



Ag News

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Pressure rises to stop antibiotics in agriculture

The Associated Press recently released a story through nationwide media sources concerning "The rise in the use of antibiotics is part of a growing problem of soaring drug resistance worldwide". It is a long, but interesting article that I encourage each of you to read, especially if you own livestock of any kind.

Here is an excerpt from the article.

America's farmers give their pigs, cows and chickens about 8 percent more antibiotics each year, usually to heal lung, skin or blood infections. However, 13 percent of the antibiotics administered on farms last year were fed to healthy animals to make them grow faster. Antibiotics also save as much as 30 percent in feed costs among young swine, although the savings fade as pigs get older, according to a new USDA study.

However, these animals can develop germs that are immune to the antibiotics. The germs then rub into scratches on farmworkers' arms, causing oozing infections. They blow into neighboring communities in dust clouds, run off into lakes and rivers during heavy rains, and are sliced into roasts, chops and hocks and sent to our dinner tables.

"Antibiotic-resistant microorganisms generated in the guts of pigs in the Iowa countryside don't stay on the farm," said Union of Concerned Scientists Food and Environment director Margaret Mellon.

More than 20 percent of all human cases of a deadly drug-resistant staph infection in the Netherlands could be traced to an animal strain, according to a study published online in a CDC journal. Federal food safety studies routinely find drug resistant bacteria

in beef, chicken and pork sold in supermarkets, and 20 percent of people who get salmonella have a drug resistant strain, according to the CDC.

Here's how it happens: In the early '90s, farmers in several countries, including the U.S., started feeding animals fluoroquinolones, a family of antibiotics that includes drugs such as ciprofloxacin. In the following years, the once powerful antibiotic Cipro stopped working 80 percent of the time on some of the deadliest human infections it used to wipe out. Twelve years later, the New England Journal of Medicine published a study linking people infected with a Cipro-resistant bacteria to pork they had eaten.

Johns Hopkins University health sciences professor Ellen Silbergeld, who has reviewed every major study on this issue, said there's no doubt drug use in farm animals is a "major driver of antimicrobial resistance worldwide."

"We have data to show it's in wastewaters and it goes to aquaculture and it goes here and there," agreed Dr. Stuart Levy, an expert on antibiotic resistance at Tufts University in Boston. "Antibiotic use in animals impacts everything."

The entire article and accompanying videos can be viewed at this link: http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20091229/ap_on_he_me/when_drugs_stop_working_the_meat_we_eat

Multi-paddock grazing provides efficiency and profits for ranchers

Source: Texas A&M AgNews

Short grazing periods on multiple paddocks within a pasture can not only restore forage conditions, but also profit margins, according to a Texas AgriLife Research scientist. Dr. Richard Teague, AgriLife Research range ecologist in Vernon, has been studying the benefits of multi-paddock grazing for the past eight years. Ranchers need to know answers to practical questions such as: how good is this management option, where is it successful, and what does it take to make it work as well as possible, Teague says.

His research on ranches that successfully used multi-paddock grazing management compared the impact on the soil, vegetation, hydrological function and profitability to more traditional continuous grazing methods. Teague examined neighboring ranches to determine the impact of multi-paddock grazing by managers who achieved excellent livestock and vegetation results compared with areas grazed continuously at either light or heavy stocking rates.

He found the multi-paddock managers were able to carry many more animals, have more forage than their neighbors and have excellent wildlife habitat. They also achieved high levels of animal performance per acre while equaling the vegetation composition, soil cover, soil carbon, soil health and infiltration rates measured on ranches under light continuous grazing.

In contrast, the ranches managed under higher stocking rates with continuous grazing had a higher degree of soil compaction, more bare ground, lower soil carbon, poorer grass composition, more weeds and lower forage production than those under multi-paddock management at high stocking rates or the continuous grazing at low stocking rates.

