



FACstracs

Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan Inc.

Spring/Summer 2004

Representing the livestock industry in advancing responsible animal care in agriculture

ANIMAL CARE AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (FACS), in partnership with Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization, is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2004 Animal Care Award. This was the third year for this innovative partnership.

The Animal Care Award is targeted at University students in the Colleges of Agriculture, Veterinary Medicine and Education at the University of Saskatchewan. To qualify for a \$1,000 award, students submitted an article on topical animal care issues which also show economic importance to our province.

The Animal Care Award program was developed to increase the awareness of the importance of responsible animal management, and to the best of our knowledge, this partnership between government and industry promoting responsible animal care is the first of its kind in North America.

Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization contributed \$35,000 for 2003-2004 to implement the Animal Care Award program as well as two other one-of-a kind partnerships, the Animal Care Speakers Bureau and the Animal Care Travel Bursary.

In total 16 applications were received and seven finalists presented to a four-member judging panel. Based on the quality of both their written articles and presentations, all seven finalists received the \$1000.00 Award.

Award recipients, all from the College of Agriculture, are as follows:

- Steven Cuddington
- Rebecca Gummesson
- Christa Harder
- Jonathan Leicht
- Shacara Lightbourne
- Ashley Rowland
- Michael Wheeler

The articles presented by the Award recipients will be featured in future issues of FACStracs or you can check out the FACS website at www.facs.sk.ca.

We would like to sincerely thank our judges Dr. Murray Woodbury, Dr. Rick Omer, Tara Jaboeuf and Kevin Hursh for taking time out of their busy schedules to review the articles and hear the presentations. An extra thank you is extended to Kevin Hursh for reviewing the articles and providing editorial guidance to the recipients ensuring that their articles were print ready. □

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2004 Stock Person's School

The Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (FACS) together with the University of Saskatchewan is pleased to present its 4th Annual Stock Person's School. This year's School will take place at the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Room 2302 on May 6, 2004 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m.

This annual one-day school addresses specific issues relevant to pasture riders and cattle producers, which will improve their knowledge and performance level. As the cattle industry struggles with the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, the 2004 School will address the BSE issue as well, provide an insight on how to adapt to a changing market.

The prestigious lineup of speakers for the School includes:

- Dr. Lyall Petrie, WCVN, "Diagnosing Lameness"
- Dr. Chris Clark from the University of Saskatchewan, "BSE - From A - Z" and "BSE - A Year Later, Now What?"
- Dr. Ernie Olfert, Director, Animal Resource Centre, University of Saskatchewan, "Humane Euthanasia"
- Mr. Les Johnson, CCIA, "Tagging: Is it Working?"
- Mr. Bob Brady, Brady Marketing Services, "Adapting to a Changing Beef Cattle Marketplace"
- Dr. Cheryl Waldner, WCVN, "Biosecurity and Herd Health"

Registration for the Stock Person's School is only \$96.30 (including GST) if registered before the Early Bird deadline of April 30, 2004 and includes a continental breakfast and lunch. For more information or to register contact the FACS office by phone at 306-249-3227, by fax at 306-244-4497 or by email at facs@sasktel.net. To register by phone or fax please provide your VISA number.

Avian Influenza (Asian Bird Flu)

With the recent activities surrounding Avian Influenza, the Western College of Veterinary Medicine (WCVN) and the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (FACS) presented a free Avian Influenza Information Session for poultry producers, the general public and the media.

The producer-focused Information Session was held on the evening of March 16, 2004 from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. in Room 2302 of the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan.

The Seminar proved to be a success with almost 60 participants including several media personnel.

The following individuals presented at the Information Session:

- Dr. Ted Leighton, Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre, University of Saskatchewan, "Avian Influenza: Global Concerns and the Role of Wild Birds"
- Dr. Susantha Gomis, Avian Pathologist, WCVN, "What is Avian Influenza"
- Dr. Dennilyn Parker, Small Animal Clinician Dealing with Exotics, Avian and Wildlife, "Should owners of exotic and pet birds be concerned about Avian Influenza?"
- Dr. Steve Whitehead, Deputy Medical Health Officer, Saskatoon Health Region, Public Health Services, "What are the risks to people?"

