Cattle Bloat Controlled By Drug

➤ A NEW DRUG for one of the most dreaded conditions of cattle and sheep—swelling or bloat—has just been given the green light for commercial sale.

Discovered by a scientist at Kansas State University, the drug prevents the excessive suffocating foam that swells the stomachs of cattle, sheep and other ruminants when they eat green alfalfa or clover.

Losses of nearly $100 million each year have been suffered by U.S. farmers and ranchers. The new drug is also needed in New Zealand, Australia and South America, where cattle bloat is even more serious than in the United States.

The drug, called poloxalene, is a nonionic surfactant that has given 100% control of bloat in cattle pasturing in alfalfa, said its discoverer, Dr. Erle E. Bartley, a top dairy nutrition specialist. The drug, developed with the help of Smith Kline & French Laboratories of Philadelphia, is on the market in the South, where the cattle and sheep already are out to pasture.

When ruminants eat green legumes such as alfalfa and clover, a gas that normally forms in the stomach to aid digestion becomes trapped with another substance. This substance forms a stable foam that the animal cannot remove by belching. The foam and gas keep building up and the animal's abdomen swells painfully.

Unless serious measures are taken by the farmers to puncture the stomach or otherwise relieve the pressure, the animal can suffocate and die.

By controlling the bloat, poloxalene may enable farmers to use more of the highly productive legume pastures and reduce the need for costly supplemental proteins.

Poloxalene has been declared safe and healthful, and has been approved by the Food and Drug Act after 10 years of research. None of the drug is excreted in the cows' milk nor found in body tissues of cattle, said Dr. Bartley. It prevents bloat for at least 12 hours and is palatable to cattle. It has not caused any adverse effects on health, reproduction, or on milk quality or quantity.

The drug will be sold in a dry granular form called Bloat Guard which may be spread over the grain as a top-dressing. It works best when fed to cattle a few minutes before they are set out to pasture or given freshly cut legumes.

Louisiana State University

SUFFERING FROM BLOAT—Excessive suffocating foam that bloats the stomachs of cattle and other ruminants when they overeat green alfalfa or clover can now be controlled by a drug spread over grain as a top-dressing.

CONSERVATION

Aid Destroys Wetlands

➤ FEDERAL assistance for agricultural drainage is destroying more wetlands in the United States than farmers and ranchers are able to conserve, said Dr. Ira N. Gabrielson, president of the Wildlife Management Institute.

Engineers, land speculators and local promoters have already thoughtlessly destroyed the fabled river of grass, the Everglades National Park, he told the 31st North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference in Pittsburgh. Real work on water pollution abatement shrivels through lack of adequate funds while America plans to spend billions of dollars on building highways and public accommodations in wildlife refuges.

Conservationists both in and out of government are more concerned with "ballot-box" conservation than with muscles and bones of the resources themselves, he said. They are attracted to the tinsel rather than to the tree.

Popular ballot-box conservation can get things done in a hurry, but it can also be inefficient and harmful unless carefully planned and controlled.

Even though natural resources conservation is more popular and widely accepted in the United States than ever before, there is urgent need for the right decisions to prevent permanent damage to parks, wildlife, soil and water. Too often the long-range, meaningful programs are unspectacular and America does not wake up until there is an acute shortage or immediate threat.

There should be a system for choosing alternatives in order to avoid conflict between various agencies, said Dr. Gabrielson. Is it better to construct scenic park drives and pleasant residential and industrial areas if those same factories and residences are dumping pollutants into streams? Will the Bureau of Mines or the Office of Oil and Gas support or oppose efforts for vigorous pollution controls to clean up strip mines, acid mine wastes, oil and gas wastes?

There is continuing and growing conflict between the big dam builders for flood control, electric energy and water supply and conservationists who claim these controls can be obtained by less costly and less destructive methods.

National and regional conservation groups should use coordinated independent studies to obtain an objective outlook on the complex projects underway, and to secure a more balanced and expert analysis than any one group could obtain alone.

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