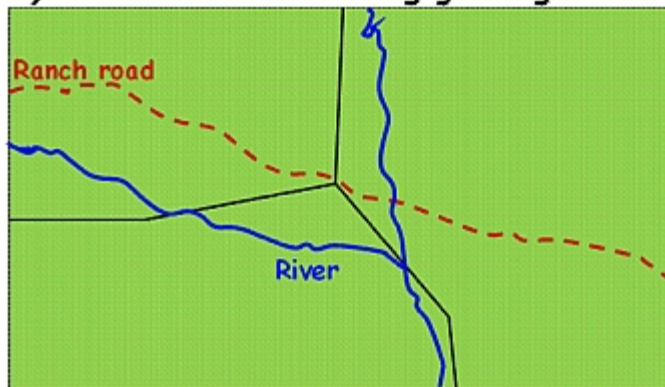
"The reason the multi-paddock grazers were able to achieve these positive results is they aimed at managing to give the best vegetation and animal performance," Teague explains. "The key to doing this is to match animal numbers with available forage at all times to avoid overgrazing and poor animal performance." Teague says to achieve top plant and animal performance, the time cattle are left on the paddock must be short enough to prevent a second bite, defoliate moderately during the growing season and allow adequate recovery time before grazing again. Using these guidelines, the range will improve over time so the highest possible condition is attained.

Research shows potential grazing income is four times higher on pastures with excellent range condition compared to that in poor condition. The problem is, in order to maximize profits, pastures have to be stocked at a rate that will decrease range conditions; whereas to improve range conditions, pastures have to be stocked at a rate that will lower overall income. Past research has shown that to improve range condition under continuous grazing, at least 1,000 to 1,500 pounds of forage per acre must be left at the end of the season. At least 800 pounds per acre must remain just to maintain range conditions.

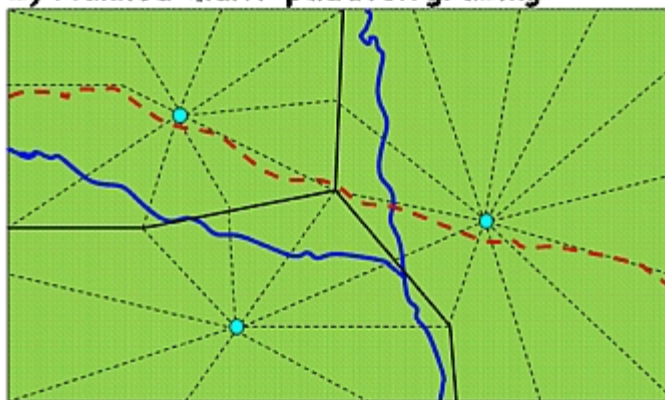
Multi-paddock grazing management offers a more sustainable and productive alternative, but it takes goal-setting, monitoring and flexibility. It allows better distribution, better control of use of palatable plants, adjustment of recovery periods, increased percentage of green leaf and less seasonal fluctuation in the diet. Plan and manage for success by creating sound, achievable goals. The plan should consider income and expenses, as well as a biological plan. It will take monitoring, control and replanning. Flexible stocking rates must be matched with forage availability.

Under continuous grazing in large pastures, cattle tend to concentrate on areas close to rivers or other sources of water and the more palatable plants. Even under light or moderate stocking, these areas are more heavily grazed while the rest of the paddock is under grazed during the growing season. "This weakens the plants on these heavily grazed areas and plants so they produce less and are more adversely affected during dry years," says Teague. Subdividing existing paddocks with electric fencing and providing water points is a modest investment that enables a manager to graze

1) Continuous season-long grazing



2) Planned multi-paddock grazing



— Existing fence ● Water point
 - - - - - Electric fence

This graphic demonstrates how an existing ranch can be divided up into multiple paddocks to restore forage conditions and improve profit margins, according to Dr. Richard Teague, Texas AgriLife Research range ecologist in Vernon. (Texas AgriLife Research photo)

a larger portion of the ranch. "More of the ranch would be used, and the plants would not be overgrazed," he says. "This improves the rangeland if conducted properly and both productivity and profitability can be improved, as indicated by numerous ranchers." Teague says successful multi-paddock managers plan grazing and finances to improve forage species composition and production, minimize impact of drought, reduce costs, improve work efficiency and increase profits. Multi-paddock managers who have succeeded have received training and coaching and then practice to develop better skills. They report that changing to multi-paddock management has simplified their job and allowed them to be more efficient. Producers considering multi-paddock grazing should base decisions on goals set in advance - these need to include desired landscape, profit and quality of life elements to guide all management decisions. Land restoration, animal performance and wildlife needs should be incorporated into the grazing part of the plan each year. The management plan must also regularly assess forage on hand to adjust livestock numbers or area grazed. Grazing periods need to be based on different recovery during periods of fast or slow growth.