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“Fence Lines to Corporate Board Rooms”

FACS 12th Annual General Meeting and Conference

December 8 & 9, 2003

FACS 12th Annual General Meeting and Conference, held on December 8 and 9, 2003 at the Travelodge Hotel in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan was another resounding success.

As with past conferences, FACS was successful in developing an excellent line up of presenters who addressed issues that are unique to most, but relevant to all! The program highlighted the important issues of our time, provided attendees with valuable information and the successful action steps necessary to sustain a responsible, world-class industry.

The prestigious lineup of speakers for the conference included:

- Dr. Bernard Rollin, Professor of Philosophy, Animal Sciences and Biomedical Sciences, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO discussed "Animal Production and Emerging Social Ethics for Animals"
- Mr. Barney Cosner, Director, Wyoming State Fair and Rodeo, Douglas, WY examined "What are We Looking at in our Ag Mirror!"
- Mr. Robert D. Sopuck, Vice President, Delta Waterfowl Foundation, Brandon, MB presented "Animal Rights and Animal Welfare: Implications for Modern Agriculture"
- Dr. Tina Widowski, Associate Professor, Department of Animal and Poultry Science, University of Guelph, Guelph, ON looked at "Auditing Animal Welfare on Farms: What Can We Measure?"
- Mr. Greg Whalley, President, Britco Packers, Langley, BC "What's For Dinner?" a look at safely and humanely raised and slaughtered food

FACS also included on the Agenda a BSE panel: *Dr. Chris Clark* from the University of Saskatchewan spent time in the United Kingdom during their BSE Crisis, and spoke on his experiences abroad, as well as humane euthanasia procedures. *Mr. Bruce King*, Manager of Saskatoon Processing Co., provided insight into the changes experienced by the rendering and processing industry since May 20, 2003. The panel also looked at the proper disposal techniques of dead stock, and the environmental impacts of the different techniques with Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food & Rural Revitalization representative, *Mr. Donn Farrer*. *Mr. Tim Oleksyn*, a producer from Shellbrook, Saskatchewan, completed the panel and shared his experience as a producer post-May 20, 2003.

Thank You

... to the Sponsors of the FACS 12th Annual General Meeting and Conference, December 8 and 9, 2003:

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- Western Beef Development Centre
- Western College of Veterinary Medicine
- Westway Feed Products

As with past FACS events, this conference attracted participants from across Canada and the United States.

Look for updates regarding the 2004 Annual General Meeting on the FACS website at www.facs.sk.ca. □



High Energy Diets Affect Broiler Chicken Welfare

*Submitted by Steven Cuddington
2004 Animal Care Award Recipient
From the College of Agriculture
University of Saskatchewan*

Within the poultry industry, intensive production practices are implemented to maximize economic returns. Air quality, stocking densities and feed/water availability all have set limits, which have been established to provide a suitable environment. Regulating the feed intake of broiler chickens is not always practiced, but it should also be taken into consideration as a welfare issue.

Broilers are raised on a highly concentrated energy diet to maximize growth rates and reduce the total number of days needed to reach market weight. The feed is available constantly in a pellet form. The intense growth rate which results causes stress on the broilers and can result in metabolic diseases and skeletal disorders. These not only harm the welfare of the broilers, but result in economic losses due to reduced animal performance, mortalities, and condemnations at slaughter plants.

The most common metabolic disease that broilers experience due to excessive growth rates is ascites. Ascites is the excessive accumulation of fluid in the abdominal cavity. It occurs due to an imbalance of oxygen requirements and oxygen intake, which results in increased blood pressure due to hypoxemia like conditions. These conditions result in increased blood pressure (pulmonary hypertension syndrome), which leads to failure of the right ventricle of the heart.

According to Dr. Olkowski of the University of Saskatchewan, the incidence of ascites in broilers has been increasing at an alarming rate, and this condition has become one of the leading causes of mortality and whole carcass condemnations in modern broiler flocks throughout the world. In 2002, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) reported approximately 1.2 million broiler chickens were condemned in Canadian slaughter plants.

