

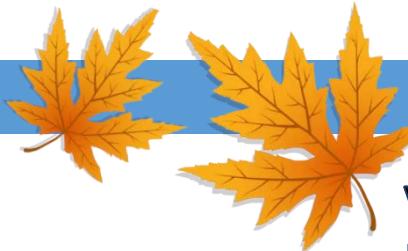


NEWSLETTER

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FALL 2024



Brian Reed, DVM - RETIREMENT

Scott Tillman, DVM

As of July 1st, Dr Brian Reed ended his tenure at what was thought to be a temporary stop in southeastern, PA, to a decades long commitment to the success and well being of the practice and most importantly, his clients. His midwestern demeanor combined with his constant pursuit of excellence helped to grow a humble idea into what is now a 10 veterinarian practice serving much of the Susquehanna valley. His day to day work on the farm improved the lives of countless producers, and his financial work, both here and across the country, has challenged the idea of what a farm veterinarian actually is. His work through the practice and Center of Dairy Excellence provided the framework and guidance for many farm transitions, feasibility of expansions and additions, and improvements in profitability. Of course our loss is bittersweet as he will be greatly missed.



However his work is nowhere complete. Though leaving the more physical daily schedule of herd checks, sick calls, and emergencies, his retirement will allow him to advance his consulting and financial offerings across the country, provide leadership in state and national organizations, and continue to redefine what it is to be a large animal veterinarian. We also hope he does find some time to relax. We know many will miss him, but we congratulate Dr Reed on his retirement and wish him best of luck as he faces new adventures in his retirement!

VETERINARIANS

DOUG SCIPTIONI, VMD
ERICK STOLTZFUS, DVM
W SCOTT TILLMAN, DVM
EDWARD FUHRMAN, DVM

CINDY FOULKE, DVM
JAMES SHISSLER, VMD
TERI COON, DVM
LINDSAY HETRICK, DVM
TIMOTHY TRAYER, DVM
KRISTEN HAYMAN, DVM

SUPPORT TEAM

JULIANA JABLONSKI
COMMUNICATIONS

JERILYN HERRICK
FINANCIAL MANAGER

JUSTIN NOLT
PHARMACY

NEVADA STOLTZFUS
PHARMACY AIDE

DROP OFF FEE - IMPLEMENTATION

This past month a decision was made that drop offs of medication may incur a "Drop off" fee of \$25. Many factors led to this, including greatly increasing costs of purchasing replacement trucks, repair and servicing costs continuing to climb, and the price of fuel continuing to be high. Also the driving time of the vets needs to be considered. The profitability of drugs is not nearly as high as what some believe, so the costs of maintaining the fleet are becoming more cost prohibitive in being able to continue "free" drop offs. Exceptions may be made by the veterinarian if we are driving right by your operation, or if it's a bulk order large enough to justify delivering it.

We have often encouraged "stocking up" by offering quantity discounts on multiple bottles of medications. Ask your regular vet what the discount price breaks may be at on the different products. Also Volume/bulk discount of an extra 2% is made above and beyond those quantity breaks. By stocking up each herd check it reduces the requests for having a bottle dropped off here and there between regular visits. Also we can "drop ship" many items for a shipping charge that's less, or in some cases maybe we can leave at a herd visit at a farm in your region or vicinity, with that client's permission. Also medications can always be picked up at the office, or left outside after hours in some situations.

Thank you for understanding, as the requests for one or two bottles dropped off seem to be increasing, sometimes taking us a good distance out of our way. Driving a half hour one way to drop a bottle of oxytocin, and then back is just not feasible. We realize no one likes extra charges or fees, but it's become necessary with the current economy and inflation that the costs are rising and our vehicles are one of the largest expenses.

2024 DAIRY PRODUCERS MEETING, HIGHLIGHTS



James Shissler, VMD

As always, we appreciate all our clients, and one of our main client appreciation events is the Dairy Producer meeting we hold yearly at the Shady Maple Smorgasbord. It's a wonderful time of fellowship, food, and most importantly, providing some learning opportunities that hopefully can be used to benefit your business and livestock. Also, we greatly appreciate the sponsors of the meeting that provide information about many products and services. This year was definitely the largest ever with incredible turnout. We can't thank you enough for supporting us and making us an important part of your operation. Many express during and after the meeting how much they appreciate these opportunities and our services. This year our format included a couple outside speakers discussing milk regulations, and also financial aspects to consider. Some of our own veterinarians also gave short talks with some quick tips that were hopefully very beneficial to your operation. Here are a few quick recaps of our talks:

Down Cows by Dr. Tillman:

