

## Meeting Consumer's Needs

(Continued from Page A37)

"The trick is increasing communication on the background of the cattle," he said. Pritchard checks the animals' ears to determine what the calves have been implanted with. "If they're fairly green when they come in, you may want to lay off the initial implant."

Implant potency is at its maximum two days after being injected into the animals, so he recommends waiting two to three weeks to implant to let the cattle "get set up on feed" first.

Dr. John Scanga addressed dark cutters and maturity effects on beef quality.

According to the 2000 National Beef Quality Audit, the cattle industry loses \$5.43 per steer or heifer slaughtered because of losses incurred for dark cutters. This number is actually \$1 lower than the 1995 audit.

"The incidence rate is down and I think we're getting a handle on it," he said. Two influencing factors may be that packing plants are scheduling delivery of cattle, so there is less time for the cattle to stand. Also the carcasses are getting cooled faster — they are chilled in 10-12 hours — than previously.

To put the problem in perspective, out of Scanga's study of 2.6 million cattle, the dark cutter incidence rate was less than .5 percent.

Dark cutters come from long-term stress, not excitement, even six hours before slaughter. Scanga believes that the condition comes from stress occurring one to two days before slaughter.

Animals with a poor temperament, which includes their ability to deal with stress, tend to have problems with palatability. Animals "used to a life of hardship," even if they were more high strung, tended not to be dark cutters.

Dark cutters are seasonal, showing up at the end of July and August. "It takes a lot more energy for cattle to cool themselves than to stay warm," he said.

Heifers comprise most of the dark cutters, perhaps because they may start cycling if the MGA is not correct in the ration. Estrogen is a stress-producing hormone.

Too many, the wrong combination, or wrong timing of growth promotants may also cause dark cutters.

Dr. John Comberford, Penn State, addressed genetic implications of beef quality.

"Most carcass traits are not affected by one single gene," he said. "We have to deal with a combination of groups of genes."

"Most carcass traits

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have moderate to high heritability. The reason for that is that most carcass traits can be changed genetically by selecting for it," he said.

Marbling, for example, is 25-40 percent heritable. "You can make a difference in the marbling score without having to affect other carcass traits," he said.

"We have some powerful tools available — it's not just weaning weights anymore, it's carcass traits."

Expected progeny differences (EPDs) are the deviation from the average for a sire's progeny.

With such a wide variation of traits not only across breeds but within breeds, EPDs are helpful in making proper selection decisions.

To wrap up the day, Scanga discussed animal identification and country-of-origin labeling.

Scanga believes that a standardized system of identification throughout the U.S. would be helpful to the cattle industry. Besides bringing about more efficient management and communication, an identification system would help to minimize impact of not only disease but also bioterrorism impacts.

He also spoke about the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, signed into law May 13, which mandates country-of-origin labeling. The law mandates that animals born, raised, and slaughtered in the U.S. will be labeled by Sept. 30, 2004.

The U.S. imports 16 percent of its supply of beef and cattle.

## Drought Emergency Lifted In Six Counties, 14 Counties Returned To Normal Status

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Gov. Mark Schweiker recently lifted the drought emergency for six counties and restored 14 other counties to normal status.

Dauphin, Perry and Wayne counties have been upgraded to drought-watch status, which calls on residents to voluntarily conserve five percent of their daily water usage.

Bucks, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties have been upgraded to drought-warning status, which calls on residents to voluntarily conserve 10 percent to 15 percent of their daily water usage.

"Recent rains and water-conservation efforts have led to some improvement in water conditions in parts of the state," Gov. Schweiker said. "While I am pleased to announce that I am lifting mandatory water restrictions for six counties, I must stress that the drought is not over and that 14 counties remain in a drought emergency."

Fourteen counties — Adams, Bedford, Berks, Chester, Cumberland, Delaware, Franklin, Fulton, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Northampton, Schuylkill and York — remain in drought-emergen-

cy status and should continue to follow mandatory water restrictions on non-essential water use.

Fourteen counties - Bradford, Centre, Columbia, Juniata, Lackawanna, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Union and Wyoming — have been removed from drought warning and watch status and are returned to normal status.

A drought emergency, the third and most severe stage of the three drought declarations, imposes mandatory restrictions on non-essential water use and must be declared by the Governor.

A drought warning, the second stage of drought, calls for a 10 percent to 15 percent voluntary reduction in water consumption. A drought watch, the first and least severe stage, calls for a voluntary five percent reduction of non-essential water use.

In a drought emergency, mandatory water-use restrictions include strict limitations on the watering of lawns, athletic fields, golf courses and the washing of automobiles; not serving water in eating places unless requested by

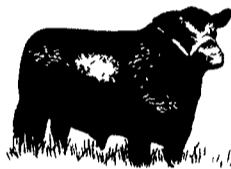
the customer; and closing down of indoor and outdoor ornamental fountains, waterfalls, and ornamental pools unless they are needed to sustain aquatic life.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary David E. Hess said the drought underscores the need for the state to address long-term water-resources issues.

"Currently, we don't have a full-time program to evaluate the status of Pennsylvania's water resources and promote the efficient use of water," Secretary Hess said.

"We need to develop long-term water-use strategies as part of a comprehensive approach to better manage our precious water resources. That is the main reason for Gov. Schweiker's initiative that calls for water-resources legislation."

Secretary Hess said that drought-emergency conditions have occurred in parts of Pennsylvania in five of the past seven years. He also noted that the State Water Plan has not been updated in more than 25 years.



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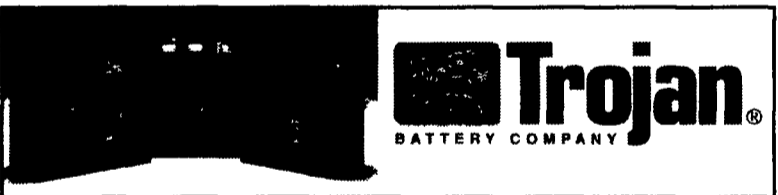
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