February 2004

# Animal Industry News Update

## from the LCES Animal Science Specialists

**Horses (Dr. Clint Depew)**

**Transporting Horses**

Transporting horses to compete in athletic events is a natural part of the horse industry and most horses adapt well to being hauled. However hauling can be quite stressful to some horses. Stressed horses are more susceptible to a variety of diseases and injuries, and stress may alter energy metabolism and affect the horse's performance.

California researchers studied the effect of transporting horses during the summer. They found that horses transported 24 hours generally lost 6% of their body weight, and recovered half of that weight within 24 hours. Muscle fatigue also was found in the transported horses, but complete recovery occurred in 24 hours. The horses' cortisol levels indicated that the horses were stressed, and they did not recover within 24 hours. Thus, they were more susceptible to infections and diseases during and after long term transport. This research emphasizes the need to minimize the stress on horses during transport.

To reduce stress when hauling, start with a healthy horse. A horse with a respiratory disease will be compromised further by hauling. Always offer water at every stop. Provide adequate ventilation and considered unloading when stopped. Feed only high quality clean hay to avoid dust in the respiratory system. Feed on a regular schedule and consider using a laxative feed such as a bran mash on nervous horses. Feeding grain to a nervous or stressed horse can cause colic. It is advisable to only feed hay to nervous horses. Respiratory problems may take 2-3 days to appear so always observe your horses closely following hauling.

**Ulcers in Horses**

Equine ulcers have become a commonly recognized problem in horses. Maryland researchers reported that 94% of Thoroughbreds in race training had gastric ulcers, and 100% of the horses raced had gastric lesions. The prevalence of ulcers in show horses has been reported at 58%. These researchers identified the following risk factors: transportation, level of exercise, changes in diet, feeding schedules, and housing.

In a Nevada study, researchers reported that the prevalence of ulcers in precompetitive horses was 17.4%. After a three day competitive event, 56.5% of the horses had ulcers. These results indicate that preparation and competition in a single event may cause ulceration. Therefore it is very important to make every effort to reduce the stress level in feeding and training programs.

Horsemen should attempt to maintain horses in as natural an environment as possible because studies have shown that ulcers can disappear within two weeks of placing a horse in a natural environment. If a horse must be stalled, feed plenty of hay to maintain good gut function. Additionally you should change the level of stress in your training program slowly. If the horse is nervous make changes in his housing, feed or training schedule to create a more comfortable and less stressful environment for the horse. A more comfortable horse will ultimately be a more successful athlete.

**Beef (Dr. Jason Rowntree)**

Howdy! My name is Jason Rowntree and I am your new Beef Specialist (Ruminant Nutrition). I look forward to meeting you throughout the year. If you have any comments in regards to the beef update or if there is anything our office can assist with please do not hesitate contacting me, my email is JRowntree@agcenter.lsu.edu and office phone number is (225) 578-3345.

**BSE and the Media**

The announcement of a BSE-positive cow on December 23, 2003, sent a shockwave throughout all levels of media. How do we as extension personnel and cattle producers handle the media? This question was addressed recently by the National Cattlemen's and Beef Association (NCBA). Five points were offered as means of addressing questions by the media. 1) **Screen media calls.** When a reporter questions you, be proactive. Ask questions about who the reporter is, who they work for, what they want to discuss and when their story must be finished, and lastly when would be a good time for you to return their call. Following the conversation, take time to organize talking points and call the reporter when you are ready for the interview. Remember that reporters have deadlines so they may ask you to return their call rather quickly. If you do not feel comfortable about the interview, refer them to your state cattlemen's association or beef university personnel. 2) **Focus on your message.** Select a few talking points and repeat them throughout the interview. Always try to direct the interviewer towards your prepared talking points. 3) **Never speculate.** The truth is first and foremost, therefore do not allow reporters to lead you into speculation or subject material you feel uncomfortable about. If you are unsure of the correct answer, simply ask the reporter if you could take time to find the correct answer and get back in touch with them. 4) **Take advantage of experts.** The internet is one source of information, however just because it's on the internet, doesn't mean it's a fact. Consult university, USDA and NCBA websites for proper information. You can again rely on university personnel and cattlemen's associations for factual information. 5) **Be Positive.** Lets face it, not all of us

are huge fans of the media, however we must be positive. We are all associated with the beef industry in one form or another and consequently must represent our industry with pride, respect and integrity. Always be kind and positive to the reporter. (Source: Beef Business Bulletin, January 8, 2004).

**Broiler Litter Banned as Cattle Feed**

On January 26, 2004, the USDA and Health and Human Services together with the FDA banned the use of broiler litter as feed for cattle. The reason for this ban is because broiler feed can contain ruminant byproduct meals. Although small, there is a percentage of feed wasted by the broilers which ultimately falls into their bedding and in turn can be unknowingly fed to cattle. No ruling on broiler litter application to pasture and crops has been made and is still currently legal. This information is available at http://www.hhs.gov/news/press/2004pres/20040126.html.

**Louisiana Master Cattle Producer Program Kicks Off**

The Louisiana Master Cattle Producer Program is a 30 hr classroom oriented program aimed at increasing the knowledge base of Louisiana cattle producers. The program debuted to the public during the annual Louisiana Cattlemen's Convention and had approximately 90 in attendance. More information on the program can be accessed at http://www.lsuagcenter.com/subjects/masterfarmer/m_cattle.asp.

