

Vaccines Topic Of Herd Health Seminars Conducted This Week

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — For dairy and beef producers alike, Neospora, although a new disease, is increasing in importance as it moves east from California.

At a seminar conducted at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center Tuesday, New Franklin Ruritan Community Center on Wednesday, and the Lebanon Ag Center on Thursday, herd health — specifically vaccines — was in the spotlight.

Presenters Dr. Les Choromanski, Neospora manager for Intervet Inc., and Dr. Arlen Mills, Penn State extension veterinarian, shared their knowledge and experience about herd health.

Neospora
Choromanski has spent the past seven years researching Neospora and developing a vaccine for the parasite.

It was first identified in 1988 as Neospora Caninum — a cause of abortions in dogs. Researchers recognized the disease as a major cause of abortions in California's dairy cattle in 1991. The parasite is blamed for 40,000 cattle abortions each year in California. In addition to abortions, the disease causes a drop in milk production of more than two pounds a day.

By 1998 they had identified dogs as a definitive host of the disease, as the eggs of the disease, oocysts, can be produced and passed through a dog's intestinal system.

Also in 1998 the USDA grant-

ed conditional license to a vaccine, "Neoguard," which became a full license in November 2001.

"The infection of Neospora is for life," said Choromanski. Although infection can be horizontal (from dog to cow), or vertical (from cow to calf), an infected cow can produce a healthy calf. On the other hand, the fetus can be aborted at any stage of gestation. Cattle do not spread neosporosis horizontally to each other.

Choromanski recommends using a vaccine in the first trimester of gestation followed by a second dose 3-4 weeks later.

Producers should use the vaccine "if you have unacceptable — more than five percent — levels of abortion and have animals that have tested positive for Neospora," he said. However "even the best vaccine can fail" in a poorly-managed, virus-infested environment.

One biosecurity measure is to ensure that dogs are not allowed to feed on aborted fetuses or placentas.

Parasites, as a whole, said Choromanski, have an adverse effect on the immune system in his lectures.

"Parasites in cattle can... more than just nip at the producer's food dollar," he said.

According to Choromanski, a moderate to heavy load of parasites can interfere with the immune system's response.

"The biggest mistake you can make is applying dewormers at your convenience, not by the label," he said. For the Pennsylvania region, he said, spring and fall seem to be optimal for vaccination.

For cows with a high parasitic contamination level, he recommended treating them to remove parasites to begin the vaccination program. They should be treated again at freshening and again 6-8 weeks later.

Moderately contaminated cows should be treated at freshening and 6-8 weeks later. Cows with low levels of contamination should be treated once a year at freshening.

In summary,

"the keys to an effective vaccination program are good nutrition and a good parasite control program," he said.

Parasitism costs producers

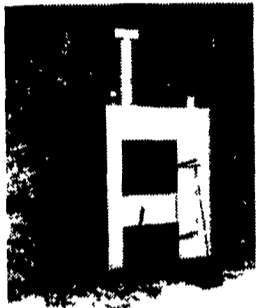
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At left, Les Choromanski, Intervet, and Arlen Mills, Penn State extension veterinarian, were presenters at several herd health seminars conducted this week.

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