May 2000

Animal Industry News Update

from the LCES Animal Science Division

Beef

Things Change (Dr. Hollis Chapman): A recent picture of cattle in a Kansas feedlot reminded me that things change. The cattle had “tipped” horns. This is an alternative to surgical or complete dehorning, and is accepted by a segment of the industry because it is less stressful. However, if calves are headed to special sales, or video sales, they should continue to be dehorned.

Along the same line, young bull calves (450 pounds and under) bring the same price as steers at local auctions. Also, bull calves are slightly heavier than steer calves of the same age. However, this is not an industry recommendation because of product quality and overall efficiency

Note: The 2000 Beef Improvement Federation Meeting will be held in Wichita, Kansas from July 12-15. For information, contact Todd (toddj@kla.org) or Twig (twig@kus.edu).

New Grades for Cattle (Dr. Ron Del Vecchio): The USDA and researchers at Colorado Sate University have devised changes in the cattle grading standards currently being used. There will be a gradual changeover to the new standards beginning October 1, 2000.

The current United States Standards for Grades of Feeder Cattle were adopted September 2, 1979, and do not accurately reflect advances made in carcass size through the use of growth implants and better feed management. Feeder cattle grades are based on differences in frame size and muscle thickness. The current grades recognize three frame size grades (small, medium, and large) and three muscle thickness grades (No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3).

Based upon the old standards, steers who fit the medium frame score were expected to weigh between 1,000 and 1,200 pounds when they reached choice grade. However, research data indicate that steers were actually 1,000 to 1,250 pounds at choice.

The old standards of frame measurement weights have been raised from 50 to 100 pounds in steers, and 150 pounds in heifers of all frame scores. Further, changes being made will incorporate four muscle thickness grades, rather than three, to better reflect the current supply of feeder cattle and to allow for more specific descriptions of cattle. These changes mean it will soon be harder to make top/good grades in the cattle industry. (Source: The Weekly Livestock Reporter, April 27, 2000).

Dairy (Dr. Charlie Hutchison)

Wisconsin politicians never seem to get it right: Politicians have introduced a bill to extend dairy price supports for two years and to raise the support price to $12.50/cwt. Extending is good, but raising the price to $12.50 would be a killer. There are a lot of western dairy farmers who can produce milk for $11.00/cwt. These producers would have a built-in incentive to expand. The governmental cost of such a program could be the same as it was back in the 1980's and the price support system would never see the light of day again. Federal government expenditures on dairy will exceed $500 million this year according to USDA. The expenditures include price supports, market loss payments and Dairy Export Incentive Program subsidies. Last year, the government spent $480 million on dairy. Though these are large numbers, they only represent 2.5% of all government ag spending, and one-fourth of what was spent in the early 1980s on dairy.

Sen. Russ Feingold (D., Wis.) and Sen. Herb Kohl (D., Wis.) along with Rep. David Obey (D., Wis.) also want to target $500 million in new dairy market loss payments to smaller producers. Payments would be capped at $14,500 per farm (150 cows) for the Fiscal Year 2001, starting October 1, 2000. (Source: Georgia Dairy Fax March/April Issue, Bill Thomas).

Swine (Dr. Tim Page)

Pig Respiratory Health: There has been a significant increase in outbreaks of chronic respiratory diseases in pigs over the last two years. These increases in respiratory problems may be related to Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). In reality, there are very few remaining swine herds in the United States that have not been exposed to PRRS.

Some producers are vaccinating for PRRS. Most producers have learned how to manage and control PRRS by slowly building up the pig's immune system naturally. Most reports suggest that 12 to 18 months are needed to really get control of the disease in a swineherd.

As a result of these increases in pig respiratory problems, I am strongly recommending the following (these are 'rules of thumb', whenever in doubt, consult a veterinarian):

1. Vaccinate all pigs as soon as you purchase them. [Pleuroguard 4 (Pfizer) or RespiSure (SmithKline Beacham)]
2. Re-vaccinate with a booster shot about 2-3 weeks later.
3. Treat acute cases of respiratory problems with the following: a) Tylan 200 in one side of the neck and penicillin in the other side (depending on the severity of the symptoms, usually treat for 3-4 days in a row).
4. On any pig operation that has gilts or sows: Quarantine all newly purchased pigs for at least 60 days.

As always, do not recommend any biological that is not approved for swine, and remind your clientele about withdrawal times on all medications, dewormers and feed additives.

Poultry (Dr. Theresia Lavergne)

The United Egg Producers (UEP) is developing new animal management practices, for egg producers. The UEP guidelines are voluntary. UEP first recommended guidelines in 1983, and has decided to reconsider their recommendations in light of new scientific and social trends. The following management practices will be addressed: crowding (increased cage space), suppressed social behavior, beak trimming, and molting. Now is the time to be considering new management practices. The following are indications of this: pressure from animal rights activists, a ban on battery cages in the European Union, bills are being introduced into legislature (ie, prohibition of forced or induced molting in California), and McDonald's Corp. is writing animal welfare guidelines for all suppliers of animal-derived products. (Source: *Feedstuffs*, May 1, 2000)

Sheep (Dr. Terry Dumas)

Under the Market Loss Assistance Program, the United States House and Senate approved financial assistance to wool producers. In 1999, wool prices reached the lowest price in history when adjusted for inflation. Direct payments for wool producers will be available after October 1, 2000, for the 1999 wool clip. About $11 million is expected to be available. In addition, the government has developed a 3-year, $100 million Lamb Industry Assistance package. This package includes 1) direct payments for producers and feeders, 2) animal health, 3) marketing and promotion, and 4) government purchases of excess lamb meat. Also, President Clinton has taken action against cheap imports by placing tariffs on imports from Australia and New Zealand.

On another note, U.S. sheep and goat producers incurred $20 million in losses due to predators during 1999. Losses of sheep and lambs totaled $16.5 million and goats $3.4 million.

More information on these topics can be obtained from the American Sheep Industry Association (www.sheepusa.org and www.americanwool.org and www.lambchef.com).

Animal Health (Dr. Steve Nicholson)

Drought in Southeast and River Parishes: This year, Anthrax (charbon) could reappear south of Baton Rouge. The multi-parish outbreak of 1971 (June-August), followed heavy rains at the end of a dry spring. At that time, many years had passed since the last outbreak, and vaccination of livestock had been all but forgotten. The lag-time between recognition of the disease, notification of producers, vaccination, and development of adequate immunity was enough time for more than 700 confirmed cases in 11 parishes. Two veterinarians even developed carbuncles on their arms from exposure to infective carcass materials. The vaccine is a live organism, will not cause the disease, and is inactivated by antibiotics. Deaths stop 8 days after vaccination of healthy animals.