

Quality Care Matters

A Column about Dairy Animal Care provided by the Pennsylvania Beef Council



Cargill's Antibiotic Residue Program

In this month's Quality Care Matters, we interview Mark Miller, Cargill Regional Beef Food Safety Superintendent, about Cargill's antibiotic residue program. To meet USDA regulatory and food safety policies, Cargill released revisions to the program this winter. If any animal is found with violative antibiotic drug residues, all purchases from the animal's owner will stop until corrective actions are in place. If a second violation happens, within 12 months, Cargill will suspend purchasing animals from the owner for 12 months.

To follow is more information about this new policy, and its implementation in Pennsylvania.

How would Cargill halt purchases from producers identified as violators? Today, there is poor trace back to farm of origin.

- It is extremely rare that Cargill is not able to trace back to the producer/owner. Animals, when taken to sale, are required to have, on file, a chemical residue/meat bone meal (MBM) certificate from the owner. It is the responsibility of the dealer/haulers/sales to identify those animals coming to slaughter.

- First violation within a 12-month period — Cargill sends written notification to the producer and when appropriate, the sale barn or buying station representative, advising them of a residue testing violation and that another violation within a 12-month period will result in the suspension of purchases from the producer. The producer is required to submit written corrective actions to our company procurement personnel.

- If there is a repeat (second) violation within a 12 month period — Cargill sends written notification via certified mail, and makes a phone call when possible, to the producer and when appropriate, the sale barn or buying station representative, advising them of a second residue testing violation within a 12-month period. The producer is informed that he/she is immediately suspended from selling animals to any Cargill facility for a minimum of 12 months from the date the second result is received. The producer is required to submit written corrective actions to our company procurement personnel before animals can be brought into a Cargill facility. We also notify USDA/FSIS inspection personnel at the plant of the repeat residue violation and suspension.

Would attending a Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) or Dairy Animal Care Quality Assurance (DACQA) program to become certified qualify as a recommended corrective action for redemption?

We would require that a producer demonstrate (e.g. through training, identification or similar method) how they will prevent sending another animal with a chemical residue violation, from being sold into commerce for meat slaughter.

Supply of market cows is important to Cargill's Wyalusing business. If Cargill adds restrictions to cow purchases, will it negatively impact line flow or will Cargill be forced to pay more for better quality cows?

Markets are extremely volatile and we will pay what the market can bear. Cargill is not alone in this endeavor. Meat packers, cattle producers, sale barn and buying station owners all have a responsibility to make sure antibiotic residue violations are eliminated. Cargill is required to follow the limits set by FDA and USDA just as all other packers and producers.

New testing technologies allow antibiotics to be detected at more

sensitive levels. Will this increase the number of violations?

The increased sensitivity detection levels will increase the likelihood of identifying animals that either didn't have a proper withdrawal time or had chemicals administered improperly. Following both proper withdrawal times and instructions for properly administering the drug are keys to avoiding a chemical residue violation.

A cow is purchased and subsequently, harvested, at Cargill. Test results show there is drug residue leading to condemnation of the entire carcass. What can Cargill do to recover its investment in the cow?

In certain situations, in the loss of a carcass due to residues leading to condemnation, we will seek to recoup our financial loss from the producer.

Will the costs of all this new regulatory protocol be subtracted from the market cow purchase price?

Nothing has changed about how we procure cattle except the actions needed from a producer if they send us an animal found to have residue violations. The extra responses required from producers allow us to continue buying their cattle in the market place with confidence they have taken steps to prevent a recurrence.

Is there a "do-over" test in the event that the initial test shows volatile residue?

No, carcasses are prescreened by USDA/FSIS; they are again screened at the FSIS lab before performing quantitative tests.

Buyers of market cows can generally identify suspect animals due to udders, feet and legs, open sores, C-sections, etc. What percentage of violations come from un-suspect cows?

All suspect animals are prescreened according to inspection protocols set by USDA/FSIS. Most of the violations come from these types of animals identified as suspect in the ante mortem and post mortem stages of the process.

Are beef cows a problem when it comes to residues for Cargill-Wyalusing?

Typically older animals coming to market are at higher risk for residue violations than younger animals.

What are the most common antibiotic/analgesic residues that you see?

Penicillin and banamine are the most common residues found in animals that fail at the Wyalusing facility.

