



# December 2024 Newsletter

## Bovine Leukosis Virus (BLV) has Hidden Costs to Producers

Most producers have seen cows with classic BLV tumors, large nodules at the base of the udder or front of the shoulder, a down cow with tumors pinching nerves, or a bulging eye from a tumor behind the eye. It's easily the most common cause of cattle cancer, and a transmissible virus causes it. The cost is higher than anyone realizes.

Only 3 to 5 % of cattle infected with the BLV virus will get tumors. These tumors form in lymph tissue, mainly in lymph nodes because the virus infects immune cells. Because most cows are culled at a young age, even if half the cattle in a dairy herd are infected with the virus, seeing the tumors form is uncommon. The disease doesn't show up on most producer's concern list.

But more evidence is constantly accumulating about the productivity drag from this virus. We know that infected animals leave the herd much earlier than non-infected animals for a variety of reasons. Basically, animals infected with BLV are less healthy, succumb to infections compared to non-infected animals, and produce less milk. The cost of this virus to the industry and to your farm is probably higher than anyone realizes. The loss is not readily seen and it's hard to measure, but it is real.

The virus is transmitted from animal to animal mainly by blood contamination. Common use needles are considered the number one cause. There are multiple other lower risk transmission avenues including some biting insects, common use dehorning (burning kills the virus), and even rectal sleeves, especially if there is blood on them.

Contaminated colostrum will infect calves just like Johne's disease. Control requires a comprehensive plan involving your herd veterinarian, but going to single use needles is a huge step and prevents the transmission of other diseases as well.

## Supply Shortages to affect Needles, Syringes Supply

Products produced in China which includes needles and syringes, have a shortage and pricing issue.

One type of disposable syringe we purchase jumped in price from \$23.19 to \$56.25 from one order to the next order several weeks later. Currently, we are trying to obtain U.S. manufactured syringes and plastic hubbed needles that are less expensive but of acceptable quality. Of course, every supplier has the same issues, and availability is starting to become an issue. **Also, aspirin is totally off the market, and it will not return. Although, the clinic has some remaining.**

## Correction to Article on Official ID

Our lab will run Johne's on any blood sample that is accompanied with official ID identifying the animal.

The 840 ID is required for animals tagged since Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, but prior official ID tags are accepted. This is a federal rule.

Anyone can make an error with all the rules that get thrown at us daily. We recently had an interesting situation when a veterinary clinic sent us Johne's samples without official ID. They got upset when we requested the official ID. They claimed the state lab didn't require the ID. I checked with the state lab and in fact they were out of compliance.

## Amy Joins Clinic Support Staff

Amy Freriks, of Waupun, has joined the clinic support staff. Amy will be helping part-time at the front desk several days of the week and will also be assisting in the labs.

She has a lot of customer service experience but is new to the farm animal medicine scene. She's been enjoying learning all about DAs, milk fevers and sick cows.

Amy is married to Jeff Freriks, who is an applicator at Insight FS. Their kids keep them busy, including Amy's youngest, Kendra, who enjoys showing dairy cattle through the Holstein association.



# A Closer Look at the Poultry Processing Fiasco

By now most of you have heard about the 60,000 free roasting chickens being given away by a poultry farm in Southwest Wisconsin. All you had to do was bring a trailer and haul the chickens' home to butcher. Wild, but true story. But let's look at the story in reverse.

Turns out that Pure Prairie Processing owed the chicken farmer \$100,000 in back payments for chickens sold and according to a Wall Street Journal article, the farm is owed \$500,000 under their contract. The farmer couldn't buy feed anymore plus he and his wife had expanded and put up a \$300,000 building. It's hard to just kill thousands and thousands of chickens.

Why didn't Pure Prairie pay the farmer and 50 others? They were bankrupt, chapter 11. The company that started processing in November 2022. It owes from \$50 million to \$450 million more than selling all its assets (which are worth only \$50 to 100 million) will cover. But the kicker is that Pure Prairie received \$45 million in grants and loan guarantees from the Biden administration, part of the American Rescue Plan that spent \$700 million to, "stem the loss of small farming operations through the last 40 years in this country," per secretary of ag Tom Vilsack. The assumption was that by starting more meat packing plants there would be more markets for smaller farmers, more profit in the final product. If the federal government invested in more feed mills would more corn be made into cattle feed? Would farmers purchase more feed? Would the price of corn go up? Do government officials think or just try to buy votes?

This is another example of the government, in its infinite ignorance, trying to pick winners, and a lot of innocent people are the losers. The Packers and Stockyard Act of 1921 sets some standards for paying farmers, and the packers are supposed to be bonded. But a bond is like insurance. If the packer doesn't pay for their bond, the farmer doesn't know, and the farmer gets screwed. I'm hoping the chicken farmers are made whole, but after having to give away their chicken crop and having no income for how long, I'm pretty sure being made whole isn't going to happen. Seems the farmer always gets screwed, doesn't it?

Everyone hates the packing business; they always blame packers for markets. Tyson dominates the poultry market. But if it was such a great business Tyson stock wouldn't be the same price today that it was in 2016. Plus, there are a couple dozen other companies that also process poultry. The plant that was modernized with the federal grant had gone out of business prior. There may be some niche markets for some processed or specialty meats, but this was clearly federal money being thrown at a problem that didn't exist, and I wonder, where did all that money go?

## Drop Ship Reminders!

Animal Health will be closed on Tuesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, (Christmas Eve) and Wednesday, December 25<sup>th</sup>, (Christmas). Orders placed on Monday of that week will not ship out until Thursday, December 26<sup>th</sup>, after the holiday.

Please try to place all orders the week before to ensure you receive your orders and products during the holiday shipping rush. For Christmas and New Year's please make sure to stock up on all products for those two weeks.

Please be aware when shipping orders with the cold and snow that any products that are refrigerated once shipped from the Animal Health warehouse are not covered by Animal Health. The product will be at a loss/no good to use if it gets too warm or freezes.



## Clinic & Lab Holiday Schedule

The clinic and labs will be closed on Christmas and New Year's days.

- The clinic will close at 3:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve.
- The Milk Lab will run routine samples on Monday and Thursday the week of Christmas and New Year's.
- The Blood Lab will not run any blood samples submitted on Christmas Eve. Bring samples in by 5:00 p.m. on the 23rd, in order to have results on the 24th.
- The Bedding Lab will only set up samples on Thursday the week of Christmas and New Year's.