## Poultry (Dr. Theresia Lavergne)

**National Situation**

Total broiler production for 2003 is estimated to be 32.6 billion pounds, which is up 1% from 2002. Wholesale price of broilers averaged 62.0 cents per pound, up 6.4 cents per pound from 2002. Total broiler exports for 2003 are estimated to be 1.7% higher than in 2002. Egg production remained unchanged in 2003, and egg prices increased 21.3 cents per dozen in 2003 (88.4 cents per dozen). Per capita consumption of eggs was similar to consumption in 2002 (252.2 eggs per person).

**National Outlook**

In 2004, broiler production is expected to increase approximately 3%. Broiler prices are expected to remain the same, or increase slightly, in 2004. The trade policy questions with Russia and Mexico have been resolved, and the broiler export market is expected to increase approximately 4%. Additionally, restrictions on exports of U.S. beef and the weakness of the U.S. dollar against other currencies may boost poultry exports. Egg production is expected to remain the same in 2004. Wholesale prices should remain similar to 2003.

**Louisiana Situation**

Almost one billion pounds of broilers were produced in 2003. The gross farm value of broilers was $596.7 million in 2003. There were 422 broiler producers in 2003. There were 1,010 egg producers 2003. Total eggs produced remained the same in 2003 (28.1 million dozen). Farm value of commercial egg production was $23.6 million in 2003.

**Louisiana Outlook**

Broiler production should follow the national outlook in 2004, which should increase. Broiler prices and net returns should remain similar to 2003. Also, wholesale egg prices should remain similar to the 2003 prices, and production should remain similar to 2003. The number of egg producers should be similar to 2003.

## Dairy (Dr. Charlie Hutchison)

**Milk Prices, MILC and Milk-Feed Ratio**

The February Class I price fell to $11.59. This is a decline of 26 cents compared to the January class I price. The price drop was not nearly as drastic as the $1.99 plunge in the January Class I price. However, it means the February Milk Income Loss Contract payment will be 95 cents — 12 cents more than the payment for January. The good news according to Phil Plourd, vice president of research with Blimling and Associates of Cottage Grove, Wis. would be that prices for March may not vary much if recent cheese-price stability continues for a couple of weeks.

The milk-feed price ratio dropped to 2.75 during January — a decline of just 0.06 points, according to the USDA's "Agricultural Prices" report. Despite the slight decrease, the ratio is still 0.35 points higher than a year ago. However, a ratio of 3.0 or higher is considered favorable for expanded milk production.

Wisconsin dairy farm families received the most money ($376 million) under the Milk Income Loss Contract program from October 2002 through the end of January 2004. The next five highest states according to the money received were New York, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, California and Michigan

Class III milk futures made some nice gains the last week of January, with most all contracts through February 2005 making double-digit advances. March through November '04 contracts are now trading in the top one-third of the 10-year price average. Through year-end, these contracts now average $13.09, nearly $1.20 above the 10-year average. Forty-pound blocks of cheddar gained 2 ½ cents this week, closing today at $1.3250. Barrels were unchanged, again closing at $1.2550. Butter also jumped 12 ¾ cents/lb. this week, closing today at $1.55.

**New Rules Strengthen Ruminant-Feed Ban**

In order to tighten the safeguards that keep BSE out of the food supply, the Food and Drug Administration announced several changes to strengthen the 1997 ruminant-feed ban. The changes include:

1. Eliminate the exemption that allows mammalian blood and blood products collected at slaughter to be fed to other ruminants as a protein source.

2. Ban the use of "poultry litter" and "plate waste" as feed ingredients for ruminants. Plate waste consists of uneaten meat and other meat scraps collected from restaurants and rendered into meat-and-bone meal

**Animal Health (Dr. Steve Nicholson)**

**January was hard on cattle**

Across the state cattle are showing the effects of a dry fall, poor forage, poor quality hay and harsh winter conditions. And, there is a long way to go. Thin cows will be slow to breed back and provide fewer calves to sell next year. We have seen a number of herds where 10% of the cows have died.

**Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE)**

USDA APHIS officials did a good job explaining the BSE situation. The most effective measure to protect cattle, the ban on feeding rendered ruminant byproduct back to ruminants, has been in place since 1997. Two important points for the public to grasp are that BSE is not a contagious disease and protective measures have been in place for years. The BSE positive cow from Canada apparently was born four months prior to the feed ban was in place. It is likely that she received feed containing infective prions at an early age before coming to this country.

**Dealing with Weak Calves and Calf Diarrhea**

Weak calves born into wet, muddy conditions may have a problem getting up, walking, and obtaining an adequate amount of milk. A weak calf may be the result of a difficult calving. A diet low in protein during the last third of pregnancy may result in a cow having a weak calf. Thin cows often produce less milk, or milk low in disease resisting antibodies.

Although not a common problem, some calves are born healthy and strong yet seem unable to locate the udder and teats. These calves are sometimes referred to as dummies by disgusted ranchers. They have to put the cow in a chute and physically train the calf to nurse.

There are other reasons that may prevent a healthy newborn calf from receiving an adequate amount of milk. A heifer may not accept her calf and allow it to suckle; the size and shape of the teats of an old cow may make it difficult for the calf to nurse; or mastitis may have destroyed the milk producing tissues in part of the udder.

Whatever the cause may be, calves that do not consume two quarts of colostrum within a few hours and perhaps a gallon within 24 hours, are at risk of dying from an infection. Failure to obtain the disease resistance provided by milk antibodies is a major reason for calf diarrhea and septicemia.

Antibiotic treatment and replacement of fluids and minerals in sick calves can be successful. Warming the calf and intravenous fluids may be life-saving.