

Animal Industry News Update

from the LCES Animal Science Specialists



Swine (Dr. Tim Page)

Making Show Pigs Out of Nursery Pigs

We have many show pig producers in the state who spend a lot of money on purchasing high quality gilts and semen to produce high-quality show pigs. They spend all that money and then drop the ball when they wean the pigs and place them in the nursery. This is the most difficult time in a pig's life – considering the stress of weaning and adjusting to a new environment and diet. Producers can spend all the money in the world on genetics and breeding, but if they neglect the weaning and nursery phase, their pigs will not develop into top-notch show pigs.

Feed quality, feed intake, feeder management and hygiene are some of the most important factors in helping a weaned pig transition into the nursery. They must have a warm, draft-free environment, a high-quality health program and a system that minimizes disease exposure. Easily accessible drinking nipples and an unlimited supply of clean, fresh water are essential to the development of a quality pig. One critical key in the development of show pigs is identifying pigs that are reluctant to begin eating after weaning. Alert producers can help teach pigs where and how to eat. They can use individual feeding options and mats to help some of them begin eating. Symptoms to watch out for in pigs that are not eating properly are: a) thin body condition b) fuzzy hair c) poor appetite d) depressed activity or alertness and e) signs of dehydration. Another important factor in maximizing feed intake in the nursery is keeping clean, quality feed in the feeders at all times throughout the nursery period. This will increase feed intake and animal weights.

Producers should not fill feeders so full that the feed gets stale and old. Feed will lose its palatability if left in the feeder too long, and pigs simply will not eat it. Adjust feeders as the pigs adapt, eat and grow. One little trick to getting pigs to eat in the beginning is to keep the feeder gates closed until the pigs are placed into the pen. Then open the gates so the feed flows into the pan and is visible. This makes pigs curious and they will investigate and usually start eating. Producers should check feeders daily to make sure they are flowing properly.

Hygiene cannot be stressed enough. Producers need to reduce pathogens in all ways possible. Use materials that are easy to clean. Smooth, nonporous surfaces are easier to clean and quicker to dry. Remove all waste and fecal material before beginning more thorough cleaning procedures. Producers need to use disinfectants as well. Pay attention to dilution rates and contact times for disinfectants. You have to plan ahead to allow for proper drying and downtime.

Producers should always be aware of climate conditions that can affect nursery pigs. Never place weaned pigs in nurseries with moist surfaces and humid environments. If nursery pigs are allowed to get wet, they may never develop into quality show pigs. There is no

point in spending all the time, effort and money on genetics, breeding and farrowing if producers are not going to spend the time, effort and money on helping pigs make it through the most stressful time of their lives, weaning and the nursery.

Tractor Safety (Dr. Tim Page)

Farm safety should be a year-round priority. Sometimes we neglect to keep it at the forefront. Agriculture can be a dangerous business if we do not take the proper safety precautions. Every year we hear about tractor accidents with our producers. We should take every opportunity to remind them in order to keep them safe. This subject is near and dear to my heart. My mother lost her leg in a tractor accident when she was 12 years old.

I found the 10 Commandments of Tractor Safety somewhere years ago. I do not remember where I got it but I thought it was time I shared it with everyone.

Make sure all tractors have fully operational rollover protective structures. Operating a tractor equipped with rollover protection and a fastened seatbelt is considered to be effective in preventing serious injury and death due to rollovers. According to the National Safety Council, if all tractors were equipped with rollover structures and a safety belt, about 350 lives would be saved annually.

10 Commandments of Tractor Safety

1. Know your tractor, the implements and how they work. Read and understand the operator's manual before operating the equipment, and keep equipment in good condition.
2. Use rollover protective structures and a seatbelt whenever and wherever applicable. If your tractor has a foldable rollover protective structure, fold it down only when absolutely necessary, restore it and lock it again as soon as possible. Do not wear the seatbelt when the rollover protective structure is folded.
3. Be familiar with your terrain and work area. Walk the area first to familiarize yourself with it, and drive safely. Use special caution on slopes, slow down for all turns and stay off the highway whenever possible.
4. Never start an engine in a closed shed or garage. Carbon monoxide in exhaust gas is colorless, odorless and deadly.
5. Always keep your power-take-off (PTO) properly shielded. Make it a habit to walk around your tractor and PTO-driven implement. Never walk over, through or between the tractor and implement, especially if either is running. The PTO rotates with enough speed and strength to kill you.
6. Keep your hitches low and always on the drawbar. Otherwise, your tractor might flip over backwards.