- The 5 "M's" of down cows: Metritis, Mastitis, Metabolic/Milk Fever, Musculoskeletal, Mystery.
- Metritis: Fever and discharge. Sometimes subcutaneous bubbles/emphysema under skin. Often combination of antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, fluids/supportive.
- Mastitis: Watery milk, usually fever. Often combination of antibiotics, anti-inflammatories, fluids/supportive. Preventative vaccines and measures can be very successful.
- Metabolic: often milk fever (calcium) or other mineral deficiencies, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium. Avoid oral treatments initially, can't swallow well, and ulcerative, very irritating and caustic. Avoid common oral supplements with Calcium Carbonate, which is basically chalk (cheap but ineffective) or Calcium chloride which is very irritating, ulcerative, and can increase acidosis.
- Musculoskeletal: trauma, injuries. Also secondary to being down for too long and damaging muscle tissue from their shear weight.

On Farm Sampling by Dr. Fuhrman:

- Blood samples: especially down cows, take before treatment. Green top tube preferred or red top. Then keep cool. Can tell what treatment may be most effective, why they didn't respond, or help decide if alternative therapies like floating or lifting may help
- Milk Samples: few mls in a sterile milk tube, keep cool or freeze if kept more than a couple days. Turn around usually in a few days in house or outside lab. Tell what treatments and preventatives/vaccines most effective and reduce treatment costs and SCC. Helps culling decisions in incurable cases.
- Bulk tank sample: Especially used for contagious pathogen detection. Agitate at least a few minutes before sampling.
- Fecal: for parasites, or for scour/diarrhea panels. Especially young calves, or for adult cow diarrhea outbreaks to identify causes and possible treatments and preventatives.

Vaccines by Dr. Shissler

- Start young at birth and at 4-8 weeks of age with an intranasal (Inforce or Nasalgen) to start priming the calves immune system. Injectable vaccines are rarely very effective at this age due to maternal protection through colostrum preventing the vaccine from working.
- Heifers at 4-6 months of age and 10-12 months of age, at least 3 weeks prior to breeding are best given a modified live, like Bovishield, Express, or Titanium.
- Cows can be given a modified live again after freshening, preferable in the 3-6 week range (after freshening stresses, but prior to breeding by at least 3 weeks. Can receive a killed vaccine (booster) at dry off. Some also use intranasal within a week of freshening. Some studies show reduced fresh cow fevers, respiratory disease, and even reduced SCC.
- As an alternative, cows may be vaccinated and boosted twice yearly with a partial live/killed vaccine like Mastergaard or Cattlemaster.
- Other vaccines like Clostridium, Salmonella, Coliform, or the SVD implants for mastitis, etc. are usually beneficial and can be discussed with the herd veterinarian. Each dairy is different so there's not always a one size fits all approach.

Article continues on next page...

Repro and Herd Checks by Dr. Scippioni:

- Dr. Scippioni's tips included the importance of regular and frequent pregnancy checks and herd visits. Check early and often is the name of the game.
- Pregnancies are very valuable, and finding cows that are still open after breeding on a frequent basis can really affect a herds profitability and bottom line. Pregnancies can be worth around \$500 each depending on milk price and cost of replacements.
- Ultrasound is not only the most accurate means to detect pregnancies, but also other issues such as pyometras, cysts, twins, deformed and dead embryos/fetuses, and gendering fetuses, compared to blood or milk tests that are less accurate, miss and lose more pregnancies, and can't diagnose any other problems. Milk or blood tests that potentially miss a pregnancy or two a month can be very costly, much more than a herd visit costs.
- Also Ovarian structure detection greatly improves repro efficiency by knowing which synchronization programs are most effective and time to breed. Also something milk or blood tests do not provide, and results are much slower. It reduces efficiency and inherently delays in insemination.
- More frequent visits help increase pregnancy rates, detection, and more rapidly return cows to subsequent insemination. Preg rates of 25% or higher is the goal and often attainable.
- Although more frequent visits may cost a little more in the short run, increased pregnancies and pregnancy rate that result from it greatly improve the overall profitability in the long run, by keeping cows in the fresher portion of the milk curve, and providing more replacements and calves to sell. It allows for more "luxury culling" rather than having to keep lower producers or higher SCC cows just to fill stalls.
- Any herd we've seen that decreases or even discontinues regular visits is never nearly as profitable as herds with regular visits, often going into more of a just surviving, lower profitability mode, or often on the way out of business.

We hope to see everyone at next year's meeting! **SAVE THE DATE, MARCH 6, 2025**

GET TO KNOW OUR NEW VETS

James Shissler, VMD

This past year has seen a few changes in faces as we've continued to grow and provide quality services and increase responsiveness to provide better care to clients and their livelihood. These associate veterinarians came with agricultural backgrounds and previous practice experience, so they were welcome additions that could hit the ground running to provide quality care and knowledge.



