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JANUARY 2008 NEWSLETTER

RABIES CASES

The year 2007 was a busy year for rabies cases in our area. Of 300 samples tested by the Waterloo/Wellington CFIA District office, 23 tested positive. These were 13 skunks, 3 cattle, 3 bats, 1 horse, 1 donkey, 1 sheep and 1 dog. These cases were anywhere from Wellesley to Kenilworth, but there seemed to be a large number in the Elmira/Wallenstein/Linwood area. Please consider appropriate vaccination for your dog and horses and use vigilance with wild animals.

SWINE

2008 is upon us and the swine industry is struggling along with continued low prices for market hogs. Rather than look at the down side of the coming year I suggest looking for opportunities.

Improvements in production efficiencies and improvements in health status have to be the two main focuses for producers in 2008. If you are considering depop-repop options sows bred January 1 farrow April 26th and these piglets are finished market hogs in October and November. The point is, stop breeding now try and time new production for 1st half of 2009.

We have used breeding gaps to break disease cycles very successfully in some barns. The biggest economic impact is to time the production gap with expected low market hog price therefore plan ahead if you are considering this form of intervention.

2008 is the year of feed conversion so:

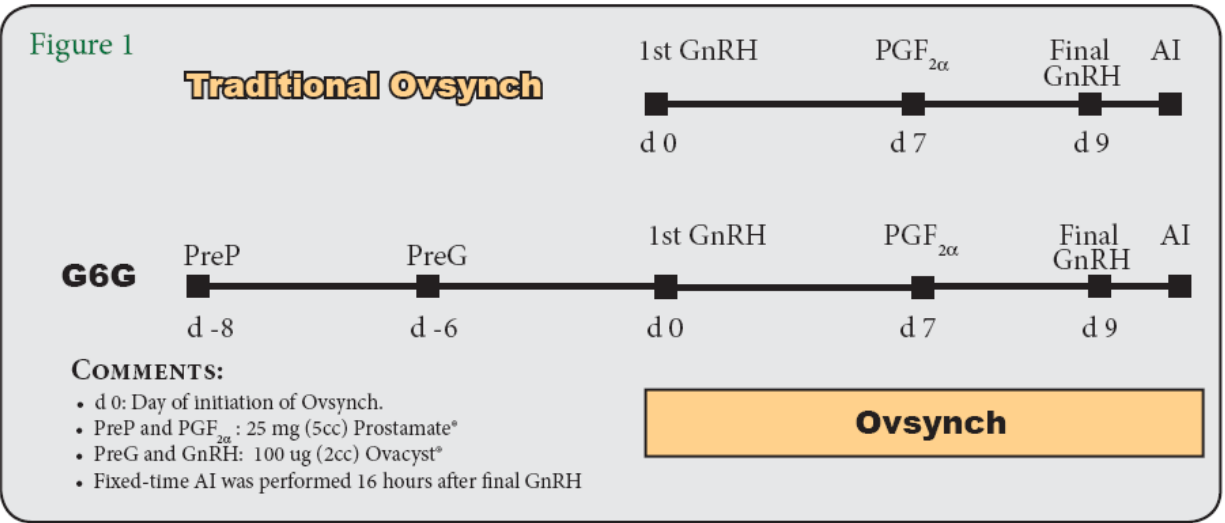
1. Make sure feeders are adjusted properly!
2. Make sure diseases that impact feed conversion eg. Mycoplasma and Ileitis are well controlled.

Some systems are looking to buy more open market weanlings or feeder pigs in 2008. Get as much information on health as possible before you buy any pigs!

DAIRY

Over the past decade or so, synchronized reproductive programs have been introduced to many reproductive protocols and have become commonplace on many operations as a way to get cows bred. With the advent of Ov-Synch, dairy producers can synchronize ovulation and inseminate cows by appointment without heat detection or any reduction in conception rate. Ov-Synch works by controlling follicular development and allows ovulation to be timed with insemination, so that both egg and sperm are available at the correct time for fertilization to occur. This is done with a series of injections of GnRH (e.g. Fertiline) and prostaglandin (e.g. Lutalyse).

Research has shown that a percentage of cows do not ovulate as intended at the time of insemination. This means that approximately 25% of cows have little or no chance of becoming pregnant because they do not ovulate when they are meant to. Now researchers at Michigan State University have developed a pre-synchronization method known as **G6G** designed to improve the outcomes to ov-synch and allow more cows a chance to become pregnant.



G6G works because previous research has shown that days 5 to 9 of the estrous cycle is the optimal interval of the estrous cycle to initiate ov-synch. It starts with an injection of prostaglandin (Lutalyse or Estrumate) followed by a GnRH (Fertiline) shot 2 days later. When used together the ov-synch program will be initiated 6 days later in the optimal phase of the cycle, when ov-synch is most likely to be successful.

Remember that G6G is not a replacement for ov-synch. It is meant as an enhancement of your current ov-synch synchronization program. When compared to a traditional ov-synch program, G6G outperformed ov-synch by increasing the percentage of cows that ovulated from 85% to 54%.

CALF MANAGEMENT

It is with mixed emotion that I sit here and type my last newsletter report for calves as an owner in Linwood Veterinary Services. After 11 ½ years, what do I know about calves that I did not know way back then? The most obvious thing is that calves do not read the books! I congratulate the Ontario Veal Association on all of their hard work in putting together some good information on calves. Please go to www.calfcare.ca to take a look or call the veal association at 519-824-2942 to ask about the information packages that they have put together. I still feel that most of the industry struggles to obtain a 5% or less mortality pre-weaning and that we still underfeed the calves. I believe that moving calves under 14 days of age is wrong as this is the time period when they generally develop their scours and moving them especially in very hot, cold or changeable weather brings with it all kinds of challenges. I believe calves should be in a well ventilated area but above 12 degrees Celsius or 60 degrees Fahrenheit for the first 2 to 2 ½ weeks of their lives. Cold housing is grand provided you are not battling scours. What about colostrum? I think that we continue to struggle doing what we should, I am a believer in a belly full of colostrum. Should it be 2.0 litres or 3.0 litres or 4.0 litres? It should be brown, it should be collected from the cow within 6 hours of starting to calve and it should be milked into a sterilized bucket and fed through nipple bottles that are properly cleaned. I would aim for 3.0 litres and try to get the calves to suckle. 2.0 litres is the very minimum and wear your blue nitrile gloves so that our dirty hands are not feeding the calf bacteria. When dealing with calf feeding equipment, rinse the bottles and pails with lukewarm water and then scrub them so that it passes inspection from your mother or wife! Turn the equipment upside down on a rack so that they air dry, stick your nose in the bottles and pails, how does it smell? Finally, if you can't feed the amount of milk that mother nature intended these critters to drink then you must put a calf blanket on them, heating lamp or keep them in warm housing. It looks like it is going to be a long winter, let's not watch them starve to death while battling scours. Now, I must repeat myself in Russia. I look forward to a new adventure with dairy and swine in Russia but I will be seen here in Ontario. If you would like to hear some tales of agriculture in Russia then I can be reached via the clinic for now. I look forward to seeing some of you around, I am not leaving agriculture. All the best in 2008.

Nancy