

Dear Jim



Answering Your Alternative Healthcare Questions

Hello everyone,

My name is Jim Gardiner and I am one of the NY NODPA Reps. My wife Nancy and I operate a certified organic dairy farm in Otselic in central NY along with our three youngest children. Over the last fourteen years my wife and I have worked at finding alternatives to medications through the use of vitamins, minerals and herbal foods to help our livestock recover from 'dis-ease'. In this column I hope to relay some of the information we have compiled over the years to help other farmers and their animals with their struggle against 'dis-ease'.

How can I deal with parasites in our certified organic dairy animals?

Soggy- this would be the best word to describe the past spring and summer here in the northeast. Wet weather during the warm months of the year tends to increase the opportunity for parasite infestation. The two body systems that are most affected by parasitic infestation are the digestive system and the endocrine system, with the effects being interrelated.

For the digestive system, the result is more physical in nature. Often the integrity of the lining of the digestive system is compromised causing nutrient loss. Many people think that parasites feed from the food that their animals eat; in a sense 'competing' for the food. This is not true in most cases. Parasites like to let your animals do all the work of breaking down the foods first. What the parasites like is to feed from the millions of miles of tiny blood capillaries that are just under the surface of the digestive tract's lining. They burrow through the lining in order to get to the nutrient rich blood supply. This is where the nutrition is 'stolen' from your animals by the parasites. In severe cases, this causes blood loss through the manure or bloating.

The endocrine system is so reliant on a constant supply of nutrients that if the digestive system is compromised in some way, disruptions in the endocrine system are soon to follow. The endocrine system controls things such as reproduction, blood sugar balance and temperature regulation, just to name a few. There are many things that can happen when the en-

docrine system is lacking. A few of the common ones would be infertility, miscarriage, milkfever, a retained placenta and poor growth in young stock.

Prevention is the key to beating losses through parasites. Of course, the first area of question would be management. Making sure animals are well bedded, ventilated, and fed a balanced diet are the foundation for healthy dis-ease resistant animals. On young stock we have found that using Black Walnut Hulls powder, vitamins A&D and oral B complex vitamins give pleasing results. These also mix well in calves' milk and are enthusiastically accepted by the calves.

The Black Walnut hulls are a great source of iodine and trace minerals that readily feed the weakened endocrine system. The vitamins A&D add strength to the walls of the digestive tract helping to rebuild and repair damaged epithelial tissues that line the digestive tract. The B complex vitamins are important when trying to maintain or replenish the good bacteria in the digestive system.

For animals older than 12 months, we use a combination of Flaxseed oil, Witch Hazel, Wormwood powder and powdered Slippery Elm Bark. For vitamins, we use A & D and B complex. This combination is mixed as a feed additive using plenty of organic molasses for palatability. This is given to the animals until all signs of parasites are gone.

Being observant of what signs of abnormality the animal is showing us will lead to what body systems are in need of nutritional intervention.

Remember these two things--watch and listen to what your animals are trying to tell you about their health and good sound management practices are the key to avoiding many health problems in the first place. It is also important to check with your certifier for the proper products that you may use before beginning the use of these products.

If you have an alternative health care question you would like Jim to address, the deadline for submission for the February issue is January 15th.

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Disclaimer: NODPA does not endorse companies or businesses, but wants to provide education and resource information for organic dairy producers. We urge organic producers to check with their certifier before trying a new product or practice.