Last summer, Dr. Lindsay Hetrick was hired to provide care to our new clients. Dr Hetrick grew up in Berks county on her family dairy farm and still actively involved. She received a BS in dairy science from Virginia Tech and her veterinary degree in 2016 from Iowa State University. Her previous experience was 7 years working as a large animal veterinarian at Quakertown Veterinary Clinic. Her areas of interest besides the family dairy are raising beef cows and Katahdin sheep. For hobbies she enjoys gardening and working in her flower beds, four wheeling, helping 4-Her's with their livestock projects

Areas of interest in practice: Bovine production medicine, calf/youngstock management, milk quality, small ruminant medicine

With our senior partner, Dr Brian Reed announcing his retirement from private practice this year, we also found the need to find a suitable replacement. Dr. Kristen Hayman is a welcome addition to our practice.

Dr. Hayman grew up in Potter county, PA, on a family farm. After attending college at Penn State University, he attended veterinary school at Iowa State University earning his degree in 2017. Dr. Hayman worked in commercial swine for 2 years before returning to Iowa State University Field Services to complete a residency in Dairy Production Medicine. He returned to PA in 2022 and joined a neighboring dairy practice in Gap, until joining the Agricultural Veterinary Associates team in 2024. Outside of practice, Dr. Hayman enjoys spending time with his wife Colleen and two French bulldogs, Farrah and Gigi.



We welcome both and know they'll have great success providing care to our clients our two newest vets and have given very favorable comments to their hard work!

AVIAN INFLUENZA (AI) in DAIRY CATTLE

James Shissler, VMD



We've gotten many questions over the last months concerning the outbreak of Avian flu, or AI in dairy cattle. Currently several states have active cases in dairy herds, though PA thus far has not had any cases detected. The USDA has restricted movement of dairy cattle between states requiring testing of lactating cows through a milk test to detect the virus. In addition to that, some states require additional testing beyond what's required by the USDA, such as dairy heifers over 18 months or various requirements that can vary state to state, or for certain shows and fairs that also require testing as part of their protocol to reduce risk of spread, particularly when animals from several states congregate. AI in cattle can cause significant production loss and reduced appetite in lactating cattle, though death losses fortunately are minimal aside from culling for low production.

Recently, Dr. Alex Hamburg contacted me last month to discuss a voluntary bulk tank testing program. The Department of Agriculture would like to have more herds voluntarily test their milk, free of charge, to aid in surveillance in case our state is affected in the future. This will help reduce public or media backlash potentially, protect the state's main industry, agriculture, and help protect your herd, neighbors, and in particular if your operation or neighbors have poultry, which are highly susceptible to the disease and results in massive losses in the poultry industry. Dr. Alex Hamburg and Dr. Erin Luley, Executive Directors of the PA Department of Agriculture, Animal Health and Diagnostic Services, sent these bullet points to consider:

- HPAI is a real threat to our dairy and poultry industries in PA. These are the two largest PA animal agriculture industries.
- Though early reports downplayed the impact on dairy farms, more recent reports from multiple states describe several weeks of decreased production, and increased labor dealing with large numbers of sick cows, increased treatment costs, and some cows that do not return to production.
- By testing milk on your farm, you help to protect your cows, your neighbor's cows, and farms across PA.
- We have learned from other states that virus can be detected in milk approximately two weeks prior to seeing any sick cows. This is another reason why testing is so important to identify herds early and take action. We cannot rely solely on monitoring for sick cows, though we know our dairies do an excellent job of this.
- States like Ohio and North Carolina that have proactively tested animals have been able to limit cases to a single farm and have avoided spread of disease across their states.
- If this disease does come to PA, the best approach is to be proactive and contain spread as soon as possible. Other states that have not reported cases early have seen rapid spread and drastic economic impact as this disease spread to neighboring poultry farms.
- Doing proactive surveillance ensures the public that the dairy industry takes human health and animal health seriously.
- Research groups in PA are already doing surveillance on store-bought milk. While pasteurization kills the virus, it is possible to identify fragments of dead virus in pasteurized milk. If a positive milk sample were traced to a PA farm, the industry may face public backlash for not doing proactive surveillance.
- PDA wants to reassure dairy farmers that we will work to keep your identity confidential in the event of a positive case in a dairy farm. Additionally, the state's response looks very different in dairy farm than a poultry farm. For an affected dairy, we would work to prevent spread of virus off that farm via movement of equipment, people, and animals, but will work to maintain continuity of business on that dairy farm.
- To date there are few human cases of illness, and all reported cases have been mild. However, the jump from birds to mammals is concerning, indicating that this virus has more potential to adapt to humans than other avian influenza viruses to date. Appropriate caution is warranted to prevent potential widespread human illness.
- Testing is simple, quick, and free for dairy farms. While not every farm may benefit from the reduced need to test cows prior to interstate movement, testing benefits all of PA's dairy farms and poultry farms by keeping our animals and industries healthy.
- If we do not get enough farms to voluntarily enroll, mandatory surveillance testing is possible.

