

Vets Attend the American Association of Bovine Practitioners Annual Meeting

By Dr. Al Martens
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Monty, Jeff, Ralph, and I attended AABP annual meeting in Omaha, Nebraska in mid-September. Like all meetings, there were some good ones and some marginal ones, but the pro is that you get to talk to other people with similar challenges. I sat in boring meetings and thought about applications of ideas I learned in the good meetings. One of the highlights included information on grazing fall cover crops and crop residue.

Mary Drewnoski, from the University of Nebraska, gave a great presentation about grazing fall cover crops and crop residue. The University of Nebraska has constant trials related to getting the most out of fall and early winter grazing. I missed the next speaker session because I chatted with her about possible applications of corn stalk and/or fall cover crop grazing in Wisconsin. One thing I had to remind myself of constantly was that Wisconsin is not Nebraska, and they have a longer fall growing season after corn harvest.

Below is a list of thoughts on grazing fall cover crops in Wisconsin.

- Grazing cover crops produces excellent results on growing beef animals.
- Central plains heifer growers are using corn stalk residue to grow dairy heifers.
- The growers claim, and I haven't seen research, but heifers grown on dirt, even if it's only part of their lives, last longer in a free stall environment.
- Fencing and water are the labor-intensive aspects. Virtual fencing will solve the fencing problems.
- Cattle eat the husks and leaves of the corn plant, they gain much better on stalks that aren't chopped, but when they are done, the stalks don't need chopping.
- There is no soil compaction from fall grazing.
- Adding a cover crop to corn residue increased protein in the grazed animal's diet, but they have less crop residue in Nebraska than we do in Wisconsin. I wonder if we can get a cover crop to germinate with all our corn stalks.
- A protein source must be added to the diet of corn stalks.
- Annual grasses gave the best results for TDN per acre for a fall cover crop.



Dr. Al led a presentation on "Attracting and Retaining New Veterinarians." Waupun Vet Services is one of the largest clinics in the state with 16 veterinarians.

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- Cattle will dig down through snow and eat cover crops or stalks, but not if the snow gets crusted.

When I go to the Dakotas in the fall pheasant hunting, I see cattle grazing stalks all over. I keep thinking there is potential for this part of the world, but I rarely see it. It's either beef cows, or it's stockers (cattle that are weaned, that will be going to a feedlot).

Ralph also wanted me to share that artificial intelligence applications are fast approaching. One idea he felt was going to be applicable was video alone or video combined with cow monitoring systems to evaluate cow lameness and sick cows.

Realistically, we probably will have systems that can identify the sick or lame cow, give you a treatment plan, and more importantly give recovery probabilities. If there are good records on the individual cow, it will tell you whether to sell the cow or treat it.

That will save money on the vet bill. Your competitor will be using AI in the future. Look for opportunities in the future to use these technologies to make your operation more efficient.

Important Facts on Goff-Bols

Last month Dr. Monty wrote an article about a new bolus called the Goff-Bol. Again, the Goff-Bol is a calcium source but more importantly a Vitamin D source that does not need to be metabolized to be active. Vitamin D is essential for calcium absorption from the diet. These are used at the time of calving ONLY. If used later in lactation it can cause cows to go down.

These fresh cow calcium boluses must be used correctly. Critical rules:

- Always use two boluses, never more.
- Never give boluses later in lactation. Don't think of them as a calcium source.
- There are two types of boluses.
 - Anionic dry cow diets, the cows get the green box boluses called Goff Bol DCAD.
 - Non-ionic or non-supplemented dry cow diets are the blue box called Goff Bol Max.

Consult with your herd vet to determine which of these are right for your herd.

Two Disease Updates

There was a case of avian influenza in a dairy herd in Nebraska two weeks ago. The number of outbreaks has significantly declined in the last couple months, at least in cattle. When bird migration starts this fall it will be a higher risk of new infections particularly in outdoor chicken flocks.

Beef cattle may also be at risk with bird migration, but because there is no testing and no beef farmer wants the stigma of an infected herd, beef animals probably won't be diagnosed. I'm hoping the disease disappears from the dairy industry.

There is an outbreak of screw worm in Mexico, and it's in the news big-time. The disease is controlled by releasing irradiated sterile male flies, but it is going to take time to increase the capacity to grow and sterilize flies. Possibly several years. In the meantime, the control measures will help keep beef prices high.

The good news is that the flies won't overwinter in Wisconsin, so unless someone goes to Texas and brings the problem back up here, we will hopefully never see the disease.

Another good reason to live in Wisconsin.

Agriculture, Pollution and Wasted Resources

I recently read that 2% of the surface area of the United States is lawn. File this away if anyone ever starts talking about agriculture, pollution, and wasted resources.

All that lawn in most cases is fertilized, sprayed with herbicides and insecticides, often multiple times a year. Some form of power equipment mows it multiple times a summer.

I guarantee there is more fuel used to mow lawns by the acre than any farmer uses per acre. The chemicals can drain into storm drain directly into rivers, no buffer strips. And I ask, after all the input costs, what crop is harvested?