Experiences with BVD in Beef and Dairy Herds in Georgia

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Where are we?

- Success
- What people think it looks like
- What it really looks like
Justification for BVD Eradication

- Decrease morbidity in stocker and feedlot cattle
  - Decreased mortality – Current herd inventory – every calf matters
  - Increase production, decreased treatment costs, improved efficiency
- Antimicrobial use – presence of PI’s increases need to treat cattle
  - Reduce and refine antimicrobial use – pathogen reduction will be key
- Improved herd performance – farm level
  - BVD reduces reproductive efficiency – decreased weaning weights and rates
Beef Production in Georgia

- Cow – calf operations
  - 15,000 farms with beef cattle
  - 400,000 beef cows – avg herd less than 30 hd
  - 245,000 calves sold through Georgia sale barns
- Stocker operations
  - Upgraders and backgrounders – order buyers
- Purebred or seedstock operations
- Dairy - 15% of beef source

The NUMBERS:

- 40%
  Georgia’s beef industry is 40 percent more valuable today than it was five years ago.
- $406.7 M
  The Georgia beef industry’s farm gate value exceeded $406.7 million in 2010.
- 15,000
  Beef producers in Georgia. Many farmers will increase their herd of cattle when drought conditions lessen.

TOP CATTLE-PRODUCING COUNTIES:
Challenges

- Different owner motivations
  - Active cattle owners – approach their herd in a business like manner
  - Passive owners – savings account approach with low inputs and low expectations

- Lack of local data
  - Prevalence in GA? (0.14%?; Lawrence, et al, AAVLD, 2007)
  - Producer knowledge
  - **Producer concern**

- Education objectives
  - Increase awareness
  - Increase activity

- Veterinary Client Patient Relationship
Lack of regional prevalence data and producer awareness hinder developing strategies to effectively deal with BVD.

Producers may be more motivated by loss of market or market discounts than market premiums.
Recent South Georgia Cases

- Adel, GA – new cattle owner – 2013
- Claxton, GA – referral veterinarian – 3/16 calves positive; 45 cows
- Dairy calf raiser – PI’s; 40-50 calves per week
  - Increase in pinkeye and recurrent pneumonia
- Bison herd with calf loss, low calf production, blind calves
### Incidence of BVD Positive Cases Since 2010

Does not include SN, FA, VI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># Tests</th>
<th>Incidence %</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2400</td>
<td>0.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>941</td>
<td>0.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1177</td>
<td>1.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1031</td>
<td>0.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1654</td>
<td>1.33%</td>
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Owner education

- Past articles and programs present the worst case scenario of BVD
- BVD doesn’t always present with severe symptoms
- Lack of records and controlled breeding seasons
- Owners are somewhat more motivated in this current cattle market
- Effects of BVD are not the same for each production phase
Cow-calf farmer
- Typically BVD causes an absence of pregnancies and calves
- Without records and pregnancy diagnosis data the effect of BVD is non-specific
- Importance of BVD surveillance is lost amongst other important issues
Solutions

- Education programs
  - Local producer meetings – 80 local GCA chapters
- Collecting local data
  - Use on farm data in VCPR to improve animal health and welfare
  - Post-market data isn’t helpful to eradicate BVD from farms
- Valid testing
  - Adopting quality control standards (Edmondson, et al., 2007)
  - Reliable test kits
- Data sharing and/or traceability
Proposed studies

- Proposal to provide cattle owner education programs in counties with the highest concentration of beef and dairy cattle
- Proposal to test bulk milk tank samples in southeast
  - Limitations of this approach
- Proposal being developed to sample sale barn source beef calves either at the order buying facility or livestock auction market
  - We would need to randomly sample 750 calves; 95% probability; 95% CI +/-5%
  - Assuming 350,000 calves and 0.4% prevalence
Summary

- “Don’t know what we don’t know”
- Nor do we have any stats to know if we are making progress
- According to the national data we may be heading in the wrong direction
- Some owners do not appear to be motivated by premiums
  - More producers are paying attention to unproductive cows during high markets