

Topic of the Month

Pneumonia

It would be very easy to write an entire book on bovine pneumonia. Fortunately for anyone reading this, I don't have that much space. We'll stick to a few selected high points.

Most pneumonia is viral in origin. Many of the viruses are present on farms most of the time. They wait for the right opportunity to cause disease. That can be a weather change, poor ventilation or nutrition, or many other factors. The viral infection allows a bacterial infection to set in and this is what we treat with antibiotics. To be fair, some calf pneumonias are bacterial, but bacterial pneumonia in adult cattle is exceedingly rare.

With this in mind, it is important to recognize that antibiotic treatment, when indicated, is not all of the solution- antibiotics do not kill viruses. That means that when faced with pneumonia, we need to consider the management factors contributing to it. More than once, a pneumonia outbreak in a lactating herd has been disrupted using a combination of vaccination and improved ventilation when it would have been far too expensive to treat the herd. This should be considered in regards to feed directives as well. Feeding an antibiotic is easy and we can feel like we've addressed an issue, and yet, it should not be a knee jerk response. Instead, it would be more appropriate to consider if the ration needs adjusted, if the barn is closed up tight, and if the cows have the appropriate minerals and vitamins for their state in life.

Commodity Futures

Prices

As of December 31, 2017

Corn	\$3.51/bu
Soybean Meal	\$312.60/ton
Milk (January)	\$14.08/cwt
Beef (Live cattle)	\$123/cwt

Practice News

- Congratulations to Dr. John McCormack and his wife Morgan as they celebrate their first wedding anniversary this month. We wish them many more happy years together.
- White Oak Veterinary Clinic and Rob's Rations will co-sponsor a Winter Producer Meeting on February 13. Topics will include protocol development for your farm. This is a very timely topic, especially with so many farms working to fulfill the requirements ahead of a FARM audit. Stay tuned for a mailer with meeting details.

In The News

- As our producers are no doubt aware, the dairy outlook for the first half of 2018 is not very bright. But according to Mike Opperman at agweb.com, the second half of the year should not be quite so bleak as production and inventories start to balance out.

After declining to the \$14/CWT range in the first half of the year, the price could recover to better than \$16/CWT later in the year. This would be partly fueled by general economic growth, and also by slow but steady growth in dairy exports to China (recall that the dairy boom in 2014 was at least partly driven by orders from China).

Of course, the health of the dairy export market will also depend on our customers, such as Mexico and Canada, on NAFTA negotiations, and on our dairy competitors in the EU and New Zealand.

Upcoming Events

- The 102nd Pennsylvania Farm Show will be held January 6-13, 2018.
- WOVC/Rob's Rations Winter Producer Meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 13, 2018.