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FEBRUARY 2006 NEWSLETTER

LINWOOD AGRICULTURE INFORMATION DAY– Tuesday, February 14, 2006

Once again we are happy to be continuing our annual agriculture and information day along with Jones Feed Mill on Tuesday, February 14, 2006 from 9-5 at the new Linwood Community Centre. If you need to arrange transportation, please contact Jones Feed Mill at 698-2082 to make arrangements.

We are going to have speakers at our Agriculture Day this year:

1. From 10:00 am – 10:30 am Dr. Jodi Kendrew – Equine Wound Management
2. 10:30am – 11:00am – Dan Ferguson – Coordinator, Quality Starts Here Program – Ontario Cattlemen
3. 11:00pm – 11:30pm – Dr. Andrew MacLeod – Reproductive Programs In Dairy Cattle
4. 1:30pm – 2:00pm – Arnie Frey – Swine Producer – “Managing the Nursery”
5. 2:00pm – 2:30pm – Dr. Martin Misener – Sustainable Pig Farming
6. 2:30pm – 3:00pm – Patrick O’Neil – Ontario Pork “Market Opportunities and Market Outlook”

We are confident that you will get some good information and look forward to some input from you for next year’s plans.

SWINE

We are excited at the early response to last month’s nursery proposal. Unfortunately we have not been able to call everyone who has expressed interest. What we are doing is making a list of producers that want more information and we will update those producers with specific opportunities as we get a little further along. The goals are simple; we hope to see some farmers build small (1200 space) nursery buildings. Have these farms capture more income from pig production than they are currently making and provide all in all out by site pig flow opportunities for larger sow farms. We urge any interested producers to add their name to the list. This in no way results in commitment to anything other than getting more information.

<u>Key opportunities for 2006</u>

We often wish that we could accurately predict high and low market prices and use those predictions to our advantage. In the end they are however only predictions. The crystal ball says December 2006 hogs could be as low as $98/ckg. From a health management standpoint then it makes sense to plan depops around this low market. If diseases are causing significant losses and other interventions have not worked this may be one of the best years to depop. If your last farrowings are in June or July you should miss shipping in the December-January market. That means you stop breeding in February or March. If you decide to depop your herd please call for a consult so we can help maximize your chances of a successful outcome. There are a lot of things that can be overlooked during a depop–repop and it is demoralizing and expensive to have it fail.

Partial depops are also very effective in improving the overall health of swine herds. The summer months are the best time to plan for a partial depop. We have carried out this program on a number of herds by emptying weaner pig inventory and a couple weanings worth of pigs. In a few herds we have moved pregnant sow inventory or planning a breeding gap to also empty the farrowing crates. If projected pig price is accurate then incorporating a planned breeding gap to empty crates in June would make good financial sense and enhance the success rate of a partial depop.

CALF MANAGEMENT

Dr. Neil Anderson from OMAF has communicated a great deal with calf specialists from Finland and thoroughly investigated the idea of feeding Acidic Milk with Formic Acid to calves. This is an old idea with newly found enthusiasm and one that I am looking for a few enthusiastic farmers to try. Why should you try? First of all, I am hoping that it reduces the severity and amount of scours between 7 and 10 days of age. Secondly, I am still looking for ways to get more milk into calves and improve growth rates in the very young dairy calf. Thirdly, I would like it to be cost effective and create no more labour than you are currently using. Requirements are, a desire to make it work and a herd large enough to feed calves in two groups. The first group would be calves in the first week of life up to 3 to 4 weeks of age. The second group would be older calves up to weaning. I have more detailed information and a farm in the area that could be visited as an example of how it can work.

PS This can be used for lambs and kids for dairy sheep and goat farms.

COW/CALF

It is the end of January and the warm temperatures and rain make it feel like March. So, I hope that you have a lot of straw because we are going to need it. Not too much has changed on the calving front, other than the calves are definitely back to their old pre-BSE prices. Just a few reminders to help with herd health.

- Have at least two to three groups.
    a. Those cows to calve.
    b. Those cows that have calved.
    c. Those cows calving and just calved to ensure calves are sucking properly before going out with a bigger group.
- Ensure an ability to restrain a calving cow so that no one gets injured.
- Once a heifer starts to calve, check that everything is normal within one to two hours, if no feet are showing do a vaginal exam with clean gloves, lube and hibitane soap.
- Once a cow starts to calve, check that everything is normal after one to two hours.
- Remember clean cows and teats, plus good colostral intake is essential for excellent calf health. Work hard to minimize “manure meals”
- Always treat newborns with clean hands, clothes and boots. Treat sick animals after handling newborns not before.
- If tubing calves – one calf tube feeder for newborns, one for sick calves. Clean out each one really well and replace them before you really want to.

DAIRY

Pfizer has once again come out with a Dairy Plus program to reward dairy farmers for using Pfizer products while also helping add value to your operation. The Dairy Plus program is a bit different this year but remains committed to supporting your ongoing health management initiatives. In summary, in exchange for purchasing $1000 or more (before taxes) of Pfizer products between February 1, 2006 and June 30, 2006, producers will receive up to 10% of the total purchase as a payment to be used for selected health investigations such as udder health, disease investigation, reproductive management or nutritional analysis. By using these services in conjunction with Pfizer products it is hoped we can all work towards new benchmarks in health and productivity.

EQUINE

Mares: Many mares in the country are approaching foaling. If you are moving your brood mare prior to foaling, try to do so 4 to 6 weeks before her due date. This allows her to adjust to her new environment as well as to develop immunity to the local micro organisms. Ensure that the area is clean and well bedded with straw (not shavings). Pre-foaling vaccinations can be done 2 to 8 weeks prior to foaling and should include a tetanus toxoid to protect the mare during foaling. Other vaccines can be given to boost colostrum antibody levels to protect the foal. West Nile Virus vaccine is commonly given as foals are more susceptible to the virus than adult horses and vaccination of the foal is expensive as it requires multiple doses. Other examples of pre-foaling vaccinations are flu/rhino, strangles and sleeping sickness. Once the foal is born, the most important consideration is colostrum ingestion. Colostrum is the mare's milk that is produced in the first 24 hours post foaling. It is high in antibodies which the foal absorbs through its intestine after ingestion. Foals who do not drink or ingest adequate levels of colostrum within 24 hours (ideally 6 to 8 hours) are at a massive disadvantage as their immune system cannot respond to bacteria or viruses. These foals are termed "Failure of Passive Transfer (FPT). This is the primary underlying cause of infection in new born foals.
This is tested for with a blood sample and can be treated with a plasma transfer.

Give new foals a foal kit which includes Vitamin E/selenium (to prevent white muscle disease), tetanus antitoxin (to protect foal from lockjaw – this is not the same as tetanus vaccination) and an antibiotic injection (Tribrissen) which is given in case the foal is exposed to bacteria during the birthing process. Keep your foal kits on hand prior to foaling and in the refrigerator.

Umbilical cord treatment involves using a disinfectant such as iodine or chlorhexadine to prevent infection of the cord. The umbilical cord is a major source of infection in the foal. Try to make sure your hands are very clean when handling the navel, or put disinfectant in a spray bottle and do not touch the cord at all.