

Cattle vaccine now available

Reduced-dosage Strain 19 brucellosis vaccine is now available to cattle raisers in states where it is needed to help reduce brucellosis in cattle herds, Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland announced recently.

"We handled regulatory changes making reduced dosage available on an emergency basis to encourage vaccination of last spring's calf crop, which is now the right age to vaccinate," Bergland said.

"USDA veterinarians believe reduced-dosage vaccination gives ample protection with far less chance of causing testing problems later," he said.

Bergland also said the uniform methods and rules for brucellosis eradication will be changed Oct. 1 to allow heifer calves of beef or dairy breeds to be vaccinated with reduced dosage between four and 12 months of age. The rules still call for vaccination with standard dosage at from two and six months of age for dairy calves and from two to ten months for beef breeds, although some states have lower age limits for beef calves.

Bergland said use of reduced dosage Strain 19 vaccine is optional for states, and some brucellosis-free or low incidence states will not be taking advantage of its availability right away.

"Reduced dosage will be especially welcomed in Texas and other south central and southeastern states where drives are underway to drastically reduce relatively high levels of brucellosis infection," he said.

Reduced dosage was made possible by research recently completed by USDA scientists at the National Animal Disease Center, Ames, Iowa, Bergland said. Their findings show reduced dosage provides about the same protection as the standard dose but with much less chance of persistent high antibody levels that confuse blood test results.

Brucellosis, also called Bang's disease, is the object of a cooperative state-federal brucellosis eradication program. The goal is to protect the 99.5 percent of U.S. cattle already free of disease while eliminating the remaining infection.

Brucellosis still costs cattle owners about \$56 million in annual losses from reduced calf crops and lower milk yields, brought on by abortion, birth of weak calves and breeding problems, Bergland said.

The regulation changes will be published in the Oct. 2 Federal Register. Comments should be sent, by Dec. 10, to the deputy administrator, USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services, Federal Building, room 805, Hyattsville, Md., 20782. Copies of the regulation changes are also available from that address.

Interest rates lowered on farm loans

Interest rates for farm facility loans made through the U.S. Department of agriculture will be reduced by 1/2 percent to 12 1/2 percent--effective for loans made on or after Sept. 29, according to Secretary of Agriculture Bob Bergland.

Farm facility loans help farmers build needed farm storage and drying equipment, Bergland said.

The reduction is a result of a continual review of interest rates charged farmers, Bergland said.

The interest rate for farm storage facility and drying equipment loans is based on the Commodity Credit Corporation's cost of borrowing money from the U.S. Treasury and was last changed on April 15 when it was set at 13 percent, he said.

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