



DECEMBER 2023 NEWSLETTER

Hemorrhagic Bowel Syndrome (HBS): How to Recognize it in Your Dairy Herd

Hemorrhagic Bowel Syndrome, or HBS, is a disease that mainly affects high producing dairy cattle. Many, probably every dairy, has had a case but may not have recognized it.

With this disease the cows will often be uncomfortable or have abdominal pain. The cow may look full, not like a bloat, but just larger in the bottom of her abdomen. Sometimes there will be jelly-like blood in the rectum but usually nothing reaches the bowel. HBS often comes in clusters, where in a week or two several cows are affected. We have tried surgeries and they can be successful if the disease is caught early, but the success rate is very low. Most cows die. The cost of the surgery versus the low success rate means surgery isn't justified. The vet school has had similar results.

Realistically, a necropsy is required to be sure that HBS caused a cow's death. Unless blood makes it all the way to the colon, which is infrequent, an HBS cow looks like other acute abdomen situations, such as a twisted bowel or an intussusception.

The problem with studying the disease is that researchers can't reproduce the disease in a research environment. The theory is that clostridium growing in the intestine causes the disease, but feeding the clostridium won't cause the disease. Also there may be some involvement with a mold in the feed, although this theory isn't supported by the evidence.

"A necropsy should be used to confirm an HBS suspicious death, and rations should be the first issue to be addressed aggressively,"

- Dr. Al Martins

Most people now accept the clostridium theory, but the actual cause is high bypass of starch from the rumen down into the intestine where the clostridium can grow using the starch as energy.

Clostridiums in other species cause similar diseases, although starch isn't an issue in other species. For a while, people fed binders to supposedly bind the clostridium toxins, or to bind the mold toxins, but usually ration or feed changes at the same time were what eliminated the disease. In one herd, the disease occurred after DA surgeries, and the feeling was that the cow's hadn't eaten well. The starch digesters in the rumen had decreased in numbers. After the surgeries the cows suddenly consumed a high starch diet with enough starch passing down into the intestine to create an environment for the clostridium to grow.

Clostridium type A vaccines have been tried but haven't shown much success on a commercial scale. They are available through autogenous companies, but it doesn't seem like it's consistent. Also, because the disease is sporadic and rations components can change, even how well rations are mixed can change, using a vaccine may look successful when the success was with ration changes.

In summary, a necropsy should be used to confirm an HBS suspicious death, and rations should be the first issue to be addressed aggressively.



Lesson on Mastitis

Dr. Ralph taught a lesson on mastitis to a dairy science class at Waupun High School this month. They discussed on-farm milk culturing and were able to see some examples of what a plate with mastitis would look like.

WVS Credit Policy Changes

Waupun Veterinary Service is changing our credit policy. Ninety-nine percent of our clients will be totally unaffected because they pay every month. We are limiting credit going forward to people with billing issues. For your convenience we do take credit cards, and we can keep your credit card on file.

We will be reaching out to clients by phone once the account becomes 30 days past due. We want to make sure the billing address is correct to prevent mail delivery issues. If we can't reach anyone by phone and/or their bill isn't resolved, their account will be labeled delinquent and sent a letter stating that the outstanding balance plus any current charges will need to be paid before or at the next time of service, including emergencies. If you get that letter, you need to work out a payment plan or bring your account current. Please be proactive and work with our support staff to resolve this matter.

If you are issued a second letter a month later, we will not provide emergency service or routine service until your current bill is paid in full during **business hours**. We will not extend credit in the future. Your account will permanently be cash only. If you have a history of slow payment or questions regarding our new policy, please contact the office. This policy is effective immediately, so it is imperative to address any past due balances before the new policy affects your account.

Vets Offer Spanish Training for Area Dairy Farms

Both Dr. Emma and Dr. Molly provide Spanish training for Hispanic employees on a variety of topics related to animal husbandry. These trainings include information from milking protocols, on farm culture, calf care, fresh cow checks, proper antibiotic usage, and basically anything having to do with farm animal care.

The trainings are usually somewhat formal; many have occurred at the clinic in our meeting room, but they can be somewhat impromptu on the farm after a herd check.

The best way to utilize Molly and Emma's skills is to use a non-veterinarian translator for human resources issues or problems between management and Hispanic employees. It makes more financial sense to seek out a lay translator to help with interpersonal dynamics. Our vets can certainly help with quick translations as they come up, but we prefer to not get involved in non-animal related contentious employee problems. Vets are expensive - we want the money you spend on bilingual training to help improve animal health and profitability (and not to translate that person A is mad at person B for stealing his lunch).



Pictured at left, Dr. Molly provides a Spanish training on the farm focused on the milking routine and milking protocols. Pictured above, Dr. Emma gives a more formal training discussing several topics of animal husbandry. Both Emma and Molly can speak Spanish fluently allowing them to translate.

Interest Rates, Inflation, History

From about 2010 until 2020 the Federal Reserve kept interest rates at abnormally low levels. The economy grew at a reasonable rate and inflation stayed below a 2% average. The Federal Reserve purchased mortgage bonds and Treasury bonds, in essence printing money and subsidizing home mortgages and federal debt.

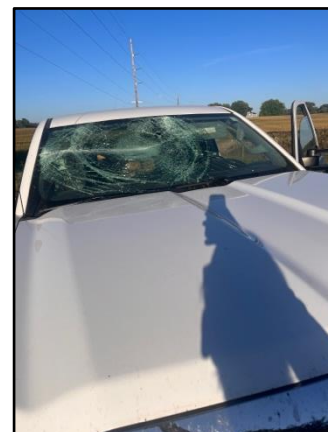
Historically these actions would cause inflation, but they didn't until in combination with Covid they did. The Federal Reserve uses interest rates to attempt to tame inflation.

In the early 80's inflation was going crazy, but for different reasons than today. Interest rates on farmland peaked at 16%, I know, I paid it. Today, economists are in two camps. One group believes inflation and interest will remain higher for longer and the second group argues interest rates will head down starting next summer. Both groups make great arguments and it's important to realize that economic factors are always different.

I think it's important to keep both possibilities in mind when doing long term planning, but I do think super low interest rates are gone unless we get another really bad recession, and even then, the size of the US debt puts pressure on interest rates.

Economic projections are like projecting milk prices two years out. Usually, economic trends move slower than the talking heads project, so I tend to side with the higher longer camp, with current interest rates about average for the last 50 years.

Dr. Molly: On the Road Again



Ask Molly about her early morning driving skills on curvy back roads. She swears she wasn't texting.