



Dairy/Beef/Livestock

Retired UI professor's very accurate cow pregnancy test grows nationwide

Retired University of Idaho animal scientist Garth Sasser has watched his company, Moscow-based BioTracking, enjoy a fast-growing market among beef and dairy producers for the ruminant pregnancy test he developed.

The company ended 2006 with a total of 207,000 samples analyzed using the BioPRYN process, more than 2.4 times the 85,000 in 2005 for a growth at 10 percent a month.

The pregnancy test is one example of UI research that translates into a commercial product that serves the needs of the state and nation.

Sasser, a reproductive physiologist who retired from the university in 1999 after a 32-year career, developed the BioPRYN Pregnant Ruminant Yes/No test based on his discovery of a placental protein of ruminants including cattle, sheep, goats, deer, elk and bison. The breakthrough came by shifting from an isotope to an enzyme-linked process.

The company recently moved to Moscow's Alturas Technology Park and employs four people full time and three students part time. Sasser established BioTracking as a spinoff company in 1994 with his wife Nancy. A dozen other labs are now buying test kits and running the test, which costs \$2.25 per blood sample. Beef and dairy producers might pay \$5 to \$10 for the traditional palpation pregnancy tests.

No test is more accurate than BioPRYN when calling cows NOT pregnant (>99.9%). It is popular among dairy producers with herds of 1,000 cows or less; 40 percent of his clients produce beef cattle. While Ohio and Texas producers are his strongest supporters, samples arrive from coast to coast and Canada.

See more at www.biotracking.com or e-mail biotracking@turbonet.com.

UI Extension expands education for Idaho's Hispanic farm workers

Expanding educational offerings for Hispanic workers remains a priority for University of Idaho Extension educators and specialists, based on advice from the state's growing dairy industry. Some 85 percent of employees in Idaho's dairy industry are Hispanic.

Extension faculty members Joe Dalton at Caldwell, Scott Jensen of Owyhee County, and Mireille Chahine at Twin Falls teamed up in 2006 to offer a Spanish-language course in artificial insemination

methods for dairy cattle. Students get 10 hours of classroom instruction about the science of artificial insemination and 12 hours of practical experience in required techniques.

"The time commitment for dairy workers taking the course is high but the feedback we received was positive," Dalton said.

The new course complements popular Spanish-language milker's schools and calf-raising schools.

Contact Dalton at jdalton@uidaho.edu.

DID YOU KNOW?

2.1 MILLION: Number of Idaho cattle in 2006. Included are 473,000 dairy and 472,000 beef cows.

*Source: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, www.nass.usda.gov/QuickStats/

4-H livestock day campers get savvy about production

The livestock industry keeps changing and so do leaders and participants in 4-H's ever-popular market animal projects.

When UI Extension educators in eastern Idaho realized that one in three youth taking beef, sheep, swine, or meat goats to their fairs were utterly inexperienced with livestock projects, they designed half-day "4-H Livestock Day Camps" to help close the knowledge gap. Nearly 5,000 Idaho youth and adults have participated since 1997.

"Campers" learn about animal nutrition by mixing their own feed rations and about quality standards by practicing injections into bananas. They identify animal breeds and meat cuts, measure on-the-hoof quality with ultrasound technology, and discuss proper ethical practices.

"Even though they are young exhibitors, they have to learn how to raise a product for a consumer," says UI Extension Educator Scott Nash of Bingham County.

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