7. Never get off a moving tractor or leave it with its engine running. Shut it down before you leave the seat. As you can imagine, a runaway tractor can be extremely dangerous.
8. Never refuel while the engine is running or hot. In addition, do not add coolant to the radiator while the engine is hot. Hot coolant can erupt and scald.
9. Keep all children off and away from your tractor and its implements. Children are intrigued by tractors, but it is not child's play.
10. Never be in a hurry or take chances about anything you do with your tractor. Think safety first; then take your time and do it right.

Animal Health (Dr. Christine Navarre)

10 Tips for Preventing Clinical Exacerbation of Heaves in Horses

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Heaves is an asthma-like disease of horses initiated by exposure to allergens such as molds and dust, resulting in coughing, nasal discharge and difficulty breathing. In the southern United States, it occurs principally in horses housed on pasture in the summer (pasture-associated), and clinical exacerbation is often associated with high environmental temperature and humidity. In more northern areas of the United States, the disease is most often observed in horses kept in a stall (barn-associated) and is associated with poor ventilation.

- There is no cure for Heaves; however, exacerbation of clinical signs can be prevented by implementing recommended management strategies.
- If your horse has summer-pasture Heaves, it should be removed from pasture prior to the time of the conditions associated with clinical exacerbation.
- Exposure to triggering agents where the horse is housed should be eliminated or decreased. If your horse has "summer-pasture Heaves," it should be kept off pasture and the pasture grass should be kept short. If your horse has "barn-associated Heaves," it should be kept at pasture.
- The barn and stall should be well ventilated, and the amount of dust must be kept to a minimum. The horse should be kept out of the stall while unloading shavings and hay, and do not store hay on a barn loft above the horse.
- Straw and sawdust should probably be avoided. Wood shavings, shredded paper or rubber mats are better bedding alternatives.
- The stall should be cleaned well to decrease the fumes of urea/ammonia, and the horse should be moved from the stall when cleaning.
- Dusty or moldy hay should be avoided. If hay is fed, it should be soaked/submerged in water to remove the dust prior to feeding. In general, alfalfa hay is less of a

problem than grass hay for most horses. Do not allow access to round bales of hay.

- Alternative types of forage (haylage, beet pulp and hay cubes) can be fed. A complete pelleted diet (feed contains 25 percent to 30 percent fiber) works well.
- All diet changes must be done gradually to avoid colic and diarrhea.
- Treatment for Heaves will likely fail if exposure to the triggering agents is not eliminated.

Dairy (Dr. Charlie Hutchison)

Milk Prices and Profitability

The April class prices for milk are: \$17.02 per hundredweight for Class I, \$13.78/cwt for Class II, \$12.92 for Class III and \$13.73 for Class IV. Based on these prices and use over the past five years, the Uniform Blend price for April milk should be about \$16 per hundredweight plus or minus 25 cents per hundredweight. This would be about 80 cents per hundredweight lower than the Uniform Blend price in March, but \$3.53/cwt higher than the same month the previous year. The April Class I price triggered the milk portion of the MILC payment program and should result in a payment of 21 cents/cwt for April milk production.

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture's *Agricultural Prices* report, the April 2010 average U.S. all milk price received by dairy producers in the United States was 20 cents (1.4 percent) lower than previous month at \$14.60/cwt. This is the fourth consecutive month-to-month decline in the all milk price. Compared to last year, the all milk price increased \$2.70/cwt (22.7 percent). Year to date, the all milk price averaged \$15.35/cwt, up \$3.20 (26.3 percent) from the same period in 2009. Of the 23 U.S. states reported each month, Florida had the highest average all milk price for April at \$18.50/cwt. Idaho had the lowest at \$13.50/cwt.

Dairy farm profitability slipped again in April. Feed costs were about the same as March, but milk prices were lower, according to USDA's "Ag Prices" report released on May 3. The all milk price in April was estimated at \$14.60, down 20 cents from March. Meanwhile, the cost of feed required to produce 100 pounds of milk was \$6.79, up 3 cents. Corn was slightly cheaper, but hay and soybeans were a little more expensive. That left income over feed costs at \$7.81/cwt, the lowest since October 2009.

The April Consumer Confidence Index (CCI) is 57.9, up from 52.3 in March. This is the second consecutive month of increase and the highest index since September 2008. "Consumers' concerns about current business and labor market conditions eased again. And their outlook was also more positive than last month," said Lynn Franco, director of the Conference Board Consumer Research Center.