Sudden death syndrome, commonly called flip-over disease, also occurs in rapidly growing broilers. This disease occurs more often in males as they tend to grow faster than females. Affected broilers die immediately and collapse on their backs, hence the name flip-over disease. The causes are very similar to ascites where heart failure is the cause of mortality.

Rapid growth rates due to highly concentrated energy feeds increases the occurrence of skeletal disorders. The symptoms range from malformation of the bones found in the legs to abnormalities in the hock or hip joints. Skeletal disorders reduce the mobility of the bird, and as it worsens the broilers often succumb to dehydration and/or starvation. These birds are also more susceptible to crushing, either in the barn or in the trailer going to slaughter. Broilers that survive to reach market weight are most likely condemned at the slaughter plant. The CFIA condemns broilers that have skeletal disorders such as arthritis, synovitis, and valgus/varus deformities.

The welfare concerns caused by excessive feeding of broiler chickens can be reduced by simple modifications. Decreasing feed intake by changing lighting systems in the barns from constant lighting to lighting periods with some periods of darkness (intermittent lighting) has shown to reduce the occurrences of ascites.

Feed restriction at an early age also reduces the occurrences of ascites and sudden death syndrome. This temporary feed restriction reduces growth at a critical time in a broiler chick's life cycle when it is the most susceptible to metabolic disease due to its high oxygen demands. Final growth rates between broilers fed with no restrictions and broilers fed with a temporary feed restriction are the same.

Feed structure can also reduce intake. Broilers are most commonly fed diets in pelleted form to maximize feed consumption. Broilers fed the same diets in crumble form consume less. Producers can slightly alter growth rates by temporarily substituting pelleted diets with crumble form early in production.

Feeding highly concentrated energy diets without restriction of intake may seem to be the most economically desirable practice in producing broiler chickens, but it increases the occurrences of metabolic and skeletal disease. These diseases not only result in economic losses for the producer, but they greatly affect the welfare of the broilers. Minor alterations in traditional broiler production practices have proven to sustain production and at the same time provide a more desirable living environment. □



This Little Pig's House

*Submitted by: Shacara O. Lightbourne
2004 Animal Care Award Recipient
From the College of Agriculture
University of Saskatchewan*

Historically, pigs were the first farm animal to be subjected to extremely intensive housing and management, a trend that has greatly accelerated over the years. Over 90 percent of pigs are raised in some kind of confinement. At the same time, swine are almost universally considered the most intelligent of farm animals (Rollins, 1995) consisting of complex behavioural patterns. For this reason, in regard to production, some understandable issues have been brought forward to address the behavioural and physical welfare of these animals, thus questioning the confinement conditions under which they are placed.

Confinement systems such as tethering, gestation stalls and farrowing crates are a great welfare concern because many of the needs of the animals are not being met, violating one or more of the five freedoms of animals revised by the Farm Animal Welfare Council in 1993. Though inhumane these systems are very effective in that they allow a great many sows to be housed in an environmentally controlled situation, fed and cared for by a minimal labour force, and maintained with minimal feed, for energy is not wasted on thermoregulation or movement (Rollin, 1995). Naturally, the public is concerned with the freedom of movement of the animals. Because consumers see these conditions as inhumane, producers are forced to modify their existing systems. As agriculturists we know, "perception is reality". This has already been the case in Europe. The European Commission of Pig Welfare has recently banned gestation stalls, applying the ban to all new operations since January 1, 2003 and all existing operations by January 1, 2013. The European public has called for loose housing conditions.

The problems that occur with sows housed under intensive conditions include fracturing and other foot and leg problems because of minimal movement, urinary tract disease because the animals are forced to lie in their own excrement, and delay in estrus (Rollin, 1995). Farrowing sows may experience dystocia, agalactia and wasting disease. Loose housing eradicates most of these problems mentioned. However, it has its disadvantages. Producers that raise their sows in loose housing conditions, particularly on straw, experience problems with worms, coccidiosis, lice and mange, mycotoxins, and swine dysentery. Behavioural problems include vulva biting and bullying.

