



DR. MARTIN MISENER DR. MURRAY RUNSTEDLER DR. PAUL SOSTAR
DR. ANDREW MACLEOD DR. JOHN TOKARZ DR. CHRISTINA MOHOS
DR. JENNIFER BROWN DR. KELLY HAEZLE DR. NIKKI WARMINGTON

3860 Manser Road, Linwood, Ontario N0B 2A0 (519) 698-2610
1-800-663-2941 Fax (519) 698-2081
linwoodvet@linwoodvet.ca

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Swine

LOCAL VETERINARIAN ENCOURAGES CANADIAN FAMILIES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR THE PORK INDUSTRY.

A TV public service announcement is asking Canadian families to make a difference by enjoying safe, wholesome, economical pork products. The main message, “You Can Make a Difference – Put Pork on Your Fork”, is intended to support farm families in the Canadian pork industry that are in crisis.

Our own Dr. Martin Misener, has stepped up to the plate with his own money and paid for the production and media for a 30 second TV advertisement. He wants to make a difference and is asking consumers to make a difference by buying and enjoying pork products year round.

The pork industry has been suffering under difficult financial conditions for almost three years and needs some good news! Hog prices have been low and were starting to recover when misinformation about the H1N1 virus got into the news and deterred some consumers from buying and consuming pork. Farm families are being forced to leave the industry with devastating impacts on their families’ lives.

“There has been a deafening silence on the promotional front during these hard times” said Dr. Misener, “and the commercial was produced to help break that silence.”

In the public service announcement Dr. Misener appeals to Canadian families to help one another. “Just by choosing pork more often at the grocery store, Canadians are reaching out to other families in the Canadian pork industry,” he said. Targeted primarily to the food shopper and decision maker, females between 25 and 45 years of age with families, Dr. Misener’s message is a call to action for all Canadians.

Dr. Misener also expresses the hope that this public service announcement will “bolster the morale of pork producers when they see that someone has stepped up to make a difference.”

The campaign will run in southwestern Ontario from Windsor through Toronto from late July to late August. The announcement also appears on YouTube.

Bovine

Pregnancy rate is a measurement of the effectiveness of your herd’s reproductive program. Recent research has calculated the value of increasing your herd’s pregnancy rate at \$66 per point per cow per year. This means that if you were able to increase your pregnancy rate by 2% in a 30 cow herd, you would realize an increase of \$3960. A good working target for many herds is a pregnancy rate of 20%. At this level you can anticipate having sufficient numbers of fresh animals to meet milk production requirements and enough replacement animals to allow adequate culling within most herds and also to market some additional animals. With a provincial average of approximately 14%, most herds can strive to increase their pregnancy rates slightly.

Pregnancy rate is the product of heat detection rate and conception rate. With good AI technique and quality semen, we should anticipate conception rate to remain reasonably consistent. Many farmers can easily increase pregnancy rate by better heat detection and AI submission. Ovsynch breeding programs or other synchronized breeding programs when used in a regimented and scheduled fashion sees more cows get bred and can increase pregnancy rate, resulting in the advantages described above.

Equine

Heaves/COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease)

Heaves is a respiratory disease of horses caused by a narrowing of the small airways in the lungs caused by inflammation and mucus accumulation. The end result is a trapping of air in the lungs. Heaves results in chronic coughing, decreased exercise tolerance, difficulty breathing and abnormal lung sounds.

Most evidence shows that Heaves is caused by an allergic reaction in the lungs after exposure to dusts and molds. In Canada, most horses that are affected are kept in stables. Signs do not become obvious until a large number of airways are affected and therefore, many more horses are probably affected than is recognized. Common risk factors for the occurrence of clinical signs are exposure to poorly cured, moldy or dusty feeds, confinement to a stable environment, inadequate stable ventilation, straw bedding and being 6 years of age or older.

When a horse is affected, the small airways are narrowed so horses will experience increased difficulty in pulling air into the lungs and pushing it out again. Severely affected animals are seen to contract the muscles of the abdominal wall during exhalation causing the floor of the abdominal wall to lift up at the very end of exhalation. This abdominal lift requires extra effort of some of the muscles of the abdomen. These muscles may enlarge visibly causing what is known as a "heave line". Another consequence of this disease may be bleeding into the lungs or Exercise Induced Pulmonary Hemorrhage (EIPH). The disease can also progress to permanent, irreversible damage in some areas of the lung.

The best treatment for Heaves is a change from the environment that is causing the disease, and elimination of exposure to dusts and mold. Unless this is done, all other treatments will not work. The best environment for an affected horse is on pasture. Cubed roughage should also be fed (or at least soaked hay). Attempting to keep horses with Heaves indoors requires well ventilated stalls bedded with shredded paper, peat or high quality shavings. Feeding horses off the floor helps the horse drain exudates (fluids) from the lungs.

Drug treatment for horses centers on corticosteroids and bronchodilators. Corticosteroids are used to decrease inflammation in the airways and are usually given for 2-3 weeks. Bronchodilators are intended to open the airways to ease breathing and are meant for short-term use or during an episode. These drugs are mostly given by injection or by mouth. Recently, inhalation therapy is being used for horses and has had great success.

Heaves is common when horses are kept in stalls, bedded on straw and fed hay. To prevent the disease, turn your horse out as much as possible, or maintain on pasture. Hay baled at 15-20% moisture and carefully stored will contain little dust and few spores. Horses fed this sort of roughage, all of their lives, should have few problems with heaves. On the other hand, hay baled with a moisture content of 20% or greater may become contaminated with the types of moulds that have been shown to result in heaves.

Please remember our office hours on September 7, 2009 are from 7:00 am to 12:00 noon due to the Labour Day Holiday.