

August
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Animal Industry News Update

from the LCES Animal Science Specialists



Animal Health (Dr. Steve Nicholson)

Plant Poisons

Cocklebur poisoning in calves

Two to three month-old beef calves were found down or dead in the pasture with rest of herd. A veterinarian necropsied a calf and submitted samples to a diagnostic lab. The pathologist reported that liver lesions were those of acute liver failure caused by the toxins in cocklebur. Stomach contents were examined and the toxic two-leaf stage of cocklebur was identified.

Cattle died from emphysema of the lungs

Yearling heifers were turned in to graze a field where seed sweet potatoes were uncovered. Within a few days some of the heifers developed harsh, labored breathing. A veterinarian necropsied one dead heifer and saw extensive lung emphysema caused by toxins in mold damaged sweet potatoes. A similar case occurred in the spring when stored sweet potatoes were fed to cattle. Treatment is limited to anti-inflammatory drugs.

Sicklepod and senna bean poisoning

Traveling about we have noticed many pastures containing *Senna obtusifolia* in central and south Louisiana. The more toxic *Senna occidentalis* is less prevalent, often confined to holding pens and disturbed sites. These plants contain a muscle poison that causes cattle to become "downers" that seldom recover. Weanlings and yearlings often are victims of these weeds in late summer and fall.

Other plants are potential problems in late summer, fall

Lantana is a highly toxic ornamental dispersed along fence lines by birds that eat the fruit. Found statewide, lantana is common to canal banks in coastal parishes.

Tung oil trees are highly toxic and may become available as a result of storm damage.

Is there a big acorn crop on trees in your woods pastures?

Perilla mint will be causing lung emphysema in some herds in August and September.

Carbohydrate overload

A large self feeder used for creep feeding contained grain dust pellets, a highly fermentable source of carbohydrate or starch. A gate left open allowed the cow herd to get to the feeder. The cattle ate an unknown volume of the feed and developed acute acidosis. Diarrhea, bloat, and dehydration killed several.

Dairy (Dr. Charlie Hutchison)

Milk Prices

Finally some good news to report concerning milk prices! The Class I price for August climbed to \$10.97, which was a \$1.20 over July. This marks the first time in 18 months that the Class I price has surpassed the level it was a year earlier. However, because of the increase, the Milk Income Loss Contract payment for August slips 54 cents to \$1.22/cwt. According to Phil Plourd (Vice President of Research with Blimling and Associates, in Cottage Grove, Wisconsin), if the cheese market maintains its current levels — \$1.50 for blocks and \$1.45 for barrels — you can look for an even higher September Class I price. USDA is forecasting all-milk prices will range between \$11.90 and \$12.30 in the third quarter, and from \$12.05 to \$12.75 in the fourth quarter. For the year, expect the all-milk price to be between \$11.60 and \$11.90, compared to last year's \$12.11 average. Unfortunately, USDA is predicting the all-milk price for the first-quarter of 2004 to range from \$11.10 to \$12.10.

Milk Production and Cow Numbers

According to the USDA's June "Milk Production" report, milk output totaled 12.3 billion pounds in the top-20 dairy states — down 0.1% from a year ago. Therefore, for the second month in a row, milk production fell below the year-ago levels— but just barely.

Even though the drop in milk production was very little for May (0.4%) and June (0.1%), the decline in cow numbers during June is very encouraging to help jumpstart milk prices upward. Cow numbers decreased by 11,000 head from May to June, and by 10,000 head compared to a year ago. This marks the first time this year that cow numbers have fallen below year-ago levels. Also, according to the USDA's "Livestock Slaughter" report, dairy cow slaughter was up 18,000 head in June compared to a year ago. That would amount to a 9.0% increase in the dairy cow slaughter rate. Also, year-to-date, cow slaughter is running 12% ahead of 2002. However, keep an eye on the California dairy industry because milk production in June was still up 0.2% and cow numbers are still running 46,000 head ahead of year-earlier levels, but there were 1,000 fewer head than the previous month. Milk production per cow is the real key to California and U.S. milk production. For the month of June, California cows produced 45 lb. less per head than last year. The top-20-state net drop in production of 15 million lb in June would have been wiped out if California cows had produced just 9 lb. per head more this June.

CWT Launches August 1

National Milk's Cooperatives Working Together

program began accepting bids for its herd retirement and market reduction programs on August 1st. The program is funded by a nickel/cwt voluntary assessment. The goal of the slimmed down CWT program is to reduce milk supplies by 1.2 billion lb. over the next 12 months. Forty-five percent of that will come through herd retirements, 10% through marketing reductions, and 35% through subsidized exports. The remaining 10% will be allocated among these programs as conditions warrant, says National Milk CEO Jerry Kozak. For information, go to www.nmpf.org.

Poultry (Dr. Theresia Lavergne)

Poultry Growers are volunteering to improve environmental management

A recent survey by the National Chicken Council (NCC) found that U.S. poultry growers are voluntarily improving the environmental management on their farms. The NCC reports that 83% of contract-grower farms and 97.2% of company-owned farms have environmental management plans in place or have applied for plans. This volunteer program encourages growers to use their litter in an environmentally friendly manner. Each plan is tailored specifically to each grower's operation. The plans take into consideration litter and soil samples in order to permit crops to uptake litter nutrients. Additionally, the survey found that almost half of poultry companies are reducing the amount of phosphorus in their feed, as well as finding alternative uses for litter. (Feedstuffs, August 4, 2003)

Salmonella Vaccine

Scientists with the USDA Agriculture Research Service (ARS) have developed a vaccine that makes hens less likely to transmit Salmonella enteritidis into their eggs. Thus, people who eat raw or undercooked eggs have a reduced chance of contracting salmonellosis (i.e., nausea, vomiting, and severe diarrhea). Furthermore, scientists found that hens inoculated with the vaccine shed 10-40% less Salmonella enteritidis in their feces, which helps reduce the spread of infection in flocks. The ARS is seeking a patent for this experimental vaccine. (FASS Track, 8/4)