

## Calf Lung Ultrasounding: Treating Calves Earlier

When a rectal ultrasound was introduced to dairy veterinarians many seized the opportunity to be more precise with pregnancy diagnosis as well as being able to determine any irregularities more easily within the reproductive tract. In recent years we have found this tool that was meant to be used only for pregnancy checks was actually much more useful.

The same rectal ultrasound (cleaned up a little of course) can be used to determine the respiratory health on calves.

When using an ultrasound for respiratory health we can find pockets of consolidation or pus in the lungs well before the calf would start showing clinical signs. The advantage of scanning the lungs with an ultrasound is that you are able to treat calves much sooner than you would after they start showing clinical signs.

The process for a veterinarian to scan lungs is fairly simple. Alcohol is sprayed along the ribs and the ultrasound probe is guided between the ribs to give us a clear picture of the lungs. With this information we use a scoring system that was developed by researchers at UW-Madison to grade lung health on a 1-5 scale. A calf with a lung score of 5, would have three or more lung lobes that are consolidated. While a calf on the other end of the scale, that may have a score of 0, would be perfectly healthy. Another advantage of calf lung ultrasound is that on average there is less antibiotic usage in the calf barn. More calves are treated, however, since they are treated at a younger age with less severe pneumonia, less overall antibiotic is used.

Since we can treat at a younger age, cure rate is often higher as well. With the aid of lung ultrasound, we are able to diagnose disease at an earlier stage and treat accordingly. This allows for a higher cure rate, better growth rates, and better milk production in first lactation animals. First lactation cows have also been found to produce more milk in their first lactation, 1,100 pounds more based on an ME305 basis.

Dr. Wade Weber is the author of this article. If you think that this may be a good tool on your farm, contact the clinic to discuss it further with any of our veterinarians.



*Can you guess which one of these calves has a lung score of 5 and which one had a score of 0? It's difficult to tell from just looking at the calves. They both look healthy, but the calf on the left has the lung score of 5, with 3 lobes consolidated. The calf on the right has the score of 0, perfectly clean lungs. Ultrasounding the lungs gives us a clearer picture.*

## Memories of Vet Work and Hunting in South Dakota

Last month I lost a friend who was instrumental in Monty and my pheasant hunting in South Dakota back in the 90's. There's something magical about the pace of life in South Dakota, it's slower, easier going and this story is an example.

Monty and I were invited to hunt near Platte. One of the farmers had beef cows with calves on rougher pasture and cattail marshes. (It's all corn, beans and wheat now, road to road) In the fall, the calves are weaned, dehorned, castrated, vaccinated, you know the routine. So, Monty and I were volunteered to work the calves in the morning before hunting one day. We brought equipment, vaccine, and implants for about 100 calves, 50 on two different farms. There were all the other hunters to help, the calves were separated from the cows, gates and chute were set up with Monty working the backend of the steers, and me working the front end (a lot easier position, thank you Monty). We ran 50 head through the chute in a couple hours with awesome efficiency. We were done with the first batch at 11 a.m. I asked the farmer if we could get set up at the second farm and work the calves that day. "Nope, we did enough work for today," he replied. "You guys need to get hunting." Hunting hours didn't start until noon and there were so many birds that the group would have a limit in a couple hours, with Monty shooting two or three limits for the guys that couldn't hit squat. "Okay, I said, tomorrow morning we work the second farm," I said. "Nope," the farmer replied. "We did enough work for this week." Two days later Monty and I came back to Wisconsin.

# Industry Trend with Beef on Dairy Steers

In mid-September every year the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP) has an annual conference. There is a trade show for products and equipment and usually three or more seminars running in parallel on a wide range of topics. Three speakers that I found exciting to listen to spoke about industry trends going forward. One spoke on genetic trends in dairy and beef and the ability to breed better animals. One spoke about animal welfare and welfare inspection of farms. And one spoke about where beef on dairy steers is going. I'd like to share some of their thoughts.

Beef on dairy was discussed from the genetic perspective and the slaughter plant perspective. When demand first started 10 years ago for beef semen, all the AI companies got out all their old angus semen and used it up. Dairy farmers wanted cheap black calf semen and they got cheap black calf semen. Now AI companies are using genetics to identify bulls that specifically produce a better steer. They are looking at genetic combinations that maximize growth rate, yield grade, and feed conversion to make whoever feeds the steer or crossbred heifer more money. I didn't know this, but Holstein steers already have great tenderness scores and marbling scores if fed correctly, they just have too much abdominal fat, too much bone which is discarded, and their ribeye is triangular not round.

The cross bred animals of today closely resemble a beef breed animal rather than a pure Holstein steer. A crossbred heifer is a more valuable animal to a packer than a purebred Holstein steer. Another problem with Holstein steers is they have over double the liver abscess rate, and when a packer dumps the liver, intestines, stomach, and spleen into the rendering chute, the loss is 100 dollars. So, they dock all Holsteins hard.

# Bumper Apple Crop Produces Great Cider

Forty-four years ago, I bought the farmette I live on. It had three apple trees that weren't pruned or sprayed but there was a co-op spray group in Alto that I joined and for next to nothing I could get the trees sprayed.

Then I learned how to prune them and when the kids were little, we rented a cider press from a neighbor and the family made apple cider a couple evenings every fall. The kids grew up, the neighbor didn't rent the press, and I got lazy and quit pruning the trees. Fast forward to several years ago, Bev, my wife, got a cider press for Christmas. So, I started spraying, pruning, and planting more varieties of apples. This year I had a tremendous crop, so a couple times a week I brought a bushel or two into the office. This is selfish, because if I don't give the apples away, I end up making cider which is a lot more work.

I brought two bushels into the clinic on a Wednesday, and Friday afternoon there were two half bushels left. Friday afternoon I sent a text to the group at the clinic that the apples needed to disappear. Ralph grabbed all the apples, I was happy, but then Saturday morning Mary from the front office called and said she had plans for some apples, could I bring more in. I assured Mary, don't worry, I'll bring in more over the weekend, which I did, but Mark Sosalla, the bad guy in this story, swung by the office Sunday, and guess what, before Mary could get her apples, they were all gone. Lots of morals of the story here. Mark Sosalla creates conflict, Al shouldn't grow apples, don't get Mary mad at you or maybe, no good deed goes unpunished. It is crazy fun to work here.



***Dr. Al is pictured above pressing apples to make cider with Dr. Ralph and his kids who are taste testing.***

## **Dr. Al's Observances**

*Annoyance: Sitting at Kwik Trip while someone tries to decide which scratch-off lottery tickets to buy. Especially if the ones they want are only available under the glass at another checkout, or they scratch it off while you wait.*

*Disrespect: Trying to make a left turn in heavy traffic at a 30 second traffic light with a green left turn arrow. The first two cars get through in 25 seconds, and you along with 5 more cars get through in the following 5 seconds.*