2009 USDA Report Summaries

The *Livestock Slaughter 2009 Summary* report, which estimates the numbers of animals culled in the United States, reported that commercial cattle slaughter totaled 33.3 million head in 2009. This is down 3 percent

from 2008. Dairy cattle represented 8.6 percent of the total cattle slaughtered in 2009, up 0.9 percent from 2008.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture also released the *Dairy Products 2009 Summary*. In addition to summarizing the total production of dairy products, the report identifies the number of facilities per state. For 2009, there were 1,178 facilities that manufactured one or more dairy products, compared to 1,125 plants in 2008. This is an increase of 53 facilities, or 4.7 percent. The top three states in terms of the number of facilities are Wisconsin (211 facilities), New York (112 facilities) and California (107 facilities). Regionally, the Atlantic states increased by 28 facilities (7.5 percent); the Central states increased 25 facilities (4.7 percent), and the Western states remained unchanged from 2008.

The USDA *Milk Production, Disposition and Income 2009 Summary* report revealed that 2009 cash receipts from the marketing of milk were 30.1 percent lower than 2008, totaling \$24.3 billion. Producer returns averaged \$12.93/cwt, 29.9 percent less than the prior year. Relative to the prior year, California had the largest percentage decline in cash receipts from marketing at 34.4 percent; Idaho declined 31.9 percent and New Mexico cash receipts from marketing went down 30.3 percent.

Dairy Product Production and Consumption

According to USDA's *Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry Outlook* report, February 2010 commercial disappearance of total cheese was reported at 782 million pounds, 9.4 million pounds (1.2 percent) less than one year ago; however, consumption of total cheese year to date is 23.6 million pounds (1.5 percent) higher than the same period in 2009. American cheese consumption was reported at 309 million pounds, down 11.6 million pounds (3.6 percent) from last February. Year-to-date American cheese consumption declined 29 million pounds (4.2 percent) from year-ago levels. Increased pizza sales have driven consumption of the other than American cheese category. February other than American cheese was estimated at 473 million pounds, up 2.2 million pounds (0.5 percent) from the same month in 2009. Consumption for January through February increased 52.7 million pounds (5.7 percent) when compared to the corresponding period last year. February butter usage was 110 million pounds, a decline of 7.2 million pounds (6.2 percent) from the same month in 2009. Year-to-date butter consumption was 2.9 million pounds (1.3 percent) more than the corresponding period in 2009.

On May 3, 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture released the monthly *Dairy Products* report for March 2010. Total cheese production was 890.1 million pounds, up 19.6 million pounds (2.3 percent) compared to March 2009. American cheese production declined to 362.3 million pounds, down 2.1 million pounds (0.6 percent) from March 2009; however, cheddar cheese production increased from prior year, up 2.3 million pounds (0.8 percent) to 281.6 million pounds. Italian cheese production increased 21 million pounds (5.8

percent) to 380.4 million pounds. Butter production was reported at 141.1 million pounds, 6.3 million pounds (4.3 percent) less than the prior year. Butter production has declined for eight consecutive months. Nonfat dry milk production of 137.5 million pounds increased 216,000 pounds (0.2 percent) from March 2009.

Dairy Cattle Slaughter

Dairy producers sent the highest amount of cattle to slaughter during the month of March on a year-over-year comparison since 2000. It also was the largest monthly slaughter since June 2009. Increasing cull cow prices have been a factor in higher culling rates.

USDA's Cow Slaughter report stated that 54,000 dairy cows were slaughtered for the week ending April 24. This is an increase of 3,900 head (7.8 percent) from the prior year and the seventh consecutive year-over-year increase in weekly slaughter. From the prior week, slaughter declined slightly, down 800 head (1.5 percent). Year-to-date cow slaughter was reported at 936,500 head, down 39,700 head (4.1 percent) from the same period last year; however, over the past 10 weeks, cumulative slaughter is up 21,500 head (4 percent) from the same period in 2009.

Poultry (Dr. Theresia Lavergne) **Pro-Animal Agriculture Groups**

It is important for poultry (and livestock) producers to know there are organizations that are "aggressive" advocates for modern animal agriculture.

