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September 30, 2010

Dear Dairy Producers and Industry Representatives,

At periodic intervals popular press articles and industry quotes state that there is a test for rbST (recombinant bovine somatotropin) use in dairy cows; in some cases the articles state that the test has been developed by Cornell University. These statements have led to confusion, and the following addresses some of the most frequently asked questions to help alleviate confusion about this topic.

1. Any test for rbST that is used in food labeling must be approved by the FDA, and this requires validation using accepted scientific practices, similar to the requirements of all tests currently used to verify label claims for food and feed products. Validation will include demonstrations of repeatability, accuracy, sensitivity, and variability. We are not aware of such validations for any test for rbST use in lactating dairy cows.
2. After checking with colleagues throughout the University, we can safely say none of the divisions within Cornell University are currently working on a test for bST; this includes the Department of Animal Science, the New York State Diagnostic Laboratory, the College of Veterinary Medicine, and the Department of Food Science.
3. Milk does contain trace levels of somatotropin but these levels are the same in rbST supplemented and unsupplemented cows. Furthermore, scientific studies have shown that the same trace amounts of somatotropin are present in conventionally produced milk and milk labeled as rbST-free or organic.
4. The challenge of developing a reliable validated test for use of rbST seems improbable for several reasons including; i) the concentration of bST in raw milk is extremely low, below the level of detection for virtually all commercial testing procedures, and ii) the challenge of differentiating between rbST and endogenous bST given the structure of the bioactive portion of the protein molecule is identical.

To summarize, to the best of our knowledge there is no reliable validated test to differentiate milk from cows supplemented with bST from those who have not been supplemented, and the development of such a test seems unlikely. Milk from rbST-supplemented cows does not differ in nutrient content or in the content of any of the trace constituents including bST. Dairy Producers and milk handlers need to understand that there is no valid milk test for rbST use, therefore any statements or references to a

valid test are incorrect and misleading to dairy producers and the industry. If you have any further questions about this matter, please feel free to contact us at 607-255-2262.

Respectfully,



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Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor



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