



Keeping Show Animals Healthy



Christine B. Navarre, DVM

CATTLE

Chronic Bloat

One of the most common conditions occurring in show cattle is chronic bloat. Common feeding regimes of show animals, which include large amounts of high carbohydrate containing feeds with limited roughage, can cause rumentitis and lead to secondary chronic bloat problems. The bloat is usually mild, and if caught early enough, is not usually life threatening. Most of the time, a slight correction of the diet by adding hay, and possibly ionophores, will decrease chronic bloat problems. In some cases, more aggressive treatment is needed by a veterinarian.

Indigestion/Grain Overload

The rush to add size and condition to show animals tempts many exhibitors to overfeed animals, or not allow proper time for diet adaptation. This can lead to mild cases of indigestion or severe cases of grain overload. Exhibitors can help prevent this by collecting information on proper feeding of livestock and by working with a nutritionist or veterinarian to develop feeding regimes suitable for show animals.

Lameness

Along with the above digestive problems that occur from over or improper feeding, laminitis (founder) and inflammation of growth plates and joints can occur. Laminitis is usually chronic and leads to hoof overgrowth, white-line disease, hoof abscesses and hoof cracks. These may or may not cause lameness. Routine hoof care and trimming are needed to prevent lameness in these cases. Acute, severe laminitis is less common in cattle than horses, but does occur and should be treated promptly. Enlargement of the growth plates or joints can cause lameness, but is usually a cosmetic problem. Draining fluid from enlarged joints is not recommended; it only alleviates the problem temporarily, and risks causing infection in the joint, which is very serious. Exercise and decreasing protein in the diet sometimes help with joint enlargement.

Respiratory Disease

Transport and commingling of livestock can lead to outbreaks of respiratory disease. Animals traveling to shows should be adequately vaccinated for respiratory disease pathogens, and stress should be minimized. Pretreating animals with antibiotics is not effective and risks causing meat residues.

Miscellaneous issues

Diarrhea is common in stressed ruminants, so it's not uncommon for show calves to get a loose stool. If the animal is eating and drinking and otherwise normal, it's best not to treat them. There is no specific treatment for any cause of diarrhea in cattle and many medications actually make the diarrhea worse. The underlying disease must be treated then the diarrhea will clear up.

Caution should be used when exhibitors try to treat sick animals themselves. Sometimes these treatments can be harmful. Balling gun/dose syringe injuries can cause damage to the throat area, causing animals to stop eating, or if severe, have difficulty breathing. A less common but potentially deadly mistake is to withhold water from animals, then let them drink large amounts to increase fill. This can

cause diarrhea, and, if severe, cause salt toxicity or acute anemia, both of which can be deadly. It is also against show rules.

SHEEP and GOATS

Copper Toxicosis

Sheep are highly susceptible to copper toxicosis and, as such, should be fed diets and salt/mineral mixes formulated especially for sheep. Stress usually induces the acute manifestations of a chronic accumulation of copper, so the show environment can bring on this disease. The signs are depression, high fever, port-wine colored urine, and yellow gums. This disease is usually fatal despite treatment, so prevention is critical.

Fatty Liver/Pregnancy Toxemia

Meat goats, particularly the Boer breed, are popular show animals. These show goats are commonly over-conditioned, which can lead to fatty liver syndrome and liver failure during times of stress. Also, when the over-conditioned females become pregnant, pregnancy toxemia can occur in late gestation. Keeping animals in proper body condition, slow weight loss to more acceptable body conditions, and proper gestational nutrition are important to prevent these problems.

SWINE

Contagious Viral Diseases

The most common problems seen in show pigs are Swine Flu and Transmissible Gastroenteritis (TGE). Most cases are mild and self-limiting, but may require supportive care.

BIOSECURITY

Show animals can potentially bring contagious pathogens back to the home farm, so proper post-show quarantine for 30 days is recommended. Even if the show animals appear healthy, they can be shedding diseases that can cause pneumonia, diarrhea and abortions. Showing pregnant female cattle is risky. If exposed to Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD), these cattle can later give birth to a persistently infected calf, which sheds this virus to the herd, and can lead to several disease syndromes. Consult a local veterinarian about preventing introduction of BVD to cattle herds.

PRUDENT DRUG USE

If an animal becomes sick and needs therapy, documentation is important. Parents and veterinarians should take the lead in teaching junior exhibitors proper drug use and handling and meat quality assurance guidelines. For more information, go to https://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/livestock/animal_health/understandingdruguseregulationsinfoodproducinganimals

January 2019



For the latest research-based information visit our website at www.LSUAgCenter.com