



Penn State Cooperative Extension Capitol Region Dairy Team

LEARNING ABOUT MEXICAN HOLIDAYS

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You might first ask yourself, "Why is this guy who works with dairy farms writing about Mexican holidays?" Well, it is quite an interesting story.

About five years ago, I was working with dairy farms in central New York, many of which were employing Mexican and other Latin American workers. At that time, I knew very little about the workers' cultural background. However, I realized that there was a growing need for training programs to help the workers and farm owners to be more successful. Hence, my interest really began to grow.

Since that time, I have been involved with many different programs that have broadened my perspective and understanding of the Mexican culture. These include coordinating a milker training school in Spanish, facilitating four Spanish For Dairy-men classes with 48 farm owners or employees, and I helped to develop and coordinate four "Managing the Hispanic Workforce" conferences.

Now my family and I live and work in Adams County, an area with a growing Mexican and Latin American population. Visiting with and leaning about our Latino neighbors has been a very rewarding and enriching experience!

One of the most interesting things I have learned about the Mexican culture is their appreciation of traditional and religious "das festivitos" or holidays. Here are highlights of a few of the most important:

- **Semana Santa.** Semana Santa or Holy Week celebrates the Christian holiday of Easter and runs from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. Since about 90 percent of Mexicans are Catholic, attending Mass on Good Friday and Easter Sunday are typical traditions. This is also a time that Mexicans enjoy celebrating with their families and communities.

- **Cinco de Mayo.** The Cinco de Mayo or "The Fifth of May" commemorates Mexico's victory over the French in The Battle of Puebla in 1862. France had invaded the Gulf Coast of Mexico with their army of 6,500 well-prepared soldiers. They were in route to Mexico City when they were defeated by a smaller, poorly outfitted Mexican army of 4,500 that was led by Mexican General Ignacio Zaragoza Seguín. The victory was a splendid moment for the Mexican people. However, Napoleon sent 30,000 more troops and was eventually able to defeat the Mexican army, take over Mexico City, and install French rule over Mexico. This only lasted a few years, ending as the U.S. began providing more political and military assistance to Mexico. Even though the French did eventually defeat Mexico, Cinco de Mayo honors the bravery of General Zaragoza's small, outnumbered militia at the Battle of Puebla.

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- **Mexican Independence Day.** Mexican Independence Day is celebrated on Sept. 16 and commemorates the start of the battle for independence from Spain. Early on the morning of Sept. 16, 1810, Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a Catholic priest in the village of Dolores, delivered "El Grito de Dolores." This "Cry of Dolores" was "Mexicanos, Viva Mexico!" and was directed toward the Indian and mestizo people who had been exploited by the Spaniards. Hidalgo's cry inspired the revolution and he became known as the father of Mexican independence.

- **Da de los Muertos.** The "Day of the Dead" celebrations take place on Nov. 1 and 2, All Saints Day and All Souls Day, respectively. This tradition stems from ancient indigenous people of Mexico who believed that the souls of the dead "return" to be with the living every year. While the celebration varies across different regions of Mexico, the festivities often begin with families fixing up the graves of deceased relatives and even building elaborate altars at the cemeteries. One candle is placed for each dead soul. The altars are often decorated with marigolds (the traditional flower of the dead), mementos, photos and other remembrances of the dead. They celebrate by eating traditional foods such as "pan de muerto" (bread of the dead) and favorite foods of their deceased relatives.

- **Da de Nuestra Seora de Guadalupe.** The "Virgin of Guadalupe Day" is in honor of Mexico's patron saint and is celebrated on Dec. 12. The history of this holiday dates back to 1531 when Juan Diego was crossing a barren hill called Tepeyac Hill to attend Mass. Suddenly, he was stopped by a bright light and the sound of heavenly music. Then a beautiful dark-skinned woman declared herself to be the Virgin Mary and mother of Jesus Christ. She told Juan Diego of her desire to have a church built on that barren hill and asked him to relay that message to the Bishop. When Diego was finally able to speak to the Bishop, the Bishop asked for proof that this encounter really took place. A few days later, The Virgin once again appeared to Diego on Tepeyac Hill. He explained the Bishop's request. She instructed him to pick roses from the hill, a place where roses didn't typically grow, and deliver them to the Bishop as a sign of this encounter. When Diego laid the roses out for the Bishop, a perfect image of "La Virgen Morena" (the Dark Virgin) was revealed on Juan Diego's cloak. The Bishop then ordered that a small church be built on the site of the "appearance." Today, a much larger Basilica has been built in honor of the "Virgin of Guadalupe." Carefully preserved inside is Juan Diego's miraculous cloak that still has a very clear image of the "Virgin of Guadalupe" imprinted on it. Interestingly, just last

'Moo University' Looks At Cow Health

ANDY ANDREWS
Editor

NEW HOLLAND (Lancaster Co.) — Vaccination programs for heifers should start not real early, but at the right time — about 4-6 months of age to get maximum herd health benefits, according to a Penn State veterinarian.

Dr. Arlen Mills noted that modified live vaccines are used to protect the young cow for a host of diseases he reviewed last week at a special beginning and young dairy farmer meeting called "Moo University" at Yoder's Restaurant in New Holland.

