

Bird Flu Quarantine is Fiasco for Farm

*By Dr. Al Martens
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The first and only Wisconsin Bird Flu outbreak, which I wrote about last month, occurred on a farm that we service. It's been a fiasco for the owners because they were the guinea pigs for the politicians.

Everybody seems to have worries about making the wrong decision, so they make no decision and leave our client out to dry. Rules have been changed part way through the quarantine process. Part of the problem is that USDA has their set of rules, but the state can disregard the Federal rules at will. The financial health of the farm was never a consideration of the state. I'll try to tell the story with some lessons for anyone unfortunate enough to experience a similar situation.

First, there is a lot about the disease we don't know, including transmission. It is assumed that this strain came from wild migratory birds. The owner would like to emphasize that migratory birds shouldn't hang out around your farm or in your fields. Cow to cow transmission while milking is considered the main form of transmission once on the farm, but this farm had a dry cow freshen that had been dry well before the farm was infected, and the dry cow had antibodies in her milk which indicates she was infected during her dry period, so there's more going on with transmission that we understand.

The virus was discovered in the December routine bulk tank test. Every bulk tank in the state is being tested monthly now, but prior to this positive tank it was every other month. On this farm there was never any effect on milk weights, cow health or activity monitors from infection. Realize this is the type D genotype, and the type B genotype makes cattle sick. The bulk tank screening test cannot differentiate between B and D, a second test must be run at Ames, Iowa. While you wait, the farm is under quarantine.

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Quarantine means no animals could leave the farm without the state's permission. That meant that a poor-doing cow that needed to be slaughtered couldn't go. It died, dead stock took it after being informed of the quarantine, and that created a fervor. The regulatory people got involved. What if dead stock sold the meat? Maybe pets would die? In my opinion, all animals butchered by deadstock should have cooking in the processing protocol. Cooking is not just for Influenza, but for salmonella and E. Coli, and brucellosis and a dozen other diseases. If people want to feed their pets raw dead animals, all they have to do is drive down the road and pick them up. You want your pet food cooked.

The heifer grower is quarantined for 30 days after the last heifer arrives, which means the heifer farm which gets a constant flow of heifers is permanently quarantined. That means no selling eggs from the heifer farm chickens. There are a lot of trickle-down effects.

Animals going to slaughter at first couldn't go anywhere. They can't go to an open auction like Milwaukee because there is no guarantee that they will be slaughtered. They must go directly to slaughter, (do not pass go, do not collect \$200) but the slaughter plant baulked. Maybe their employees were at risk? Monty finally wrote a CVI to state that the animals were healthy so they could die at slaughter the same day. Transportation had its issues.

The worst issue was that the farm voluntarily agreed to allow research on individual animal milk with the goal being that the state could learn about the immune response. But one cow showed a minute level of virus which had to be very dead because the cow had milk antibodies, and even though the USDA goal of a negative bulk tank was achieved, the farm was kept on quarantine. No good deed goes unpunished as my father always said. If you test positive, call the clinic ASAP and agree to nothing.

Troubleshooting Phone Issues at Vet Clinic

With all the great modern components of technology sometimes phones just don't work. Recently, we had some issues at night. The phone at WVS comes in on fiber optic through the internet. If Spectrum fiber optic fails, like when the line to the city of Waupun was cut two summers ago, we lose phone service. We are installing a backup system that will switch to a cell phone tower.

After hours, at a data center server somewhere in the world, our phones are switched to the phone of the veterinarian on call. Clients that call then have to pick the east or west vet per queue. But the call going to the on-call vet is subject to US Cellular reliability.

If your call doesn't go to voicemail, or if the phone just keeps ringing, or if you are not sure, call back and try again. If you still can't get through, try using one of the individual vet's personal cell numbers. Don't just leave a message if it is not the on-call vet, because the vets not on call may not check their phones. You can also call back to the office and reach out to the other vet on call and see if they can help or at least start the process of diagnosing why the other vet's phone isn't working. You can also reach out to other vets in the practice, preferably partners and get them involved. If you don't have their numbers, just ask them next time they are out. Every partner will share their number, this includes Monty, Jeff, Mark W., Ralph, Emma, Nick, Mark S. and Molly.

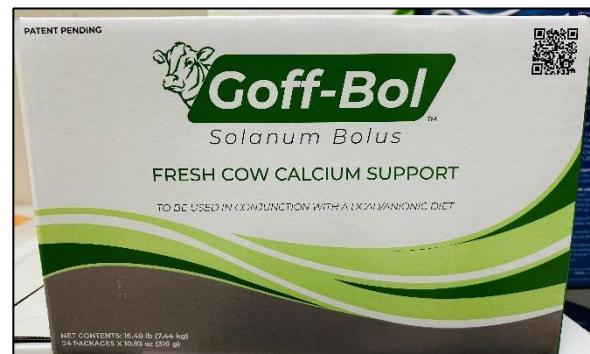
Update on New Fresh Cow Calcium Boluses

A couple of months ago WVS introduced a new product, Goff-Bol. This is a fresh cow calcium bolus that showed great promise.

We did a low-key introduction because we were concerned about product availability; the company has doubled production capacity and is increasing another 500% this summer. We also wanted to get client reaction to how the product worked. The concept was tremendous, and the developer, Dr. Jesse Goff, who is both a veterinarian and PhD has studied fresh cow metabolism for decades. He has been at the forefront of everything we know about milk fever and has been a speaker at many continuing education seminars we've attended.

So, the product is working great, and we are now confident in availability. The company has not spent a penny on advertising. The Goff-Bol company had similar concerns as us, so they introduced it to a select number of veterinary clinics in only a four-state area, and they introduced some direct ship to large herds. Because we were one of the few veterinary clinics in the country to have access, those of you using it are way ahead of colleagues in the rest of the country.

The company has a website, but does not sell through any major distributors, but we are confident that we can get as much of the product as our producers want.



The bolus in the green box is for anionic pre-fresh diets, while the bolus in the blue box is for more traditional diets.

There are two types of boluses, one for producers on anionic pre-fresh diets, and one for cows on a more traditional diet or binder. **Choosing the correct bolus is critical.** We are so concerned with producers using the correct bolus that your herd vet must tell the office which bolus to use before the office sells the product, and we keep records of which bolus, green package or blue package that each farm is using. You should only give two boluses at freshening and no more.