One of the influential organizations is the Animal Agriculture Alliance (the Alliance). The Alliance is a voice that promotes and educates consumers on the role animal agriculture plays in providing a safe, high-quality food supply to the United States and to the world. The Alliance was formed in 1987 and focuses on bringing "science-based" information to the consumer. The roles of the Alliance are: educator, resource of information, monitor of current and emerging animal agriculture issues, responder to issues as requested by members, promoter of animal care guidelines and provider of workshops for media.

The Alliance is a tax-exempt organization that is funded by its founding members, including poultry and livestock trade associations, producers, animal agriculture input companies, animal health companies, retailers and consumers.

The Alliance is making a difference by using social networking websites to get its message out. Those messages can be followed on Facebook and Twitter. Also, more information on the Alliance can be found at www.animalagalliance.org.

Another group that functions to "keep an eye on the Humane Society of the United States" (a prominent animal activist group) is humanewatch.org. This organization uses its website and social networking websites (Facebook and Twitter) to inform the public on the actions of the Humane Society, including lawsuits the Humane Society is filing and those being filed against it. The Humane Society is the organization that filed

California's "Proposition 2," as well as similar bills in other states.

There are pro-animal agriculture voices out there. They are providing the "science-based" message to the consumer, and through social networking the message can be easy to find!

A Positive Poultry Industry Economy Predicted for 2010!

Economists have predicted that 2010 will be a profitable year for broiler producers. And poultry companies are demonstrating this by their actions.

Sanderson Farms is expanding its production by building a new complex in Kingston, N.C., as well as planning another new complex in North Carolina. Also, Pilgrim's Pride has announced it will re-open its complex in Douglas, Ga., by January 2011 and two other idled complexes by mid-2011 and 2012.

Beef (Dr. Karl Harborth)

Howdy, Louisiana! I am Dr. Karl Harborth, your new extension beef specialist. So you can get to know me a little better; I'll tell you a few things.

I was raised in south central Texas on a cattle and hay operation just northeast of San Antonio. I earned a B.S. in animal science from Texas A&M University in 1999. After earning my bachelor's degree, I interned and worked at the San Antonio Livestock Exposition for two years. I then returned to Texas A&M University, where I earned an M.S. in animal science focused on beef cattle management in 2003. Upon completion of my master's degree, I moved to Manhattan, Kan., and I earned my Ph.D. in ruminant nutrition from Kansas State University in 2006. Then I accepted a job within the K-State Research and Extension system as its southeast area livestock specialist and worked there for the past three years.

I look forward to the challenge of my new job with the LSU AgCenter, and I am excited to have been given this opportunity to work for the beef producers of Louisiana. If you have question or need assistance, feel free to contact me.

Preparing the Cow Herd for the Breeding Season

As I have traveled through parts of the state, I have seen the effect of this past winter on many cow herds. There are a greater-than-average number of cows that are in borderline to poor condition.

Body condition can be directly associated with post-partum intervals or the number of cows bred at the end of the breeding season. The poorer the body condition the longer the post-partum interval and the fewer the number of cows that will be bred. The standard rule of thumb is for a cow to be in average condition at calving. If the cow was not in average to good condition by calving, it may be at risk of not being rebred at all depending on your calving season parameters. This issue, coupled with the dry spring conditions in many parts of the state, may contribute to an increase in the number of open cows this fall.

One management practice that could be implemented to help alleviate this situation is early weaning. The term early weaning encompasses a wide range of ages, but, in general, covers weaning before a time we consider to be normal – 205 days of age. Research has shown early weaning is a viable practice when the situation dictates it to be necessary. In order to affect conception rates, calves should be weaned at 45 - 60 days of age to give cows time to gain body condition ahead of the breeding season. Calves can be weaned at any time after this if the situation dictates so or the need arises.

A research study conducted by Oklahoma State University reported an 81 to 100 percent increase in conception rates of mature cows with calves weaned at six to eight weeks, and an increase of 38 percent in first calf heifers managed the same way. These cows were reported to be average condition and, thus, we might expect the response from poor condition cows to be higher. A study I conducted at Kansas State University indicated the benefits of early weaning also can be seen in the subsequent winter months as cows that are early weaned may need 30 percent less supplemental feed during the winter months compared to those cows that were weaned normally.

If your herd is in extremely poor condition, getting them in shape for breeding should be a priority, so you can prevent an increase in open cows this fall. Early weaning is a practice that can be used in these extreme circumstances. It is not a practice that should be used by all producers, since it will increase management needs and feeding requirements. For more information on managing the beef herd for early weaning, go to: <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-1928/ANSI-3264web.pdf>.