

Penn State Cooperative Extension
Capitol Region Dairy Team

**ANIMAL HEALTH ISSUES
A FOCAL POINT FOR
CONSUMERS, PRODUCERS**

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The hardships faced by European producers with the spread of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) are a prime example of the importance of biosecurity for production agriculture in today's global and mobile environment.

Here in the U.S., Johne's Disease is another prime example, as the disease silently robs economic returns before producers even suspect a problem.

There are consumer issues at stake. While there is no conclusive evidence, researchers are examining the similarity between Johne's Disease and human Crohn's Disease, as both are



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chronic intestinal diseases. Epidemiological studies have not established any connection between human contact with Johne's-infected animals and Crohn's. Moreover, pasteurization and proper cooking eliminate opportunities for contamination. But there is a public concern about the potential link between the two. This is why the industry needs to document success in identifying and controlling such diseases.

Biosecurity is defined as man-

agement practices which prevent introduction of disease onto the farm or its spread within the farm. Such preventive management practices begin with awareness. Unfortunately, recent surveys conducted by the National Animal Health Monitoring Service (NAHMS) indicate that about half of all dairy producers are unfamiliar with diseases such as Johne's.

NAHMS estimates that at least 22 percent of the nation's dairy herds have cows infected with Johne's. The cost is more than \$200 per cow in inventory each year, due mostly to decreased milk production and premature culling.

This disease is easy to miss unless you investigate for it. Just because you do not see it doesn't mean it isn't there. What makes the disease so challenging is that it has a long incubation period and progresses slowly. If symptoms do appear (long-lasting diarrhea and weight loss, despite good appetite), they are often confused with other illnesses. And they often occur after a stressful event such as calving, which further confuses diagnosis.

The primary route of transmis-

sion for Johne's and other diseases within a herd is fecal contamination. Biosecurity measures aimed at reducing or eliminating contamination of calves through fecal matter and colostrum are the most powerful tools available.

To prevent the spread of disease between animals on your farm:

- Cows should calve in clean, uncrowded pens, which have been sanitized between occupants.

- Feed bunks and troughs should be used for feeding and watering all stock on the farm.

- Different equipment should be used for handling feed and manure.

- Udders and teats should be cleaned thoroughly before collecting colostrum.

- Feed only colostrum from Johne's-negative dams.

Testing is an important tool, but since none of the tests available today are 100 percent accurate for identifying Johne's, consult with your veterinarian to determine if a problem exists and design an effective management plan for your farm.

When a new animal is purchased, the entire disease history

of the farm of origin is purchased along with it.

To minimize the risk of introducing disease:

- Purchase only test-negative animals from documented low-risk herds.

- When purchasing groups of animals for expansion, have your veterinarian discuss herd health records with the veterinarian of the herd of origin.

- Isolate and quarantine new animals.

- Practice thorough sanitation of facilities and require it for people coming onto your farm.

- Use a planned vaccination program as recommended by the herd veterinarian based on herd health history. Few diseases can be eradicated through treatment alone.

- For some diseases, but generally not for Johne's, vaccination programs can help manage the impact, but are not 100 percent effective.

- Strategic culling is often necessary to improve herd health and prevent re-introduction of disease.

Source: The Pennsylvania Beef Council and the National Beef Association.

**Farm-City Event
Promotes Understanding**

(Continued from Page A28)

came from a Romney/Corriedale cross, and the design is one of a kind.

Don Hoffer, crop farmer, placed the top bid of \$625 to present the shawl to his wife Shirley.

The price was the most ever paid in the event's 15-year history. The auctioned monies help pay the expenses of the banquet.

During the reception before the banquet, many commodity groups offered free samples and literature to attendees. Numerous door prizes were also awarded through a drawing.



Pennsylvania Lamb and Wool Queen Amber Shollenberger promotes the use of wool and lamb during the reception conducted at the Lebanon Valley Expo Center.

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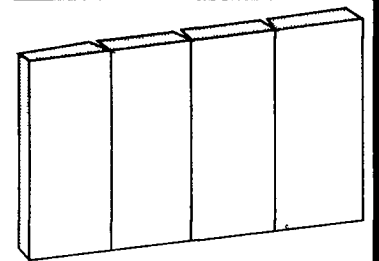
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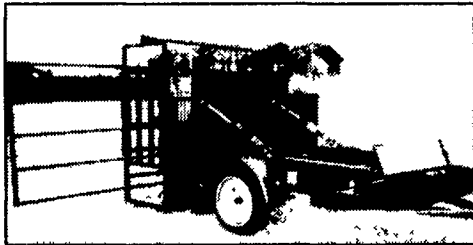
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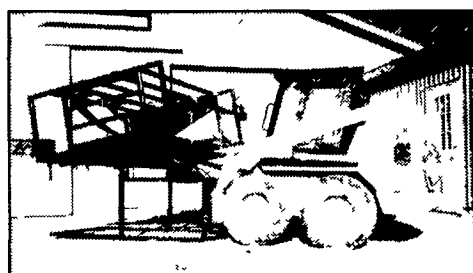
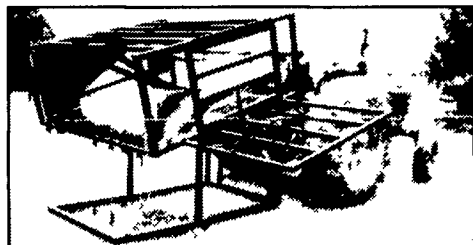
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