"So in dry areas, the rest period will be 90 or more days, while in wetter areas, it will be 40 to 60 days," Teague says. "Such management can provide recovery on all areas of the ranch for 340 or more days each year." By allowing only moderate defoliation during the growing season with short grazing periods, allowing recovery before regrazing, and grazing again before the forage gets too mature, animal performance can be high without damaging the grasses. Planned multi-paddock grazing, when managed to give best vegetation and animal performance, has the potential to produce superior conservation and restoration of resources, and to increase ranch profitability, Teague says.

Putting a face on the beef industry

Source: TSCRA



In efforts to continue proactive outreach, the Texas Beef Council (TBC) teamed up with the Texas Farm Bureau to develop a video utilizing beef farmers and ranchers

to tell the beef production story. The goal of the video is to educate consumers about the beef industry in order to dispel myths about modern beef production practices related specifically to animal welfare, the environment, nutrition and food safety.

"The Texas Farm Bureau is pleased to partner with the Texas Beef Council (TBC) to tell the stories of the families involved in Texas beef production," said Gene Hall, Texas Farm Bureau public relations director. "Their commitment to the land and their heritage, both passed down from preceding generations, is truly inspiring."

Interviews were conducted with three beef industry families focusing on the dedication and commitment of beef producers. The video takes consumers on a virtual journey visiting the R.A.

Brown Ranch, Texana Feeders and Star Ridge Land and Cattle Company.

"TBC was fortunate enough to work with Texas Farm Bureau to produce a first-rate video that will lend itself to multiple uses within the Texas beef industry," said Richard Wortham, TBC executive vice president. "The video will help put a face on our industry and allow consumers to better understand the hard work and dedication cattle producers put in each and every day to supply not only the U.S., but the world, with a safe and wholesome product."

The video is featured on TxBeef.org in a new section titled "The Beef Story". It will also be utilized at various TBC events and seminars. Cattle organizations and beef industry groups are encouraged to utilize the video in their efforts to combat animal agriculture activist and explain the beef production process.

For more information on this and other checkoff-funded programs, please visit www.TexasBeef.org or call 1-800-846-4113.

New Campaign Investigates HSUS Lobbying Activities

Source: Cattlenetwork.com

The Alliance has been made aware of a new campaign to petition the IRS to investigate alleged under-reported lobbying activities of the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Frank Losey of the Illinois Professional Pet Breeders Association and Karen Strange of the Missouri Federation of Animal Owners are heading up the effort, which aims to coordinate thousands of letters and e-mails to policy makers requesting that HSUS be revoked of its tax-exempt status due to excessive lobbying at both the state and federal levels.

While the Alliance was not involved in the planning of this campaign, we believe it may be of interest to our members. HSUS' activities target farmers, ranchers, pet owners, hunters, and scientists by working to eliminate the right to own and enjoy animals. Those who are interested in participating in the campaign should send a letter to the IRS by Certified Mail and e-mail their Senators and Member of Congress before January 1. The organizers believe these tactics will increase the chance of IRS action.

The Sportsmen's and Animal Owners Voting Alliance has published detailed information about the campaign on its Web site, including:

- [Fourteen pages of background information about HSUS' lobbying activity](#)
- [Strategic Planning Materials and Instructions](#)
- [Sample IRS Letter](#)
- [Sample E-mail to Congress](#)

New Year Means New Regulation for Texas Cattle

Source: TAHC

Thinking about selling, leasing, bartering or even giving away a breeding bull? On January 1, Texas bulls that undergo a change of ownership (except to slaughter) must be either certified as a virgin bull or be tested first for cattle trichomoniasis, a protozoal disease that can cause cows to abort very early in pregnancy. Infected bulls carry the microscopic “bug” that causes trichomoniasis without any signs and can transmit the single-celled protozoa to cows during breeding.

“There is no effective treatment for bulls, and once infected, they can continue to spread trichomoniasis when they breed,” said **Dr. Dee Ellis**, who, on January 1, will be Texas’ new state veterinarian and head of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), the state’s livestock and poultry health regulatory agency. “Infected cows may clear the infection, but only if they are given rest from breeding for 120-150 days—an expensive option, as a calf crop will be missed. A vaccine also is available to help in the management of infected cows, but it will not prevent infection.”

The country’s western states have long-standing cattle trichomoniasis regulations. About two years ago, the Texas ranching industry requested similar regulations, to protect against the introduction and the spread of cattle trichomoniasis, or “trich.” For months, representatives from the state’s ranching, marketing and veterinary industries worked with the TAHC to develop effective regulations to control the disease, which affects herd productivity and an operation’s bottom line. In April 2009, the TAHC enacted requirements for bulls entering Texas. In-state regulations were delayed until January 1, 2010.