What are other plants doing about the residue problem?

The industry is currently determining the best way to move forward with a consistent approach. Cargill is participating in this process.

In your producer letter, you state that "if any animal, which is prohibited from slaughter and found to have violative levels of antibiotic drug residues, all purchases from the animal's producer will be halted until corrective actions are in place." The following sentence says, "If a second violation, from the same producer occurs within 12 months." If purchases are halted, how could a second violation happen?

If a producer on receiving the first letter complies with the direction of giving us the appropriate corrective action, we will continue to buy their cattle in the market place. The direction in the letter is clear on the required steps and the consequences if those steps are not followed.

Culinary Students Tour Veal Farms

The Pennsylvania Beef Council partnered with Marcho Farms, Franconia, Pa., and the beef check-off to host an educational farm tour on April 28. Sixteen students and a chef instructor from the Philadelphia Art Institute's culinary program attended the one-day event, gaining a first-hand look at the veal industry, from farm gate to dinner plate.

As one of the nation's leaders in veal production, Pennsylvania is well-positioned to provide future chefs and foodservice professionals with an up-close look at all aspects of the modern veal industry.

The tour kicked off at the Marcho Farms barn where Dr. Adnan Aydin, director of research and nutrition, explained how each veal calf is carefully raised on select formula milk replacer. "We supervise 100 percent of the growing process and take every measure to ensure our calves are properly cared for," said Aydin. "We're committed to producing a quality end product for consumers."

Marcho Farms' commitment is demonstrated by their investment in group housing, where special flooring material and design provide the calves with a comfortable and clean environment. Following the barn tour, students were transported to Marcho Farms headquarters located just a few miles from the farm.

Today, Marcho Farms processes more than 2,000 veal calves per week. The students were led on a walking tour of Marcho's fabrication and slaughter facilities where they learned about the quality assurance measures implemented during processing, from machine handling and sanitization to shipping and sales.

The day ended with an in-depth panel discussion and question-and-



Students from the Philadelphia Art Institute culinary program tour a Marcho Farms veal barn on April 28.

answer session hosted by industry experts including Wayne Marcho; Aydin; Daryl Bernhard, Marcho Farms; Dean Conklin, director of the checkoff's veal program; Beth Ann Mumford, American Veal Association and Paul Slayton, Pennsylvania Beef Council executive director.

Topics included veal nutrition, issues management and quality assur-

ance. Wayne Marcho also spoke to the students about his company's commitment to excellence. "You can't change the quality of the calf in the plant," Marcho commented. He explained the root of their success saying, "We start with quality on the farm and the feed we produce. We care about our company and we care about our consumers."



From left, State Agriculture Secretary George Greig; Dennis Liegey, owner of Denny's Beer Barrel Pub, Clearfield; The Governor's Special Advisor for Agriculture Boots Hetherington. Greig and Hetherington presented Liegey with a May Beef Month proclamation.

Pa. Beef Council Celebrates Beef Month

BEDFORD, Pa. — The Pennsylvania Beef Council visited Denny's Beer Barrel Pub, Clearfield, on Monday, May 9, to proclaim May as Beef Month in Pennsylvania. State Agriculture Secretary George Greig helped celebrate by cutting into the giant, 15-pound burger prepared especially for the event.

Denny's Beer Barrel Pub was founded in 1977 by Denny and Jean Liegey, and is now widely known as the home of the world's largest hamburger challenges. "We welcomed more than 200,000 customers last year through our door," Denny Liegey said. "I like to say about 90 percent of them were ordering hamburgers."

Several local officials joined Secretary Greig at the event includ-

ing Clearfield County Commissioners Mark McCracken, Joan McMillen and John Sobel. The Governor's Special Advisor for Agriculture, Boots Hetherington, was also on hand to present Liegey with the official beef month proclamation.

Pennsylvania Beef Council Executive Director Paul Slayton recognized the efforts of Pennsylvania producers. "We are committed to producing a safe, wholesome product, evidenced by the 3,300 farmers certified through our Beef Quality Assurance program," said Slayton. "Quality starts at the farm."

The Pennsylvania Beef Quality Assurance program is a nationally coordinated, state implemented program that helps raise consumer confidence by promoting proper management



The giant 15-pound hamburger crafted for the event