



## EVALUATING PREGNANCY DIAGNOSES

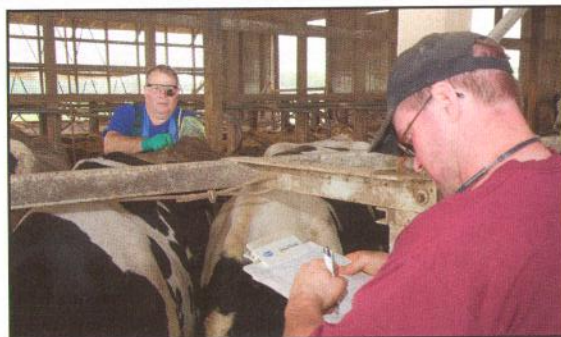
For pregnancy confirmation, one has several options. The “hands-on” choices include ultrasound evaluation, rectal palpation after 35 days, or “calf bumping” at 6 to 7 months. There are also blood and milk tests to identify pregnancies.

In a recent *Hoard's Dairyman* webinar, Paul Fricke discussed key factors to successfully finding open cows as early as possible with each method.

He said ultrasound users should be wary of any tests done before 30 days of gestation. This stage has become the classic cutoff because the embryo undergoes a growth spurt between Day 25 and Day 32.

When utilizing blood or milk tests, the University of Wisconsin-Madison researcher explained that it is important to watch for false positives. Once a cow calves, it continues to have pregnancy-associated glycoproteins (PAGs) in its blood for up to 60 days postcalving, which can cause false positives.

In all pregnancy detection programs, rechecks are important. If pregnancy is confirmed at Day 32,



Fricke recommends a retest at 74 days.

Costs are comparable for palpation, ultrasound, blood test, and milk test, ranging from \$2 to \$5, depending on number of samples, number of cows checked, and local lab options.

The webinar, “Strategies for nonpregnancy diagnosis in dairy cows” can be viewed at [on.boards.com/WB\\_050916](http://on.boards.com/WB_050916).

## DISEASE MAY STUNT CORN SILAGE QUALITY

Corn fungal diseases such as northern leaf blight and gray leaf spot are well known for their effect on harvest yields. Maybe more importantly, they impact quality factors in the ear, leaf, and stem as well. According to Caroline Kalebich and Phil Cardoso of the University of Illinois, using foliar fungicide to treat fungal diseases can improve silage quality in diseased crops.

When the corn plant is fighting northern leaf blight and gray leaf spot, scientists believe it produces more lignin to act as a barrier to protect the plant from further damage. This, in turn,

causes higher neutral detergent fiber and lignin concentrations, driving down fiber digestibility.

In a research study at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, corn treated with fungicide reduced the fiber content and improved feed conversion rates for the cattle fed treated diets. Cardoso and Kalebich suggest the smaller amount of feed needed to create a pound of milk was indicative of forage quality. In a similar study conducted at the University of Illinois, plants treated with fungicide exhibited higher digestibility. They found the greatest effects were seen in the leaves and stalks of the corn plants.

## DO COLOSTRUM CELLS MATTER?

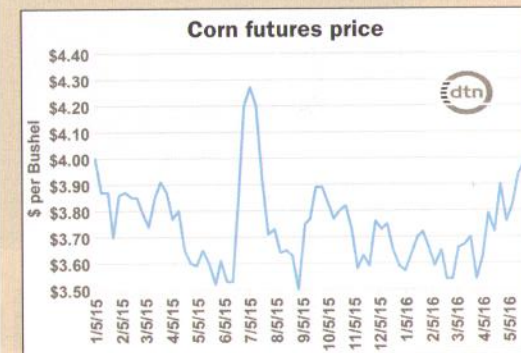
Testing colostrum for immunoglobulins and serum protein is the gold standard to ensure

immune system.

Calves were given either WC or CFC after birth,

## CORN PRICES CONTINUE TO RALLY

Concern continues over the slow pace of planting in parts of the Corn Belt where delays may result in greater soybean acreage. The focus on higher demand for corn through the next growing season has also sparked strong buyer support through April and May. This has pushed corn futures prices



from \$3.54 at the end of March to near \$4 per bushel at the end of May.

Dairies are encouraged to buy short-term supplies through the spring. Seasonal dips in the corn market based on weather conditions and demand should give producers an opportunity to make mid- to long-term buying decisions for summer and fall needs.

—Rick Kment, DTN Dairy Analyst

## AVOID MASTITIS DURING HEAT STRESS

Heat stress and immune suppression are tightly correlated in dairy cattle. According to Mississippi State's Stephanie Ward, a cow's vitamin E and selenium levels are strongly affected during heat stress in addition to immunoglobulin concentrations. The combined loss of these immune boosters opens the door for mastitic pathogens.

In a recent *SQMI Quarterly* newsletter, Ward reminds producers to cool cows but to do