Listeriosis

CAUSE: *Listeria monocytogenes* is an extremely environmentally resistant bacterium that tolerates a wide range of temperatures. It grows between 39 and 111°F (4 and 44°C).

EFFECT: Listeria that are inhaled or ingested are associated with septicemia (blood infections) or abortions. Intestinal infection may cause no signs although the animal is shedding organisms in feces. Inflammation of the brain, encephalitis, is commonly recognized as "circling" disease in cattle. Listeriosis can also affect sheep and goats.

How is Listeriosis spread? *Listeria* are found in soil and water. Animals can carry the bacteria without showing any signs of disease, thereby serving as asymptomatic reservoirs. It is spread primarily through contaminated feed (spoiled silage may be a culprit) or fecal-oral transmission.

How can Listeriosis be prevented? Do not feed spoiled silage. Baylage (bagged round bales) are more often contaminated with *Listeria*. Dairy and meat processing plants must follow strict hygiene to avoid contamination of products.

Can Listeriosis affect people? Yes. Although it is killed by proper pasteurization, *Listeria* in the processing plant may contaminate previously pasteurized dairy products during packaging. Even so, as a food borne disease it is most commonly associated with non-pasteurized products. It can also be acquired through direct contact with aborted materials or tissues during necropsy. Pregnant women are particularly susceptible to infection.

What if there is an outbreak? The disease tends to be sporadic. If feed is suspected as the source of the outbreak, switch to another feed and destroy the contaminated feed. Aggressive antibiotic treatment early in the course of the disease may be curative.

For more information on Listeriosis, see:
CDC: Listeriosis
The Merck Veterinary Manual: Listeriosis
OIE: Listeriosis