

Student Evaluates Calf Nutrition Product

*By Nick Mayer, DVM
Waupun Veterinary Services*

This summer, we were pleased to host Abigail Underhill, a veterinary student from The Ohio State University, for a four-week externship at our clinic. As part of her experience, Abby conducted a field trial evaluating a newer calf nutrition product while spending time on farms working directly with producers, employees, and animals.

The product is Lactipro®, a normal rumen bacterium that buffers rumen acidosis. Although the trial did not demonstrate a statistical difference between treatment groups, the results suggested there may be potential benefits to the product, particularly since the study was conducted on one of our top-performing dairies known for exceptional calf-rearing practices.

Throughout her externship, Abby gained valuable hands-on experience in large animal rural practice, built strong relationships with our clients and their teams, and learned firsthand how deeply farm employees care for their calves, even to the point of refilling grain pails before grain weights could be collected (which was adverse to trial protocol, but the correct action for a caring employee).

We thoroughly enjoyed working with Abby and appreciated her enthusiasm, professionalism, and dedication throughout the summer.

We intentionally structure these externship trials, so students work **independently with producers and their employees**, without a veterinarian standing over their shoulder, allowing them to build confidence and real-world communication skills.



Abby Underhill, of Ohio, is pictured on an area farm this summer. Underhill conducted a field trial evaluating the product Lactipro® in calves.

Research Findings on Castration Age

Recent research changed one of my long-standing misconceptions, but not one of my long-standing recommendations. I have always advocated for early castration, within the first month of life was my goal, and when I did monthly herd checks we just castrated while I was there. My misconception was that I thought there was some advantage to leaving bulls intact until 3 or 4 months of age for increased gain. I didn't think it through because the testicles don't produce testosterone (which increases muscling) until puberty. The research shows that the stress of later age castration creates severe weight loss from cattle going off feed, and this is not weight that is recovered during finishing.

I was involved some years ago with a group of mixed heifer/bull feeders that were about 450-pounds, Herford crosses, that came from out west. We processed them right off the truck. They were in tough shape. They had probably been through two sale barns being resold and just weaned. We had two dozen deaths out of 400, and every death was a castrated steer. No heifer deaths.

Continued education to offer the best services to our clients



At WVS we host rounds twice a month to share knowledge, discuss difficult cases and learn from each other or experts in the industry. Last month Dr. Schefers and Jeanne Bishop of Merck joined the vets for rounds. Dr. Schefers shared his techniques and knowledge of things to look for when doing a postmortem exam or necropsy.

Some Old Problems Don't Disappear

A recent incident on one of our farms is a stark reminder that some old problems don't always disappear.

A tire sidewall with steel belting was accidentally dropped in a mixer. Four cows died with acute abdomen infections and the first one for necropsy was hardware from the tire belting. The wires in the sidewalls are sharp, and they can penetrate any part of the cow's digestive tract, causing peritonitis. They are small and light enough that magnets located in mixers won't catch them. A cow magnet would be a preventative, but magnets have a cost and with the magnets included in mixers this is a rare situation.

If a tire sidewall ends up in a mix, it would probably be best to discard all the mix.

In my experience, the biggest risk was always in cattle with access to dirt pastures.

The big three were nails from feed bunks, wire pieces from building fence, and the worst cause of hardware were the little wire clips used to hold the wire to a ceramic insulator. One end would break off where the wire clip was bent around the barbwire. Cattle were always interested in the green plants just under the fence and licking up wire pieces in the process.

Gas Station Experiences, Thoughts With Dr. Al

You're in a hurry. You pull up to the pump to get gas, and you're on the phone, talking about parts you need for equipment that broke this morning.

You turn on the pump with your phone in one hand and the other hand hitting the correct button for gas grade, and suddenly a voice blasts at you from the gas pump advertising a personal injury lawyer.

You can't remember which of the buttons turns off the noise so you start pushing buttons, and suddenly you panic a little because you remember that if you hit the wrong button, you get a car wash billed to your credit card, and if you wanted a car wash, you'd be in front of the car wash paying for it at the car wash. Has your grocery store ever asked you if you needed some 10-W-30 or maybe a coupon to the local vet clinic at the cash register?

Finally, you hit the correct button and the noise created by a talking head that needs a razor, shuts off. But now you were distracted so you must redirect your thoughts back to the parts guy what he just said.

How many people pumping gas think, "Oh, that's right, I need to contact a personal injury lawyer this morning, and this talking head would be a good choice?"