

## Liver Abscesses in Fed Cattle: Holstein steers have disadvantages over beef

Holstein steers have several disadvantages over beef and beef cross cattle when dealing with liver abscesses.

The first disadvantage is that there is a lower percentage of salable meat in a Holstein carcass. The second disadvantage is that Holsteins have a much higher percentage of animals at slaughter with liver abscesses, particularly severe liver abscesses.

Liver abscesses are caused by bacteria traveling from the rumen to the liver in the blood. The initiator is rumen acidosis, which damages the lining of the rumen allowing bacteria to escape the normal gut lining barrier and get into the blood stream. Since all the blood from the entire GI track is filtered by the liver, the bacteria are trapped by the liver.

With small numbers of bacteria caused by occasional acidosis the liver and the immune system can handle the insult, but continuous and multiple acidosis insults results in abscess formation. The abscess will often grow, rupture, and multiply in an animal's liver.

A severe liver abscess, which is present in about 25 percent of Holstein steers, result in about \$100 in discarded carcass value. This one issue alone results in a 2 cent per 100 weight discount for Holstein steers.

Holstein steers do have an advantage of providing a very consistent carcass size and cuts of meat that are very similar, excellent for boxed beef and lower end restaurant trade, but packers hate liver abscesses among other issues.

The industry has fed antibiotics to try to control abscesses, and still feeds the antibiotic Tylan. There have been unsuccessful attempts at using vaccines. But liver abscesses continue to be an issue.

I believe the real problem is that Holsteins must go on a hot ration early to prevent them from developing a huge frame. Colored cattle don't have the genes to develop the massive 1,800-pound frames that Holstein genetics grow. Feeding Holsteins successfully requires

producers to feed aggressively to put meat and finish on before the frame can develop.

I still chuckle about a part time farmer that I used to implant steers for that were fed a high corn silage

diet. Some steers received 3 implants at least 200 days apart, they were marketed at close to a ton, I think some enjoyed their 3-year birthday party. What a money pit.

Due to frame size and genetics, beef cattle can be backgrounded on a very high roughage diet between weaning and finishing. With most beef calves born in the spring, and beef demand steady year-round, backgrounding allows growing part of the annual beef crop slowly on inexpensive feed and bringing cattle to finish throughout the year.

At a recent meeting, I listened to the head of an AI company talk about the steps they were taking to develop beef bulls specifically for beef on dairy crossing, to produce a crossbred calf that feeds like a beef animal and also yields a carcass like a beef animal. I believe that will be significant in reducing liver abscesses.

*“Liver abscesses are caused by bacteria traveling from the rumen to the liver in the blood,”*

~ *Dr. Al Martens*

# Looking Back at the Dairy Industry with Dr. Al

This might make you smile or cry, I understand either way.

I started in Waupun in late June 1978, fresh from vet school. The biggest farm we did work for was the prison, at 100 cows milked. If I remember correctly the next biggest was maybe 70. We had at least a dozen farms that milked 10 to 15 cows, with my best guess being the average was 35 head. The bigger farms had a single hired man, although most farms had a tremendous amount of input from the farm wife and multiple kids.

Even though I was on call every other night and there were always evening and Sunday calls, I drove about half the miles in a year that the veterinarians run today. Milk was about \$10 per 100 weight and was set by USDA under a system called 'parity'.

Several big milk co-ops were in the process of being investigated for bribing the secretary of the treasury, John Connally, to get him to increase the price, which he had done after the bribe. This and several other factors killed the parity concept in the early 80's and milk prices tanked big time. Milk price battles never seem to end.

Relevant to this story, I was reviewing records with a client during that time, and we were happy that a first calf heifer produced 50 pounds. That's in a day. First ever on his farm.

## Rompun Available to Vets

Rompun or Xylazine (generic) the cow and horse tranquilizer that has been smuggled into the U.S. as an illegal powder from China to add to fentanyl, will still be available for veterinarians and producers to use to sedate animals.

There had been a push to make it a controlled substance, although veterinary use had nothing to do with the illegal powder coming into the country. Congress passed the bill. The Senate and President have to sign off.

## Check Cattle for Cancer Eye

The primary form of cancer in both Holstein and Herford cattle is squamous cell carcinoma that forms on the lids, often the third eyelid.

If it is present at slaughter the animal will be condemned and tanked. It is important to recognize the tumor early since it can be removed at this early stage and smaller size. If it is given a chance to grow, the tumor becomes very invasive locally and surgery will not remove all the cancerous cells resulting in reoccurrence.

It is easy to have a vet do a quick check on any eye that you or your employee notice doesn't look right, especially if there is a what looks like a wart or a small rough growth anywhere on the lids.

## Vet Gets Ticket

This bill arrived in the mail in December. It's a parking ticket for a partner at WVS who appears to be a scofflaw.

The city of Columbus doesn't put tickets on windshields anymore, so this vet was unaware they had violated the law.

The veterinarian in question was at a farm management meeting at the bank in downtown Columbus. If you can figure out the guilty party's name, give them some grief.

**Local Notice of Unpaid Parking Citation**

COLUMBUS POLICE DEPARTMENT  
150 S LUDINGTON ST  
COLUMBUS WI 53825  
920-623-6919

December 22, 2023

To: WAUPUN VETERINARY SERVICES LLP  
85 S HARRIS AVE STE 203, PO BOX 569  
WAUPUN, WI 53983

Your vehicle, identified below, was cited for a parking violation. The citation was not disposed of by the original due date of 11/26/2023 and therefore the forfeiture has increased to \$20.00.

**Citation Information:**  
Ticket Number: 31783  
Ordinance Violated: 2 HR. LIMIT 9A-5P  
Violation Date: 11/16/2023 4:18 PM  
Violation Location: W JAMES ST @ 100 BLOCK  
Vehicle Registration or VIN: W1EY7993  
Vehicle Description: 2018 Jeep GRAND CHEROKEE SUV

Failure to pay the forfeiture amount of \$20.00 by 1/5/2024 may result in any or all of the following actions:

- Registration of said vehicle will be suspended and your privilege to register any vehicle in the State of Wisconsin will be denied.
- You may be summoned to appear in Municipal Court. Failure to appear may result in a warrant being issued for your arrest and a judgment rendered against you in accordance with State Statute 345.47.
- The fees will increase to \$25.00.

You may dispose of this citation by mailing the amount due to the address listed above or you may also pay in person Monday through Friday between 8:00am and 4:00pm. Please do not send cash or coins. Please contact the police department if you wish to contest this matter in court.

Sincerely,  
COLUMBUS POLICE DEPARTMENT