Dr. Connor of the University of Manitoba says that "the industry does tend to be interested, but there is no great move [to group sow housing] at present." John Maltman, Swine Specialist with Manitoba Agriculture & Food expressed that obtaining financing from banks (when they are not familiar with a new system); labour requirements and aggression as challenges for group housing. Kelly Lund of Alberta Food and Rural Development in her 2002 welfare review states that when considering individual feed control, levels of aggression, ability to manage successful production, cost, ease of implementation in new or retrofit facilities, group systems based on ESF (electric sow feeders) are recommended at the present time as the most suitable for Alberta producers making the transition to group housing. Dr. Harold Gonyou, Prairie Swine Centre, has seen an increased interest in group housing using Electronic Sow Feeders (ESF).

"Less than a tenth of 1% of barns were using ESF two years ago. Now about 2% of the Canadian herd is using ESF." Both researchers agree that the drive for more welfare-oriented sow housing systems will continue to grow.

The issue of welfare is having a substantial impact on the agricultural sector of today. Consumers are becoming more conscious of their environment and our limited resources. This state of mind has brought about both Animal Welfare laws and on the extreme side of the spectrum, Animal Rights supporters who reject all animal use. The issue of farrowing crates, gestation stalls and tethering, it seems, is being addressed at a very slow pace in North America. However, on November 5, 2002, Florida voters approved a state constitutional amendment to prohibit commercial hog producers from housing pregnant sows in gestation stalls. It is inevitable that the European consumers' concerns will intensify the North American concerns, forcing the North American Agricultural sectors to comply to their demands of better treatment of these animals. Thus, gestation stalls, farrowing crates and tethering will be eradicated. It is up to us as agriculturalist to be ready when this happens. □



Commonly Asked Questions About BSE

The following is an excerpt from a document written by Dr. Chris Clark - Department of Large Animal Clinical Sciences, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatchewan. To view the complete document please look on our website at www.facs.sk.ca

What is Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (B.S.E., also known to the media as "mad cow disease")?

This is an unusual disease of cattle that causes degeneration of the brain. In fact the name really tells you all you need to know:

Bovine - affects cattle
Spongiform - sponge like
Encephalopathy - brain disease

Essentially the disease causes brain cells to die. When they die they leave behind microscopic holes. When the brain is examined under a microscope the holes can be easily seen and the brain looks a little like a sponge.

What is a prion?

BSE is one of a group of related diseases (known as spongiform encephalopathies) that are seen in a number of species including:

Scrapie - Sheep
Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) - Deer and Elk
Transmissible Mink Encephalopathy - Mink
Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease (CJD), GSS, FFI, Kuru - Humans

These diseases show a number of similarities; the time from infection to disease is very long (typically measured in years) and the agent that causes the disease is incredibly hard to destroy (much, much harder than either the bacteria or viruses that causes most infectious disease). Furthermore despite years of research scientists were unable to find an infectious agent. In the mid 1980s an American research had a theory that scientists had been looking in the wrong place, perhaps there was no virus or bacteria involved. This led to the theory that pure proteins could be infectious (hence Prion - proteinaceous infectious particle).

We now know that the prion protein is a natural protein found in the brains of most animals (we don't know what it does yet). Like all proteins it has a very characteristic shape, which is essentially a series of spirals. When an animal develops a spongiform encephalopathy the protein essentially re-folds into a different shape, essentially a flat sheet. The significance of this change is that the protein is incredibly tough in this new shape and cannot be destroyed by the cell's natural recycling processes. The abnormal proteins accumulate into long strands (fibrils) and eventually kill the cell.

We now think that if an animal eats abnormal prion protein, the protein is able to survive digestion, get out of the gut and make its way to the animal's brain where it is able to induce the natural prion protein to change shape and the process then starts a chain reaction with more and more prion protein being produced.

What does BSE look like?

As BSE affects the brain the two main signs of the disease are changes in the animal's behavior and changes in the way that the animal walks. It is important to recognize that on a worldwide basis almost all cases of BSE have been found in dairy cattle. This is important because obviously dairy cattle are much more commonly handled and producers tend to know their animals very well. Consequently dairy producers can often recognize very subtle changes in behavior that would go unmissed on a beef farm.

