

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE PASTURE

If you are an observant reader you will note that each issue of The GALA Newsletter contains the following sentence on page 3: *The opinions expressed in any letters or articles are solely those of the respective authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of GALA, the GALA Board of Directors or the editors.* I have reproduced it here because I want to make doubly sure that you, dear reader, know that what follows are my personal opinions, i.e., some of what follows may be controversial, and do not necessarily represent

Drug-Resistant Camelid Parasites

Recently I have heard of instances of farms that are having problems with parasites that have become drug-resistant. This reminded me of an Observations column I wrote four years ago, *To De-Worm or Not De-Worm, That is the Question*. If you are concerned about drug-resistant parasites (if you have a meningeal worm control program you should be concerned), then you may wish to revisit that article. It can be found at:

www.greenbriarllamas.com/DeWorm.htm.

Whether or not you read the article I wish to emphasize the last sentence in the first paragraph of the article: *In the final analysis your farm is unique and needs its own unique parasite control strategy developed in consultation with your veterinarian.*

Follow-up on Prion Diseases

In my last column I discussed my concerns about Prion Diseases. Since that column was published several prion disease related events have occurred.

First, both the Texas and Alabama Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE, popularly known as Mad Cow Disease) cases were characterized, after post-mortem examination of the brains, as an atypical strain¹ which appears to arise spontaneously, i.e., there is currently no known causative agent. Studies have shown that this atypical strain can spread from animal to animal. There is also an atypical strain of Scrapie. I am always uncomfortable with anything that is described as “arising spontaneously”. I am reminded that not too many centuries ago, it was thought that maggots arose spontaneously.

Second, there was a cattle feed recall² because the feed was contaminated with cattle remains, contrary to the requirements of the 1997 FDA ban using cattle offal in feed.

These events remind me that we should continue to monitor the situation and communicate with our legislators whenever we are not pleased with government actions with respect to prion diseases.

Barbaro, Barbarism, Form and Function

Barbaro is the horse that broke his right hind leg in the Preakness. I do not happen to be a horse-racing aficionado. I am concerned whenever humans interfere with the genetics of other species in a manner which compromises the health and welfare of these animals. A case in point is race horses where an objective of the breeding plan is to increase the potential speed of the horse with an attendant sacrifice in the structural conformation of the horse, i.e., thinner leg bones. I think any breeding program which compromises the potential health and welfare of the animal is barbaric, whether we are talking about horses, alpacas or llamas (see first paragraph of this column). We should be mindful of the ultimate impact of our breeding decisions – will the resultant animal have its form and function compromised? If the answer is in the affirmative, then I believe we should reconsider what we are about to do.

For those who might be wondering how Barbaro is doing, as of July 3rd he remains in intensive care and has had his cast changed for a second time.

One positive thing has come out of Barbaro's misfortune; an anonymous donation launched the Barbaro Fund at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Medicine³. Donations will help care for large animals being treated at the Widener Hospital at the New Bolton Center.

Lynd

¹ Associated Press, June 11, 2006

² Associated Press, June 20, 2006

³ www.vet.upenn.edu/newsandevents/news/Barbaro_Fund.htm