Mills, along with Penn State Dairy Agent Beth Grove, spoke to a couple dozen dairy producers and agri-industry representatives at the Penn State event.

The capitol region extension veterinarian, based in Lebanon County, noted how important it is to maintain good biosecurity when using vaccines.

"Don't put a used needle into the bottle of vaccine," he cautioned the young dairy farmers.

He told them that several doses are needed to protect the cow from disease.

"If you use only one dose, the heifer is not vaccinated," Mills said. "You have to follow up with a second dose. Follow the instructions on these items."

Also, it's important not to let the vaccines, especially modified live, to sit in the sun. And don't use a disinfectant in the syringe, because that kills the vaccine.

Mills reviewed various diseases at the "Moo University":

- **IBR.** Known as infectious bovine rhinotracheitis virus, the agent is a herpes virus that infects through the respiratory system. It causes abortions.

- **PI 3.** Also called para-influenza, the disease infects the respiratory system. A mild infection follows, which gives bacteria the opportunity to invade.

- **BRSV.** The bovine respiratory syncytial virus causes pneumonia. Acidosis seems to be a trigger, but it can affect cows and calves.

- **BVD.** Bovine virus diarrhea affects the respiratory, digestive, and reproductive tracts, affecting the immune system as well. It creates lesions and ulcers over different parts of the body. It's important to know that the persistently infected cow becomes so only when it is exposed as a fetus (cows get only a transient or mild infection that doesn't last, but can infect the growing fetus). BVD causes lots of reproduction problems.

year, Pope John Paul II raised Juan Diego to Sainthood.

- **Las Posadas y Navidad.** Las Posadas is the start of the Christmas season and celebrates Joseph and Mary's search for a room at an inn in Bethlehem. Navidad is similar to our traditional religious Christmas celebration. Navidad is one of the biggest fiestas of the year. People all across Mexico take time off and make spending time with family and friends a priority. One of the biggest traditions is "Las Posadas," which takes place during the 12 days before Christmas and is a procession that grows in numbers as it makes it way to the church. Once at the church, a celebration of mass is held. Then, the adults visit and enjoy everyone's company while the children enjoy playing games and breaking piatas. Overall, Christmas is more than just one day, it truly is a celebration of the Christmas season.

Special thanks to Leticia Betances for her review of and contributions to this article. References: <http://www.mexonline.com> and <http://spanish.about.com>.



Dr. Arlen Mills, Penn State herd health veterinarian, joins Beth Grove, Lancaster County dairy agent, at the recent Moo University at Yoder's Restaurant in New Holland. Photo by Andy Andrews, editor

- **Leptospirosis.** Producers can vaccinate for five strains. Bacteria infect kidneys and abortions can be caused at 6-9 months. Source may be water or rodents.

It's important to get the heifers vaccinated as early as possible, Mills noted, before they are infected.

Also, it's important to focus on the overall herd immunity by looking at colostrum management, ventilation, and not to vaccinate too young (at 3-5 weeks, a calf's immune system is only beginning to build up).

Keep a wary eye on the calf's health at a month of age, according to Mills, because "the calf is in a precarious place" in terms of its health.

Also, watch body conditioning on the cows, supplement with Vitamin E and selenium in the diet, and feed the cow "to feed the calf," Mills said.

Mills reviewed key health guidelines in maternity pens, keeping pens clean, and keeping calves away from the older animals to prevent Johne's Disease.

When calving, learn how to wait and be patient, noted the veterinarian.

Beth Grove, Lancaster dairy agent, reviewed where Lancaster herds stand in terms of overall production. Grove noted that Lancaster falls short on days to first service (a good goal should be 75, she noted, while Lancaster stands, on average, at 96).

Shortening those days can add up to major dollars for producers.

Greater dry matter intake could be key to a cow ovulating earlier after calving.

Cow comfort and footing are essential. Producers could also be selecting for poor reproductive traits as they search for improved production genetics.

Herd managers should have roughly half the herd pregnant at any given time, she said, with a 13.5-month calving interval.

Grove reviewed some of the new research that debunks several accepted norms. The old reasoning that cows would stay in heat 18 hours, be observable in heat at night, and go back to being in heat every 21 days is being rethought. Cows today are different, according to one study, that showed cows stay in heat only eight hours, with only nine mounts or stands per heat period (Holstein) or 12 mounts for Jerseys.

Cows are also more likely to show heats not necessarily at night, but when first turned out or when not eating or resting.

"Cows do not fit into the mold that we used to think they did," said Grove.

Grove spoke about technology to detect heat, such as Heat-Watch, using a pressure-type pad and radio signal telemetry. Cost for a 100-cow dairy to detect mounts is about \$6,000, she said.

Grove noted that meetings such as "Moo University" could be continued at later dates around the county.

Eastern European Extension Agents Tour Lancaster Farming



EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) — Five agricultural information specialists from eastern Europe took a tour of the Lancaster Farming offices late last week. The Cochran Group Program members, sponsored by USDA, were accompanied by Jim Dunn, Penn State professor of ag economics, far left.

Photo by Andy Andrews, editor