

Brucellosis

has

to go



TEXAS AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE
J. E. Hutchison, Director, College Station, Texas

BRUCELLOSIS HAS TO GO

*C. M. Patterson, Extension Veterinarian
Texas A. & M. College System*

Livestock raising is a gamble at best. But animals with brucellosis are like crooked dice -- your only profit is experience.

Infected cattle suffer a 20 percent reduction in milk production. They calve on the average of once every year-and-a-half rather than once a year. In addition, the resulting abortions, sterility and difficult breeders increase replacement needs by 30 percent.

Whether you are a producer of milk or beef, these losses apply to you. A beef cow that loses 20 percent of her milk production will wean a calf 10 percent lighter than normal.

Swine producers fare little better with this disease. Infected sows abort or give birth to weak litters. Sows frequently become sterile following abortion. The disease damages the bones of the spine, with resulting paralysis in up to 20 percent of infected swine.

And that's not all. Brucellosis is the most common cause of fistula of the withers in horses. It frequently is responsible for waterbags forming on the knees of both horses and cattle.

Human cases of brucellosis are being diagnosed with increasing frequency among persons handling livestock or drinking unpasteurized milk.

Less tangible losses occur in addition to the ones listed. Loss of markets for Texas breeding and stocker cattle is be-

coming a serious problem. The shortage of healthy replacement dairy stock is commanding attention. The constant threat of the disease becoming established in the sheep and goat flocks of Texas cannot be ignored.

This adds up to only one conclusion:
BRUCELLOSIS HAS TO GO.

What Is Brucellosis?

Brucellosis is a contagious disease of animals and man caused by a bacterial agent. In cattle, it has been called Bang's disease and contagious abortion. In swine it also is referred to as contagious abortion. It sometimes is referred to as undulant fever in man.

In cattle and milk goats, brucellosis localizes in the reproductive tract and interferes with normal reproduction. In addition, the disease affects the mammary glands and reduces milk production.

In swine, brucellosis is a bloodstream infection in young animals. In addition to abortions, the disease frequently causes the birth of weak and unthrifty pigs. In older swine the disease may affect the bones of the spine and produce paralysis.

Horses suffer from local infections with the disease, such as fistulous withers, poll evil or abscesses on the point of the breastbone.

Human brucellosis is a lingering disease of the bloodstream. Although seldom fatal, it produces debility, nervous disorders and various other physical disturbances.

The germ causing brucellosis is not a hardy individual and will not survive long outside the animal's body under Texas climatic conditions. Its main means of

spread from animal to animal is through contaminated feed and water and through direct contact with infected animals having a discharge from the reproductive tract. Only in swine is the disease commonly transmitted by breeding.

Man becomes infected by drinking unpasteurized milk from infected animals or by handling infected animals without proper sanitary precautions. Assisting animals during birth or removing retained afterbirth is the most dangerous type of contact.

How Big Is Our Problem?

During the summer of 1956, the livestock sanitary officials in Texas ran a survey of dairy herds using the milk ring test. *Out of 2,551 herds checked, 79.1 percent showed evidence of infected animals in the herd.*

A similar survey will begin soon on the State's beef herds. Blood from animals at slaughter establishments will be collected and tested. Positive animals will be traced and the raiser notified that brucellosis exists in his herd.

Although beef herds are not expected to be infected in the high percentage of dairy herds, present indications are that the State average will be higher than one herd out of five.

Unfortunately, figures are not available for the swine industry of Texas. It is generally believed that the brucellosis problem in swine is concentrated in a few areas of the State. Areas of high hog density, and areas where swine are not confined by fences are likely to have the most trouble.

What You Can Do About Brucellosis

Steps to follow with a dairy herd



START NOW! Sign up on Plan A or B

1.

Plan A provides for:

- a. Test of all breeding cattle on premises over 6 months of age except official vaccinates under 30 months of age.
- b. Segregation of any animal showing a suspicious reaction to the blood test until the animal can be retested 30 days later.
- c. Vaccination of all heifers to be retained as replacements between 4 and 8 months of age (optional on Plan A).
- d. Adding to the herd only animals that are official calfhood vaccinates or known to be free of brucellosis.
- e. Disposal of all infected animals within 15 days of reaction to blood test.

Plan B provides for:

- a. Test of all breeding cattle on premises over 6 months of age except official vaccinates under 30 months of age.
- b. Branding all reactors and, if possible, keeping them separate from clean animals except at milking time.
- c. Retention of branded animals in herd for a 3-year period. Herds participating under this plan may market milk from branded animals.

d. Vaccination of all heifer calves to be kept as replacements between 4 and 8 months of age.



2. Keep fences in good repair to avoid accidental introduction of the disease by wandering animals.



3. Protect water and feed for herd from contamination with body discharges of other animals.



4. Keep fresh cows separate from the herd until discharge following calving has stopped.



5. Tell your neighbors about the losses from brucellosis and encourage them to follow a plan to get rid of the disease.



6. Stay with your plan until your herd, and your neighborhood, is *brucellosis-free*.

Steps to follow with a beef herd



1. Sign up on a plan for getting rid of brucellosis now! Plan A or B as described under dairy herds will do the job quickly. But Plan C was designed especially for beef herds. It allows a beef cattle man to outgrow his problem over a period of a few years.

Plan C provides for:

a. Vaccination of all heifer calves between the ages of 4 and 12 months.

b. Replacing all adults that were not vaccinated as calves as soon as possible with officially vaccinated heifers.



2. Add only animals officially vaccinated against brucellosis to the herd as replacements.



3. Keep fences in good repair to prevent wandering animals from introducing new infection.



4. Protect water and feed of animals against contamination with body discharges of other animals.



5. Put animals that don't clean following calving into a hospital trap until normal. Send animals that abort to slaughter.



6. Inform your neighbors of the losses in profit caused by brucellosis. Encourage them to begin on a plan to get rid of the disease.



7. Stay with your plan until your herd and neighborhood are *brucellosis-free*.

See your veterinarian or contact the Livestock Sanitary Commission today for details on a control plan. Your veterinarian or county agent will be glad to help you adapt these steps to your herd. **LET'S GET STARTED TOWARD A BRUCELLOSIS-FREE TEXAS BY 1965.**

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture
and Home Economics, The Texas A. & M.
College System and the United States De-
partment of Agriculture cooperating
Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of
Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and
June 30, 1914.

Reprint #58