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UCD VET VIEWS  
CALIFORNIA CATTLEMAN, MARCH 1998

### ***TRICHOMONIASIS: What is the future? Part II***

At the recent CCA convention in Reno, a resolution was adopted to appoint a working group to compile information and recommendations for the CCA membership regarding Trichomoniasis control in California. The reasons for this resolution include: (1) Trichomoniasis can have devastating economic impacts on individual herds and the industry as a whole, (2) this disease is widespread in California and neighboring states, (3) states such as Idaho, Utah, Wyoming, and Colorado have adopted Trichomoniasis control programs, and (4) control programs are complicated and animal health regulations may be needed to make progress. To insure that any decisions will be based on the best available information, last month's column and the next three columns will be devoted to this topic. The first two columns are a review of the medical facts of Trichomoniasis, which are reprinted from last years columns. These two columns were written by myself and Dr. Robert BonDurant of UC Davis' School of Veterinary Medicine last summer. Another column will review regulations adopted by other western states and another column will review the findings of the Trichomoniasis working group.

Trichomoniasis is a disease of cattle that causes infertility, open cows, and occasional abortions in cows and heifers. It is commonly referred to as "Trich", and is a disease that can be economically devastating for infected herds. Estimates from Idaho, indicate that this disease cost that state in excess of four million dollars per year prior to the start of their control program.

*Is there a vaccine?* Yes. Fort Dodge currently markets a vaccine made from killed whole cells of T. foetus. Tests of this vaccine have shown that experimentally infected, vaccinated females "clear" a vaginal infection in a matter of a few weeks, whereas control (unvaccinated) females remain infected for months. As of this date, no efficacy for bulls has been shown, i.e. the vaccine has not been shown to protect bulls from becoming infected.

*Is there a treatment for the bulls?* Technically, ethically and legally, no. There is no FDA-approved treatment for "Trich" in cattle. Several years ago, some bulls were successfully treated with a poultry product, but the drug is not cleared for such use in cattle. Not only that, but the FDA has declared that the use of this poultry product in cattle is outright illegal.

*What about the cows and heifers?* Most studies have shown that the disease is **self limiting** in the female, as opposed to the male, who can carry it for years. After several heat cycles, most cows and heifers clean themselves up, but this may take months. Research is showing that up to six months may be required in some cases, but 1-4 months is more common.

At pregnancy check time, non pregnant females, especially those with reproductive tracts that the veterinarian declares "abnormal" (e.g. with pyometra) should be sold for slaughter. They might represent "carrier cows" that could maintain the disease in the cow herd even if the bulls were cleaned up. Non pregnant females with "normal" tracts may be kept over for rebreeding, if a "split" calving season is practiced, but they should not be mingled with the normal cows; nor should the same bulls breed both groups of cows.

*How can I prevent trichomoniasis, if my herd's never had it?*

1. Use young, fertile bulls (<3 years). Many studies have confirmed that younger bulls are less able to carry and transmit the disease.
2. Keep fences in good repair.
3. Culture new bulls at semen exam time. (This is also a good time to vaccinate bulls for Vibrio (another venereal disease).
4. Be very suspicious of new cows or bulls, especially somebody else's cull. Keep the cow herd closed, and use only virgin and/or Trich-negative bulls whenever possible.
5. Vaccinate all females for Trich, twice at 1 month intervals, then annually. The best time to vaccinate is just a few weeks before the bulls are turned in, so that immunity is high at the time of possible exposure to the "bug".

This column ends the review of Trichomoniasis and next month we will outline and discuss the Trichomoniasis control programs being instituted by other Western states.

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