

Over the Fence

“Trich is no Treat”

Recently, at a beef seminar, I was leaning over the top rail of the panel looking at two yearling bulls, Ted was there and asked me if I needed anything from back home. He knew that I lived a couple of states away.

“Why, are you going to be driving by my parent’s place?”

“Well, sort of...I’m going up to a few bull sales”, he replied.

If you don’t mind, would you stop and pick up my Dad’s old fly rod? My mom knows exactly where it’s at.

“OK, I will” he said.

“But don’t pick up any Trich!” I added ...

He looked rather puzzled, so I went on...“yea, if you get Trich it is no Treat!”

Still with a puzzled look, he said: “What do you mean?”

Trich is short for Trichomoniasis which affects cattle and causes infertility and abortions. It is spread from cow to cow by the bull. It is a venereal disease of cattle. The consequences aren’t a cultural problem but a costly cash problem!

His first question was: “How do I know if I have it in my herd? First of all, there are no symptoms of the cow or bull that is carrying the Trichomonas protozoa but it is transmitted during breeding. Often the cow will get pregnant but then will lose the calf early in the pregnancy and you won’t notice an obvious abortion. So you will see a poorer percentage of your cows calving. If the infection was brought in the first year by a single bull – you may not notice a large drop in pregnancy rates at the next calving but it will get worse.

“How do I test for it?”

Well, it is hard to test the cows as they will build up immunity and get rid of the protozoa. But it is a short-lived immunity and they can get re-infected again. The best way is to test the bulls. Trich can hide out in older bulls more easily than in younger bulls – so they are more apt to be chronic carriers. The bulls can be tested by taking a special scraping from their sheath and incubating the sample on a certain culture media.

“Do a lot of cattlemen test for it?”

They certainly should. There are state regulations concerning testing bulls for Trichomoniasis. Any non-virgin bulls must be tested before they are brought into the state. Even non-virgin bulls that are switching owners are required to be tested for Trich. Or bulls on public land grazing permits or with grazing associations must also be tested before breeding season.

So that’s why I said pick up my fly rod but don’t pick up Trich!

And with that he was off...”Gotta go but thanks for the info. – I’ll call you when I get back.”

I wrote down the Colorado Department of Agriculture’s Animal Industry Division phone number (303-239-4161) on my card and added: “Thanks for picking up the rod!”

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