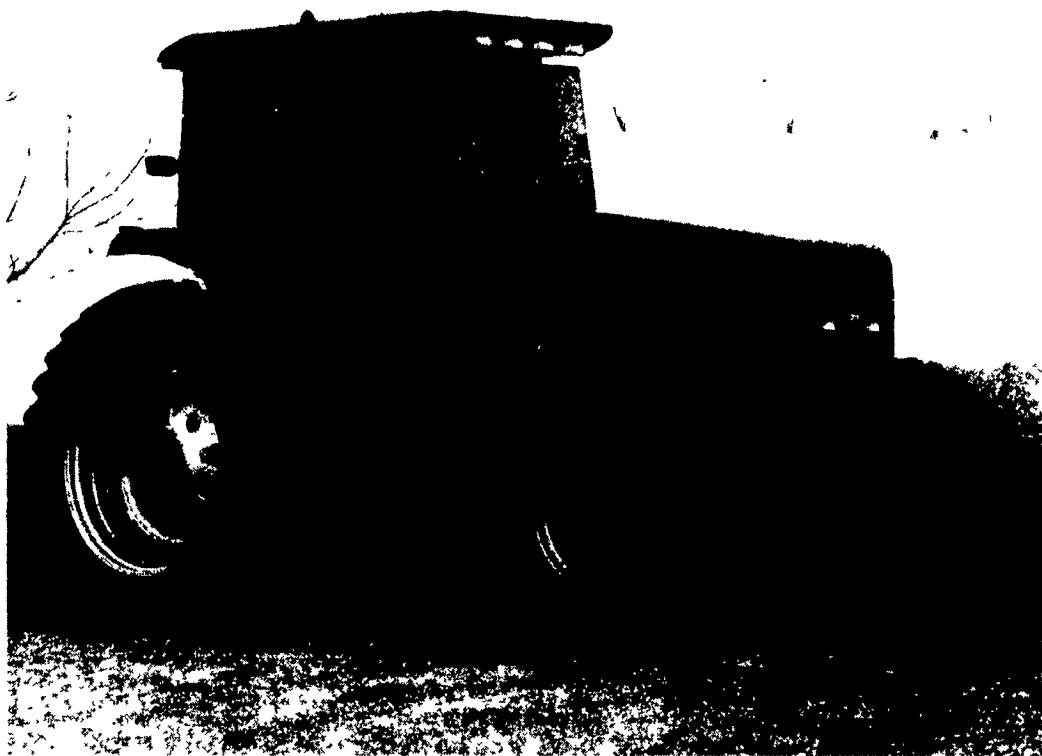
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