

Info on H5N1 in Cattle

By Dr. Al Martens

H5N1 is the Avian Influenza virus you keep hearing about. It is shed in cow milk. Pasteurization of milk kills it, but a PCR test will still show some DNA particles in the milk.

Live virus is NOT in the milk. If you get burned to death, your teeth are still there. This is an easy to kill virus. Evidently a farm worker has been infected from dairy cattle, so it is a perceived human health threat.

Interstate movement of **LACTATING DAIRY** cattle requires a negative milk test and the results go on the interstate health sheet before shipment. A positive test creates a quarantine for the entire lactating herd for any movement off your premise for 30 days and requires a second negative test of the positive animal after 30 days to remove the quarantine.

Heifers, calves, and dry cows are exempt from quarantine. This testing system will not prevent the disease from spreading because bulls, nonlactating youngstock, and beef animals are not tested, although the powers that be tell me that only lactating cows shed the virus.



Watch for Danger on the Farm

The picture above is of some chewed up twine that Ralph found in a manger on a farm.

We also get to find this stuck in the stomach of dead cows when we perform a necropsy after. It's not that uncommon, they don't always die, they could be just a poor-doing cow that has chronic indigestion.

Once I stitched up a mammary vein on a cow that cut itself on a broken triple-bend. It was sticking up a foot from the stall platform. A month later, one of my partners was called to the same farm for a bleeding milk vein. The cow was DOA. Same triple-bend still sticking up.

If a nail protrudes from a board in a cattle yard, at some point in time a calf is going to hook the side of their eye on the nail and rip the eyelid open.

It's a mistake to assume animals have the sense we have with regards to danger. Always assume there is risk to your animals from the environment and be hyperaware of everything that can create an injury.

Fence line Clean-up: Tips for Brushy Trees

By Dr. Al Martens

If you want to get rid of brushy trees like box elder or buckthorn on a fence line, here's how I do it. I kill them first, let them dry out, and then they easily burn a couple months later.

For trunk diameter up to 4 inches, I mix Crossbow and diesel in a hand sprayer. In the spring through the end of May, I use 3 ounces Crossbow per gallon of diesel, and later in the summer through winter I up the Crossbow to 4 ounces per gallon of diesel. I spray the bottom part of the trunk, called basal bark spraying. I spray about 6 inches of trunk height per inch of trunk diameter. It is important to get all the way around the trunk down to the ground and the bark should be soaked. Warning, the diesel will eat most cheap hand sprayers.

For bigger trees, I cut a notch, with the tip of a chainsaw, at a downward angle, near the bottom of the tree. This notch is almost like a stab that I can pour 2-4-D into, diluted about 50:50 with water. If the tree is bigger than 6 inches I put a notch on both sides. Again, the notch is at a downward angle so the 2-4-D stays in the notch, doesn't run out, and the tree slowly absorbs it. It takes about one ounce of diluted 2-4-D per inch of tree diameter. I use a small, tipped squirt bottle to put the 2-4-D into the notch.

If done in the spring, I can go back two weeks later and see any trees or brush I missed, it's not turning brown, and then retreat where needed. By fall, the brush and trees can be cut down and they have dried themselves out and they burn easily.

The Value of College Education: Is it worth the price?

By Dr. Al Martens

Every veterinarian has a different story related to why they chose to pursue a veterinary career. For me, I loved space, being outdoors, and the atmosphere surrounding farming. Even in 1973 when I graduated from high school, I didn't think I would be able to purchase a farm, and my agricultural knowledge at that time was about zero. My friends in high school enjoyed working on their farms and I loved spending time on my cousin's farm in Cambria, WI. All the farmers I knew loved their work. In addition, I knew I didn't want to live on a ¼ acre lot with homes on both sides of me. One of my clients 40 years ago said, "Al, if you can't pee off your front porch at high noon, you don't live far enough out in the country." He summed up my attitude.

I also was influenced by an appreciation of life that occurs in a rural community. I think religion factors in, as well as a reliance on your neighbors. A rural community is more connected. Cal Greenfield chewed me out after the last snowstorm for not taking my tractor over to a neighbor across the street to plow them out. How was I to know I asked? Cal said it was on Facebook. I don't do much Facebook, but would someone in the city actually care?

Recently, the Wall Street Journal published an article on the declining value of a college education, and I agreed with every issue they addressed. I hated college. For me it was a means to an end. Most of my friends loved it, but not me. Living in a dorm room was like prison. No animals, no freedom, no fresh air. I spent summers through high school and my one college summer plus every college holiday working as an electrician. I loved it. I had my hours to apply for a journeyman's card had I not been accepted to veterinary school. But being an electrician in Detroit wasn't going to get me living in a farm community.

Had I stayed in construction as an electrician, today I'd probably have a large contracting company, I'd be on my second or third wife, I'd have a large lake home in northern Michigan, and my kids would be druggies. College didn't get me any further financially than where I would have been, and today, with the cost of college where it is, no one should go to college because they think they will make more money. On average, they won't, with the lost earning years and the ridiculous prices colleges charge. The reason to attend college today is to enter a career field in which a college education is required. If you are from a rural environment, realize you are entering an environment where rather than freedom to think, you will be indoctrinated into a narrow spectrum of designed thought.

The cost of college has increased 700 percent in 60 years. When corrected for inflation. When I started in 1973, tuition plus room and board for four years would buy you a nice car. A lot of people in undergrad worked summers and paid for most of the remainder of the year of college. Thirty years ago, I recommended everyone should try college. Now a person should approach college as a huge investment, an investment with a lot of skepticism. You better have a plan for an end goal that has a good income if you want to pursue college.

Attorney with Ag Experience joins Dempsey Law

Last week I met a newly hired attorney in the practice next door to our office.

Liz Simonis received a bachelor's degree in dairy science at UW-River Falls and worked for Kent feed as a nutritionist for several years before returning to law school. She worked at another firm in Milwaukee before joining Dempsey law. She has an interest in agriculture law, environmental law, and business, which really fits in well with a dairy community.

I bring this up because I have not interacted with many attorneys who understand farming and if one of our clients does need legal help, Liz is an option. You can contact her at LTS@dempseylaw.com.

Virus Affecting Equine has Upswing

Equine Rhinopneumonitis or Equine Herpes Virus has seen an increase in incidence in Wisconsin this spring. This virus is very common in the equine population and most horses are infected by the time they are a year old. The immunity from disease exposure disappears rapidly so revaccination is needed to maintain immunity. Even with vaccination, animals will get infected but ideally the severity of the disease is lessened.

There are several forms of the disease caused by Herpes virus subtypes. The most severe is the nervous system or encephalopathy form. The vaccine doesn't provide protection for this form, and if there is a chance your horse is exposed to this form, you do not want to vaccinate.

To protect from abortion caused by Herpes Virus, it is recommended to vaccinate at 5, 7, and 9 months of pregnancy. If you want maximum protection from the respiratory form, it is recommended that you booster vaccinate every 3 months.

Minimal exposure to other horses, and quarantine of incoming horses to your premise for a minimum of three weeks help minimize the risk but sharing of things like brushes and tack can spread the virus.