



From the desk of Dr. Tom Michalek
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Recently some herds in the Thumb participated in a program sponsored by Michigan State University Veterinary Extension to determine the prevalence of Bovine Leukemia Virus (BLV) in Michigan dairy cattle. Dr. Phil Durst and Dr. Dan Grooms are launching an initiative to eradicate BLV.

You may remember a few years ago when Johnes was the target of a similar effort. Although Johnes has not been eradicated, great strides have been made in reducing the prevalence in your dairies. Congratulations and Thank-you for your management changes that have resulted in this change. I think BLV will be more difficult to impact change because of its multiple means of transmission.

BLV in cattle is a "retrovirus" that causes "leukemia" in about 30% of positive cattle and "lymphosarcoma tumors" in about 5% of positive cattle. The economic impact of cattle with lymphosarcoma is easily determined. These are the cattle with swollen lymph nodes that are condemned at slaughter and you don't get paid. They are also cattle with spinal tumors causing paralysis and a down cow. The economic impact of BLV positive cows with no symptoms or lesions is much harder to determine. One study shows that BLV positive cows produced 3% less milk.

Results of the survey determined that the incidence of BLV increased with the age of the animal and also increased with the open management style of larger dairies. These results were exactly what were expected. Herd prevalence as low as 0% was found in a smaller closed herd and a high preva-

lence of 70% in a large open management style dairy were results I personally received. The prevalence in your dairy probably lies somewhere in between these two extremes.

So, similar to Johnes, if we look for BLV we will find it in most herds. The tougher question is: what is the economic impact of BLV in my dairy? And if I implement management changes, how effective will they be? Talk to one of us about the BLV eradication program. It may not be for everyone!

On behalf of the doctors and staff of Thumb Veterinary, I would like to extend a big "Thank You" to Helen Kennedy for all she has done during her many years of service with us. Helen has been with us through many changes but you probably know her best as the innovator and coordinator of our drop-ship program. Helen has accepted a position with another company and we wish her all the best in her new career. Thank you for everything!!

The monthly Herdsman and Calf meetings will be on vacation for the summer! They will start up again in the fall, we will keep you posted.

Save the date!
Annual Producer Picnic will be August 6th 11am-2pm at the clinic in Sandusky.