“For months, we have worked with the Texas cattle industry to inform producers and have participated in many meetings about cattle trichomoniasis and the regulations. More than 600 accredited private veterinarians in Texas have been certified to collect samples for trichomoniasis testing, and we are ready to implement the in-state regulations for bulls undergoing a change of ownership in Texas,” said Dr. Ellis.

Dr. Ellis said the regulations will apply to bulls being sold, traded, leased or undergoing any change of ownership (except for slaughter). The regulations include three basic steps: Identify the bull. Identification is essential for matching animals with virgin bull certificates or test documents. One form of identification is needed, and it may be an official USDA ear tag, breed registry brand or tattoo, an 840 flap, bangle or an 840 radio frequency identification device. If the bull originated from another state, it may have that state’s official state of origin trichomoniasis ear tag (Texas does not have an official trich ear tag). An accredited veterinarian can apply an official USDA ear tag. Certify virgin bulls. A breeder can certify the bull as a virgin, if the animal was raised away from cows after weaning, and the bull is 24 months of age or younger. A Texas-origin bull’s virgin status may

On January 1, Texas bulls that undergo a change of ownership (except to slaughter) must be either certified as a virgin bull or be tested first for cattle trichomoniasis, a protozoal disease that can cause cows to abort very early in pregnancy.

be extended to 30 months, if the virgin certificate is signed also by the breeder’s accredited veterinarian. Virgin bulls are not required to have a trichomoniasis test prior to change of ownership. Virgin bull certificates are available at no cost on the TAHC web page at <http://www.tahc.state.tx.us>.

Test older or non-virgin bulls. Bulls older than 30 months or bulls that were maintained with cows after weaning must have a negative trichomoniasis test within 30 days prior to change of ownership. A certified, accredited veterinarian must collect the sample for testing at the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory. While awaiting test results, which usually takes about a week, the bulls must be kept away from cows. Upon receipt of the negative test results, the animal is ready for change of ownership.

“Breeding bulls that haven’t been certified as virgins or tested are considered to be slaughter-only bulls,” said Dr. Ellis. “In some cases, however, buyers may want an untested bull, although they may be buying trouble. We have provisions under the regulations for untested bulls to be identified and moved under a TAHC-issued hold order and movement permit. The animal must be isolated from female cattle, and cannot be moved until it is tested within 30 days of purchase at the owner’s expense.”

“In Texas, two tests are accepted. One is the Real Time Polymerase Chain Reaction test, or PCR, which looks for the DNA of the protozoa. Because only one PCR test is needed to detect infection, this may become the preferred method for producers who want to move cattle more quickly. The second acceptable test is the culture test, and it involves looking for the protozoa under a microscope. A series of three culture tests is needed, each conducted at least seven days apart,” said Dr. Ellis.

“Because cattle trichomoniasis is a reportable disease, we will be notified regarding test-positive animals,” explained Dr. Ellis. “Test-positive bulls may undergo a confirmation test, provided the owner or the accredited, certified veterinarian makes the request within five days of the positive results.”

Because there is no effective treatment, infected bulls must go to slaughter within 30 days of confirmation. The remaining bulls in the herd will be held, isolated from female cattle, until they undergo two consecutive negative RT-PCR tests, each conducted at least seven days apart, or three consecutive negative culture tests, with each of the tests conducted at least seven days apart. When they are confirmed negative for trichomoniasis, the bulls remaining in the herd are free to be moved or to be commingled with cows.

“The cattle trichomoniasis regulations can save cattle producers a lot of money in the long run, because this disease greatly affects calf production. If you are obtaining a breeding bull, make sure the animal has been certified as a virgin or was tested—for your herd’s

sake,” said Dr. Ellis. “We will be reviewing the regulations on a yearly basis with an industry working group, to ensure that the rules remain timely and effective.”

Texas’ trichomoniasis entry requirements for breeding bulls is similar to the intrastate regulations, but allows out-of-state bulls to be certified as virgins only until 24 months of age. Exhibition or competition bulls may enter Texas without a trichomoniasis test, but must be kept away from female cattle. The TAHC must be contacted in advance of entry for a waiver of the test requirement to be issued on exhibition bulls.

The TAHC’s cattle trichomoniasis regulations and additional information are available on the TAHC web site at: <http://www.tahc.state.tx.us> .

