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Guidelines For Purchasing Cows and Heifers

Mastitis, BVD, sterility, poor milk production, and behavioral problems are just a few of the concerns when purchasing cows or heifers. Reasons for purchasing cows or heifers can affect the health of new additions. Purchasing cows or heifers as a result of ongoing health problems in the herd will likely affect the health of new animals.

Health problems should be solved before bringing new animals onto the premises. Dairy producers purchasing springing heifers or cows to expand the herd, or purchasing younger replacements, should take the time to search for animals based on criteria that increase the likelihood of success.

The following check list should help you determine which animals are right for your herd.

For Purchased Cattle:

Know the herd of origin

- _____ their health practices?
- _____ vaccine history?
- _____ herd testing for diseases of concern to you
- _____ sale animal testing for diseases of concern to you

Test prepurchase Best when done 2 to 4 weeks prior to movement of sale animals testing will depend on diseases of concern to your herd, possible diseases to test for

- _____ Brucellosis
- _____ Tuberculosis
- _____ Bovine leukosis virus
- _____ Johnes disease
- _____ Salmonella
- _____ Contagious mastitis (*S. aureus* *Strep. ag.* mycoplasma)
- _____ BVD-persistent infection
- _____ Neospora

Avoid carrying diseases home

- _____ When visiting sales barn, or other cattle-purchase site, use disposable footwear or clean and disinfect your boots

Haul in a clean truck

- _____ Use clean, dry truck - preferably your own vehicle - to haul purchased animals, clean and sanitize your truck, before and after hauling purchased cattle

Test postpurchase If testing cannot be done prepurchase or if additional information on disease status is needed, test animals as soon as possible after arrival while they are isolated from the herd

- _____ Test for those diseases of concern to your herd (see above list)

Isolate new arrivals

- _____ Minimum of two weeks

Milk purchased cattle last or with separate milking equipment

- _____ Milk last until determined free of contagious mastitis organisms

Avoid drug residue

- _____ Ask if purchased cows have been treated with antibiotics, when? what drug(s)? Test milk before putting it in the tank

Vaccinate with all herd vaccines

- _____ Vaccinate on arrival repeat killed vaccine use two weeks later if not previously vaccinated

Observe for evidence of contagious diseases

- _____ Daily observation particularly for signs of respiratory disease

Source: Department of Veterinary Science, The Pennsylvania State University, 115 William L. Henning Building, University Park, PA 16802. Authors: Larry Hutchinson, Tom Drake, Dale Moore, Dave Wolfgang, and Bob Graves.

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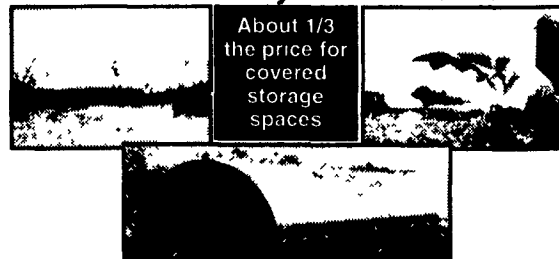
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