The main signs include:

Increased nervousness: Animals are typically reluctant to pass through doorways and become increasingly agitated when approached, there is excessive movement of the ears, licking of the muzzle and a fine tremor may be noticed.

Animals will also respond in a more violent manner to sudden noises, changes in light or sudden stimulation e.g. touching the legs with a broom handle.

The increased nervousness may also manifest as an increase in aggressive behavior towards humans and other cattle. A commonly reported sign in the UK was increased kicking when the cow was milked.

The earliest changes in the animal's ability to walk are an increased sway to the hips as she walks. This will slowly progress to an obviously peculiar gait. The animal will slip and fall more frequently until over a period of several months she eventually becomes a "downer".

Where did BSE come from?

The original source of BSE is not known. The first case was diagnosed in the UK in 1986. It is likely that the farm on which the first case was seen had seen two previous cases in 1985. Based upon statistical modeling epidemiologists think that the first case of BSE likely occurred some time in the late 1970s. Three possible sources of BSE have been recognized.

BSE may have come from scrapie in sheep following the feeding of contaminated rendered Meat and Bone Meal (MBM). This theory was the original theory that the British government used to explain the discovery of BSE. However, extensive testing of the BSE agent has shown that it is different from all the forms of scrapie previously identified.

The second possible theory is that BSE is naturally a disease of some form of exotic ungulate such as African antelope. A number of these animals were present in Britain in the public zoos. When an animal died the carcass was rendered to MBM.

The final theory is that BSE may be an extremely rare natural disease of cattle (similar to CJD in humans which occurs spontaneously at the rate of about 1 case/ million). This natural disease was unfortunately greatly multiplied by the feeding practices used in Great Britain during the 1980s.

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Thank you to SAFRR,
BDF and ADF for their
continued interest and
support in FACS.

How did BSE spread?

We are now fairly confident that the major method of spreading BSE was the practice of using rendered MBM to feed dairy cattle (especially dairy calves) in the UK. Rendering essentially involves taking waste tissues from carcasses and cooking them at high temperatures and pressures. This essentially produces three products:

- Water
- Tallow - fat
- Meat and bone Meal - protein

Prior to the discovery of BSE rendering was thought to destroy all infectious organisms. We now know that under certain conditions it is possible for the BSE agent to survive the rendering process. Hence, if an animal with BSE dies and is rendered the MBM produced still contains the infectious prion. If this material is fed to another calf that animal may become infected with BSE. The feeding of MBM to cattle was a widespread practice in the UK dairy industry, this was because it was freely available and was a cost effective source of protein. Furthermore other sources of protein used in Canada are not available in the UK due to the climate e.g. alfalfa and soya bean.

How did BSE come to Canada?

It is now thought that BSE may have come to Canada from the UK. Following the discovery of BSE and the start of the UK epidemic Canada banned the import of cattle and cattle products from the UK in 1990. Between 1980 and 1990 approximately 190 cattle were imported from the UK.

One of these animals developed BSE in 1993 and was culled. Following this event the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) started a tracing program to identify the imported British cattle. Approximately 120 of the animals were still alive and were destroyed. Seventy animals had previously died or been slaughtered. A detailed check of the records show that 10 of these 70 animals originated from farms in the UK that had subsequently developed at least one case of BSE. These 10 animals are therefore considered at being at risk of having carried BSE. In fact two of the animals originated from the same farm as the animal that developed BSE. Since they were of a similar age there is a strong probability that these animals may have been exposed to BSE.

Currently there is an extremely detailed investigation trying to determine where these animals either died or were slaughtered and what happened to the offals after death. The goal of this investigation is to determine if there is a geographical area at increased risk for BSE within Canada.

Why has BSE hit Canada so hard?

The simple answer to this question is that Canada was a large exporter of beef. The discovery of a home raised case of BSE led many countries to ban the importation of Canadian beef. There really is no scientific reason for the importation ban. The protocols put in place by the CFIA in Canada are adequate to protect both human and animal health and our beef does not represent a risk to human health. Furthermore the OIE (World Animal Health Organization) has guidelines in place to control the trade between countries after the discovery of BSE. These guidelines specifically allow the export of beef from young animals providing that certain criteria are met.

