

This update was provided by your beef checkoff. The Beef Checkoff Program was established as part of the 1985 Farm Bill. The checkoff assesses \$1 per head on the sale of live domestic and imported cattle, in addition to a comparable assessment on imported beef and beef products. States retain up to 50 cents on the dollar and forward the other 50 cents per head to the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board, which administers the national checkoff program, subject to USDA approval.



# What is responsible use of antibiotics in cull cows?

During a recent beef checkoff-sponsored working session, dairy producers and veterinarians from around the country had the opportunity to learn more about the responsible use of antibiotics in dairy cull cows from Dr. Mike Apley, Kansas State University professor of production medicine and clinical pharmacology.

To begin with, what is the current occurrence of antibiotic residues in beef linked to the dairy industry? The overall incidence of antibiotic meat residue violations is very small. However, any concentration of drugs in edible tissue in excess of the allowed tolerance as determined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can result in a food safety issue and a violation of the law. Apley says a majority of violations of identified residues in beef come from cull or market dairy cows. Often the residue issue results from penicillin (almost 40 percent of all drug residue violations in dairy cattle), flunixin meglumine and sulfadimethoxine.

"As an industry, we're under the microscope as never before in regard to this issue," says Apley. "We have to be able to document what we are

doing and develop treatment and management strategies and build protocols for animal care with our clients throughout the production system."

Through the checkoff's Dairy Animal Care Quality Assurance (DACQA) program, dairy producers are encouraged to participate in the voluntary program to enhance and demonstrate quality animal care practices that ensure food safety, quality and value and enhance consumer confidence in the milk and beef products harvested from cattle on America's dairy farms. The DACQA provides a list of recommended best management practices for judicious use of antimicrobials in cattle – adapted from the AVMA, AABP and AVC Appropriate Veterinary Antibiotic Use Guidelines – to help keep food safety a top priority.

"As veterinarians working with our clients, it's important to develop relationships with all of the people working on the dairy," Apley continues. "People throughout the dairy – veterinarians, workers, management – need to agree on the specific protocols and adhere

to proper drug use, administration and withdrawal times. Then, both veterinarians and producers should document training and employees' agreement to follow these protocols."

In developing clients' residue avoidance plans, Apley suggests using a checklist that includes treatment protocols and records for tracking cows throughout the dairy. Remember, the more details handled and recorded up front, the less chance for errors later on. And a good place to start when developing the farm's protocols is with the DACQA guidelines, which contain basic information on the proper selection and administration of products, proper recordkeeping for the entire production system and animal care and handling guidelines.

"As veterinarians, providing only verbal instructions as we're getting into the truck to leave isn't going to work anymore. We need to have records that we've trained the crews, developed protocols and written guidelines that ensure animals are being cared for in a responsible manner," Apley says. "I encourage my colleagues to develop a basic protocol for use as the starting point



Dr. Mike Apley recently addressed the industry about the responsible use of antibiotics in cull cows.

Photo courtesy of the Beef Checkoff Program.

in working with their dairy clients. No matter the herd size – a 50-cow or 500-cow or a 5,000-cow herd – in the future, we'll need to have plans to help our dairy clients provide safe milk and beef for consumers."

To learn more about Dairy Animal Care Quality Assurance and residue avoidance, visit the resource section at BQA.org **PD**

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