If you feel that voluntary testing may be of interest to your herd, or have any specific questions or concerns about it, please direct any questions to your herd vet to help you get more information.

ATTRIBUTES TO SUCCESSFUL FARMS

James Shissler, VMD

Recently I was reading an article that discussed some common threads that lead to success of dairy operations. I've summarized a few main topics from this discussion:

1. Attitude of gratitude. Even more important than financial success are relationships, whether family, friends, and others in the industry that are there to help you succeed. Most veterinarians are very grateful for our many clients, who many times feel like family to us, and part of the culture and community. We wouldn't be here if it weren't for you, our very supportive clients who value our skill, experience, and knowledge. Successful farmers also are typically grateful and thankful not only to consumers that purchase their products, but also family, their employees, and other support in agribusiness, consultants, and professionals. Although possibly counterintuitive, we've noticed those producers that utilize more veterinary services tend to be more profitable and have healthier, more productive herds by a wide margin compared to those that consider the vet just a cost to avoid and call only when severe problems and issues occur. These herds also tend to use "free" or low cost individuals that are very lacking in skills, training, and knowledge and unfortunately suffer in profitability. Although very frugal, my grandfather told me growing up on the farm, the cheapest product or service isn't always the cheapest. Managing marginal costs/opportunity costs is critical for profitability.
2. Successful producers show a passion for their work and are continual optimists. The future is always uncertain and input costs can be cyclical, going up and down over time. With the right business strategy and attitude most realize they can manage price fluctuations and have a lifestyle they can enjoy. There's no better place to raise a family than on the farm.
3. Business plans with short and long term goals can give a competitive advantage. Although we can't predict the future, having a plan helps weather those storms, and constantly tracking progress, adjusting, and constantly scan for new opportunities to minimize risk. They take advantage of opportunities that arise.
4. At least annual meetings with trusted advisors. Successful operations have meetings with their trusted partners, like accountants, loan officers, vets, nutritionists, etc. These may be profit team meetings, analyzing records, or with industry experts with the Center of Dairy Excellence to plan for expansions, next generation farm transfers, etc. Agricultural Veterinary Associates has often led these meetings to form goals, and assess financial records and business planning.
5. Cow skills. I once had someone say there are cow guys and there are tractor guys. We all know some that really have that knack for cow handling skills, spotting that sick cow before she's off long, observing slight changes in behavior that indicate estrus, whereas others seem to walk by and never notice. Hiring and training the right people to develop these skill can be critical. Some producers, herdsman, and managers just have a unique ability and "cow sense".
6. Produce high quality forage. With increasing feed costs, it's never been more important to grow and harvest high quality crops, store properly to minimize spoilage and shrinkage, anticipate low inventory and adjust rations. Forage is the foundation of high producing herds and maintaining excellent cow health.
7. Good records. It's like they say, you can't manage what you can't measure. Production and financial records are crucial for decision making. Whether DHIA, or an on farm monitoring system, in this day and age you just can't effectively manage without good data. Of course data entry is critical too so as not to fall into the garbage in/garbage out scenario. Regular benchmarking with past performance and comparing with other dairies is crucial to monitoring progress toward goals, whether reproduction, somatic cell, cow health, production, and also financial. Our vets are experienced, uniquely positioned, and more than happy to help benchmark and look for potential bottlenecks or set goals.
8. Cow comfort and welfare. It goes without saying that cows that are dry, clean, and comfortable will produce better. Bedding, ventilation, clean water, and delivering and keeping fresh feed available are crucial to success.
9. Health, treatment, vaccination protocols and other preventative measures, as well as monitoring for sick cow and health issues, is critical for herd health. Again, we're happy to assist you in reducing risk by preventing issues before they start or recognizing/identifying issues quickly.
10. Adapt to and utilize new technologies. Producers that are most successful show willingness to continually advance and adopt new technologies. It's a rapidly changing field, and technologies have changed significantly in the last 10-20 years when you look at electronics, activity/monitoring systems, computerization, smart phones, ultrasounding pregnancies and gendering, robots, drones, GPS systems and monitors on tractors and equipment, sorted semen, synchronization protocols, IVF and embryo work, increased use of phone or video consulting like we've launched with Vet Now, and the list goes on and on. Successful farmers have become technologically advanced and continually look to adopt and utilize cutting edge technology, not just remain stuck in the past.

I as well as all the veterinarians at AVA greatly appreciate your business and trusting us as your herd health consultants and continuing to help your operation grow and be successful. The health of your herd

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