SUPPORT FACS

A membership in FACS holds many benefits, including membership recognition, a quarterly newsletter, notification of special events, access to the FACS library, FACS publications, and much more.

Associate memberships are available for contributions of \$50 to \$199.99 (plus GST). Active (or voting) memberships are available for contributions of \$200 and over (plus GST). Receipts are issued for all contributions. Please complete the form to the right and return it with your contribution to:

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NEWS MAKERS

. Vivid picture of slaughterhouse cruelty....Cow appears conscious as it's hoisted up by leg....Film to be shown at launch of meat inspection review

Pigs limping out of transport trucks on their way to slaughter, cattle crammed together for a 67-hour journey across the country and a cow being hoisted by its back leg without being properly stunned.

These images, recorded on video by a Canadian animal rights activist, are slated for public showing at the launch of the much-anticipated review into the province's meat inspection system tomorrow in Peterborough.

The Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals is planning to play sometimes-dramatic footage of animal sickness and mistreatment for Mr. Justice Roland Haines, the judge conducting the review into the safety of the province's meat products.

"You see these injured, sick animals in trucks and slaughterhouses all over Canada," says Lesley Moffat, who shot the video footage last summer.....

(Source: www.thestar.com)

. Norfolk, Va. — In response to a startling report released last week by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that obesity is poised to overtake smoking as the single leading cause of death in the United States, PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals] is launching a massive anti-obesity campaign by placing billboards in cities throughout the country, warning parents not to feed their children meat and other animal products. Showing a pudgy-faced kid about to scarf down a hamburger along with the tagline, "Feeding Kids Meat Is Child Abuse. Fight the Fat," and steering motorists to GoVeg.com, PETA's new billboard aims to remind parents that consumption of meat, dairy products, and eggs is linked to obesity, as well as a host of other life-threatening diseases that put children at risk.....

(Source: www.peta.org/news)

. Edmonton, Alta. — PETA's brand-new billboard—showing an ornery-looking chicken brandishing an automatic weapon next to the tagline "If the Cow Doesn't Get You, I Might!"—aims to inform Edmonton residents that the Canadian government's strategy for dealing with contaminated meat has more to do with protecting the meat industry than protecting consumers. Chickens—already known to be contaminated with salmonella and other bacteria, as well as dioxins, antibiotics, and even the most toxic form of arsenic—could also have their own variant of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), or mad cow disease.....

(Source: www.peta.org/news)

. Animal rights group PETA will have to pay a hefty fine if it continues a controversial advertising campaign in Germany comparing battery hens to Holocaust victims after a Jewish group won a temporary injunction.

PETA will have to pay up to €250,000 (\$307,000) should it continue the campaign via posters, flyers, the Internet or other means, according to the Central Council of Jews in Germany, which filed the complaint. On PETA's web site, the pictures could still be seen on Saturday.

The campaign had opened in Germany on Thursday to protests from the Jewish community. It likens the slaughter of animals to the murder of Jews under the Nazis.....

(Source: www.dw-world.de/english)

The Ontario Farm Animal Council (OFAC) has announced the departure of Leslie Ballentine as Public Affairs Director as of March 31, 2004.

Leslie has been with OFAC since it was founded in 1988. She was A/Executive Director on a part-time basis until 1991. Growth in the organization resulted in Leslie becoming the full-time Executive Director in 1991 until 2002 at which time she became the Public Affairs Director.

We wish Leslie all the best in her future endeavors and thank her for her years of dedication.



FACStracs is a quarterly publication of the Farm Animal Council of Saskatchewan Inc. (FACS). The primary function of FACS is to promote the responsible care and use of animals in the livestock industry. The material in this publication may be used with proper acknowledgment to the source. All information contained herein is deemed to be reliable and accurate to the best of the publisher's knowledge. The authors of submitted and reprinted articles are solely responsible for the contents and accuracy of the information. (Publications Mail-Agreement Number 40845514)

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