

BeefTalk: Prevention and Early Intervention Are Keys to Unlocking the Sick Pen

If a calf is dragging, a colt missing a jump or the feed bunk is not cleaned up, there is a reason.

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Understanding the sick pen is difficult until one gets placed there. Caring for sick cattle, horses or any other animals is best understood by being sick and noting the process. The onset of a sickness usually is known.

Day one is business as usual, but things don't seem right. The old body just seems a little sluggish. One doesn't get up as fast, eats less and moves slower.

Day two is still business, but active camouflage is deployed. "Don't let the world know" is the motto. Early morning scouts are saying that things have not improved and an invasion is eminent.

An occasional sneeze, a slight cough and shifting body temperature are body defenses trying to fight off the initial attack. Early optimism is that our defenses might get the upper hand and the invader will be defeated. A couple of good sneezes could cripple their numbers, a quick spike in temperature could maim their recruits and a fleet of white blood cells could sail over and slaughter all the remaining intruders.

Day three brings damage reports that aren't good. The initial conflicts are not going one's way. The invaders are increasing, enjoying the fresh, new conquered territory and have set up camp just out of reach of the doctor's wooden stick. Active plans are being made to hit the main supply lines, the bronchial tubes. Previous invasions have had good success and intuition tells the invaders any obstruction of the airways is good.

On day four, internal strife and poor planning take their toll. Poor decisions become the invaders' advantage. Major inroads are made at slicing the air supply and other vital pathways have to be rerouted to assure the delivery of supplies to those parts of the body still willing to work. The invaders are celebrating.

On day five, one goes down because supplies are no longer being delivered to the critical junctions and the troops are failing. The invaders have conquered and the spoils are being divided up.

Invading troop Alpha, for notorious service, gets the lungs. Troop Omega can have the alimentary tract, and the list goes on. The white flag goes up from the remaining defending troops and they hand in their weapons. A short trial is held followed by sentencing. The sentence is life in Camp Chronic, with no chance of parole.

Sound familiar? I hope not because, at least in my case, I went to the doctor. I stuck out my tongue and showed him my ears. My temperature, pulse and blood pressure were taken and then I was given an antibiotic prescription on day three.

Images



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I would have gone in on day two, but the hope is that the body will get the job done. However, sometimes the onslaught is greater than anticipated or our own systems are stressed past their natural defensive capacities.

The same is true for all of us. For all of us who are entrusted to care for other living things, we must learn to be astute and pick up on a problem on day one or two. Life is better at that point.

If a calf is dragging, a colt missing a jump or the feed bunk is not cleaned up, there is a reason. More than likely it's an invasion. Early intervention will mean the difference between life in the chronic pen or, in some cases, even death.

Stay ahead of the curve and watch those entrusted to your care. Sometimes the best advice simply is to get a good cup of coffee, sit on the fence and watch.

Note problems that may be occurring. Above all, lower your stress level and of those around you, as well as your cattle and other living things entrusted to your care.

Remember that prevention and early intervention, if needed, are critical.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.


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