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BELARUS

SUCCESS STORY

USAID Assistance Boosts Belarusian Farm

USAID volunteers inform Belarusian farmers about veterinary techniques



Photo: CNFA\ Yuri Seleznev

USAID volunteer Dan Haskins (left) palpates a cow while a few of the Dzerzhinsk farm veterinarians look on.

Hundreds of cows that had previously not shown any signs of fertility have now been inseminated thanks to expert advice from USAID volunteers.

Dzerzhinsk Farm in Belarus employs more than 550 workers and is the largest force in the Minsk oblast's economy. The farm serves as a good model for future market-oriented agricultural enterprises in Belarus. Unfortunately, the farm's veterinarians have faced challenges in the area of artificial insemination and dairy health management.

In August 2009, as part of its Farmer-to-Farmer program, USAID sent two volunteers, Dan Haskins and Rick McGuire, to provide technical assistance to the Dzerzhinsk farm. Over the course of their two-week assignment in Belarus, the Americans worked closely with a variety of individuals on the farm, including Konstantin Dubrovsky, a veterinarian-gynecologist, and Nikolay Afanasevich, a farm manager.

Through this exchange, the Belarusians were able to further develop their skills and knowledge in the areas of fertility detection, insemination techniques, record-keeping, and reproduction goals and benchmarks. The exchange also led to the identification of six areas of concern and the development of a herd health program.

Dubrovsky views the exchange as very beneficial. He believes the volunteers greatly helped the Dzerzhinsk veterinarians reduce costs by sharing knowledge about the use of various medicines and different techniques.

Since the USAID volunteers departed, hundreds of cows that had previously not shown any signs of fertility have been inseminated. The veterinarians hope they will all become pregnant and deliver calves. This would increase the number of cattle and their production of milk for the region.

The Belarusian experts have noticed the benefits of the exchange with their American counterparts. The experience contributed to their understanding of artificial insemination practices and identification of breeding problems. The knowledge gained will help them in leading a more successful business and providing better services to their countrymen.