



NOVEMBER 2021 NEWSLETTER

Four vets from Waupun Veterinary Service went to the annual AABP conference in Salt Lake City the first week of October. Cass, Emma, Nick, and I (Al) went for 3 days of excellent cattle, sheep and goat meetings. Cass gave two excellent presentations related to practice management.



Change Needles: One of the next big challenges in the dairy industry is going to be reducing BLV (Bovine Leukosis Virus) infection in cattle herds. One of the methods of reducing the spread is single-use needles or needle-free injections, which are coming. There are some other positives with single-use needles or frequent changing of needles. No broken needles, which cause lost vaccine or drug or worse, the vaccine or drug ends up outside the animal intended for treatment, resulting in vaccine or treatment failure. Another plus is less pain to the animal from sharp needles, and a third advantage is the avoidance of broken needles getting into the food chain, which does happen. The needles we use are stainless steel, so magnets won't detect them. One of my clients years ago found a needle in a steak when he went to dinner. Fortunately, he was a dairy client and understood.

We're Disappointed: We ordered Dr. Nick a new Chevy Tahoe the end of September 2020 and it arrived the beginning of September 2021. It was only an 11 month wait; we were going for an entire year wait. Dr. Matt's pickup was only a six month wait.

Veterinarian Shortage: Across the country, there is a need for veterinarians. We have been searching for over a month since Kolby and Jackie decided to leave, and we have no experienced veterinarians that have applied. We have had contact with several excellent senior students but bringing new grads into the practice is a slow process.

Calf Conference Takeaways: A calf will drink 10 to 12 gallons of water in the first 4 weeks of life, if available. When water was made available, calves in the study weighed 60% more at 4 weeks and ate 50% more starter.

Molasses has sucrose remaining in it from the refining sugar. Calves can't digest sucrose, so too much molasses (5%) will cause loose stools or worse, diarrhea.

Calves in the winter need warm water. The ideal temperature is 102 degrees or body temperature. That's the temp Dr. Ralph prefers his beer.

You can't use disinfectant to sterilize dirt and manure. Equipment needs to be clean before it's disinfected.

Commodity Economics: For any true commodity produced the total net income for the producer is 0. Examples of commodities are iron ore, timber, corn, or milk. If there is no government intervention with price supports and there is no branding of the product, like Fairlife™ milk, then some producers with lower cost per unit make money, and producers with higher cost per unit lose money and again, the industry net is 0. This is because if the price goes up, the low-cost producers increase production and drive the price down and take margin from the high-cost producers.

The take home for milk producers or any commodity producer is that cost per unit is a constant battle. As a dairy producer to stay successful, your cost per 100 pounds of milk must be lower than the costs for half the milk producer. Put another way, you are competing whether you like it or not with other producers to reduce your cost per 100 weight.

The New York Times: On Friday, October 8, they ran an article in the business section entitled “France’s Desperate Quest To ‘Make Agriculture Sexy’”. It seems there is a huge shortage of help in France. Farmers from dairy farms to vineyards can’t find help. Most farm kids want nothing to do with farming. So, the country is attempting to attract non-farm kids back to the farm. But there are a couple of caveats. First, 18 percent of the youth in France are unemployed because the government pays so much not to work. Second, because of government subsidies and quotas, the farms haven’t changed in decades. Everything is still labor intensive and there is very little expansion or mechanization. Another issue is that youth want a 40-hour week with Saturday and Sunday off.

Follow up on Emma’s goat purchase from last month: My son-in-law made a goat roast and it was good. Very mild meat, similar to veal, so I have to cut her some slack. But we still can’t let her have a credit card at the fair auctions.

Thankful

I grew up north of Detroit. My dad had an excellent job with Chevrolet and because the small town we lived in was very working class, I had it good. I got new shoes every fall before school started and two new button shirts and two new pair of slacks. Mom did laundry once a week, so I wore each pair of school clothes two days during the week and one pair of the prior year’s clothes one day. We did a vacation for two weeks every other year, and I had enough farm friends I could do a little hunting. My dad started bicycle riding when I was in Junior High, and I ended up with a used bike that was high-end and got to ride with my dad and his buddies on some weekend tours, and that spilled over to college and eventually into vet school, where my wife and I would ride together with some other school friends. I worked through high school and college as an electrician with better pay than anyone else that was my age. My parents paid for my college, so I had no debt when I moved to Waupun, but I did eat generic corn flakes for breakfast, peanut butter and grape jelly for lunch, and a lot of chicken wings, beef heart, and beef liver for dinner for three years of college. I got lucky and married a great wife, and I got offered a job from Dr. Jim DeYoung in a super community. I say a lot of short prayers of thanks every day and I’ll share some with you.

I’m thankful that I moved out of the Detroit area and especially thankful I moved to Wisconsin.

I’m thankful I went to veterinary school and got a job where I worked with so many people I truly enjoy, both co-workers and especially farmers.

I’m thankful I worked with farmers that taught me the day is never finished and you work until the job is done.

I’m thankful I could never feel sorry for myself that I had to work too hard or too long of hours because the farmers always worked longer and harder.

I’m thankful that so many farmers were patient with me, blonde hair down to my shoulders, when I first moved here.

I’m thankful especially for their values.

I’m thankful that I live in a community where people wave on the back roads and say “Hi” at the coffee shop.

I’m thankful that so many farmers shared with me all their insight into farming and their family history.

