

Proper Milk Sample Protocols Important

There is an old adage 'garbage in: garbage out.' This pertains to milk samples and it's always an issue when producers send samples in for milk culturing.

The lab reads what grows on the plate. What grows on the plate is what's growing in the milk when the lab receives the sample. What's growing in the milk may not be what is causing the mastitis in the sampled cow.

About 25% of milk samples should report no growth. This is because the high SCC or somatic cells, which are white blood cells, have killed all the bacteria in the sample before the lab is able to test.

If a sample is contaminated even with a small amount of manure, basically dust off the udder, then that contamination may be what the lab identifies.

This is especially true if the sample wasn't kept cold. The more the contamination the more the risk of a bad report. Sample contamination is a huge problem.

Be sure to review sample collection protocols constantly. If you think a sample may be contaminated, start over and recollect.

Use gloves and ample alcohol to clean the teat end. Garbage to the lab, is just garbage.



Pictured from left are Dr. Ralph with his wife, Teresa; Dr. Monty, with his wife, Denise; Dr. Mike Costin, former WVS vet; and Dr. Al, with his wife Dr. Bev. Not pictured is Dr. Jeff.

WVS Vets Attend Annual Cattle Conference in California

Al, Monty, Jeff, and Ralph went to the annual cattle veterinary meeting. Al had to speak about an office management topic. We went out to dinner with a past WVS partner, Mike Costin, who works in Chicago and commented several times he missed the clients around Waupun and farmers in general.

The takeaway was that Wisconsin is way better than Long Beach, California as a place to live. First off, attendance was half what the 2021 meeting in Salt Lake City was. If you live in the country, I guess there are tolerable cities and intolerable cities, and a Los Angeles suburb is intolerable. Even the number of booths in the exhibition hall were way down.

We were in a Hyatt, and there were homeless people in tents on the front lawn, the police moved them away in the morning, and they magically reappeared at night. Walking a couple blocks to a restaurant on the waterfront and we passed people sleeping in nooks and crannies. Although it rarely rained there were multiple puddles against doorways of closed businesses, I guess they need more barn gutters for when the urge arises.

Tomorrow morning when you walk out the door do what I do every morning and say a little of prayer of thanks that you live here. It is the best. By the way, Monty likes Guinness beer, Ralph likes bikinis.

Mysterious Death of Heifers is Accidental Poisoning

Years ago, Dr. Mark Sosalla was presented with a client having an occasional bred heifer dying in the heifer group. Before the heifers died, they acted weak and disoriented, in general like maybe rabies, or some other kind of poisoning. He started sending samples from the animals to various labs with mixed results.

Finally, a pathologist at Iowa State solved the mystery with gas chromatography. This was the same lab equipment and similar testing that solved the PBB mystery from my days in college, the paper shortage, and the subsequent movie 'Bitter Harvest'. The chemical was a Triaryl Phosphate, similar to organophosphates that were used heavily for rootworm in corn. The Triaryl Phosphate was used as a fire retardant in oils like hydraulic fluid and transformers.

In this case, the farmer was oiling a barn cleaner style chain feeder in a bunk and was getting the oil from a relative as 'waste oil'.

The problem with the poisoning is that it comes a couple weeks after the exposure, so Mark and the farmer couldn't associate the waste oil on the chain with the down heifer two to three weeks later.

When the lab called, Mark talked to the farmer, and it was an 'aha' moment. The products are still used in hydraulic fluids.

The take home is if you break a hydraulic hose in the field or in the feed, don't feed the contaminated hayledge or feed. You could lose an animal or two several weeks later and not know why.

Crowding is Concern With Sheep, Goats

I walked into the clinic three weeks ago and there was a young goat on the necropsy table, full of worms. Always tragic, especially because young sheep and goats are very susceptible to parasites, and the parasites have become very resistant to the drugs used to control them.

One of the concerns with small sheep and goat producers is crowding, and crowding isn't obvious until it's a crisis.

Parasite larva that hatches in manure from infected goats are tough. They can withstand drought and dry conditions for 2 months, all the while more and more larvae are being hatched every day from more fecal material.

So, the young, infected goats are ingesting more larva every day. The infectious larva can easily overwinter for up to 8 months, so once a pasture or dirt lot is heavily contaminated, it takes a long rest to decontaminate.

The best way to control the parasite burden on your farm is by doing regular body condition scoring, FAMACHA scoring (looking at the mucous membrane color of the eyelids), and fecal egg counts. Contact WVS if you'd like one of our vets to help you establish a herd health plan.

Interesting Wisconsin Courts, Employee Case

A guy named Palmer applied for a job at a company and they agreed to hire him contingent on his passing a criminal background check. Turns out he was convicted of 8 violent crimes including felony strangulation and suffocation of his then girlfriend and criminal damage to property. The company declined to hire Palmer and he filed a complaint with the Wisconsin Equal Rights division. They said the company had to hire Palmer.

The company appealed to an Administrative Law Judge. He found in favor of the company, saying Palmer's history supported a violent behavior was a concern.

Palmer appealed to the labor and industry review commission who agreed with Palmer. It then went to a circuit court who reversed and supported the company. Then it went to an appeals court who supported Palmer and told the company to hire him.

Finally, the supreme court took the case and held that a company can refuse to hire because violent domestic crimes do reveal a violent personality and an employer has the right to refuse to hire someone with a history of domestic violence. My concern is with all the judges and commissioners that thought hiring an individual with a violent history was OK. I guess we need fox guarding chicken coops.