Wrecks Are Not Desirable; Vaccinate Your Calves Now

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The process of getting calves ready for market is not simple. In days past, calves generally were not handled or worked prior to shipping in the fall. Instead, they were gathered, sorted and hauled directly to the auction barn.

Calves would not be separated from their mothers prior to sale and the bawling of fresh-weaned calves echoed from the local sale barns. These calves did well and many returned to the countryside for a more leisurely feeding period in smaller lots or pastures.

Today, the table has turned. Many calves go directly to feed yards that aggressively feed calves. In many ways, this is a culmination of genetic selection for growth and the availability of reasonably priced feed grains available in sufficient quantities that facilitate the operation of large feed yards.

Standing at the entrance of a large feedlot today, one would see a constant flow of tractor-trailers loaded with feed or loaded with calves, courtesy of a very efficient transportation system.

In terms of filling trucks with calves, today's buyers do not have a few select orders that offer a premium. Today's buyers have a standard order that fills large pens in large feedlots with similar types of calves that are preconditioned for such an environment.

The bottom line is that the need for preconditioned calves is now the norm, not the exception. At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, in response to the recommendation of our local veterinarian and in preparation for this fall's shipping, the calves were vaccinated with a seven- way clostridial, including blackleg caused by clostridium chauvoei; malignant edema caused by clostridium septicum; black disease caused by clostridium novyi; gas gangrene caused by clostridium sordellii; enterotoxemia and enteritis caused by clostridium perfringens types B, C and D; and histophilus (haemophilus) somnus.

The calves also received a five-way viral product at branding for infectious bovine rhinotracheitis, bovine viral diarrhea types I and II, bovine respiratory syncitial virus and bovine parainfluenza 3.

The cost of these products was 76 cents for clostridial/somnus vaccine and $1.86 for the five- way viral product. Two to eight weeks prior to weaning, a booster vaccine is administered for clostridial/somnus and the five-way viral.

At the same time as the booster vaccination, calves receive their initial vaccination for mannheimia (pasteurella) haemolytica. The cost for pasteurella is $2.32 per dose. The booster vaccinations cost 76 cents for clostridial/somnus vaccine and $1.86 for the five-way viral product.

At weaning, the calves again will receive all three vaccinations at a cost of $4.94. The calves would not need to be vaccinated at arrival at the feedlot because they should be fully prepared for the transition. The total cost for the vaccination program is $12.50 per calf.

This is a fairly aggressive vaccination program, but these calves are heading to the feedlot. For every 100 calves in the feedlot, the death of one calf would be more costly than the price of an aggressive vaccination program.

In addition, the nature of many of these diseases, if ever encountered, seldom involves just one animal. The reality of an outbreak is that a significant number of calves will be sick. The lost performance, lost value on the rail and actual treatment costs combine to produce what most cattle producers call a wreck.

It's best to not go there, so vaccinate the calves.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at *http://www.BeefTalk.com*. For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to *http://www.CHAPS2000.com* on the Internet.

Check Which Diseases Your Calves are Protected From:

- ❑ Blackleg (*Clostridium chauvoei*)
- ❑ Malignant Edema (*Cl. Septicum*)
- ❑ Black Disease (*Cl. Novyi*)
- ❑ Gas-gangrene (*Cl. Sordellii*)
- ❑ Enterotoxemia and Enteritis (*Cl. perfringens types B, C and D*)
- ❑ Haemophilus (*Histophilus somnus*)
- ❑ Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis
- ❑ Bovine Viral Diarrhea type I and II
- ❑ Bovine Respiratory Syncitial Virus
- ❑ Parainfluenza 3
- ❑ Pasteurella (*Mannheimia haemolytica*)