

## **BeefTalk 472: Today's Market Preparation Begins with an Ear Tag**

*The process of preparing calves for market does not change the anticipation or remove the nervousness associated with marketing the annual calf crop.*

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Market and price are foremost in the minds of producers as they contemplate the fall roundup. The market watch can be nervy because market slippage can mean big dollars.

Producers cannot control the base market. Only the market's rise and fall are left for the producer. The market shifts can be muted with contracts and other selling options, but the anticipation, the good and bad, generally remains somewhat raw.

The focus on market product begins with getting calves ready to sell. Astute producers know market preparations began with breeding decisions because the type of calf for sale is a product of selected genetics.

Fall brings on the urgency of market preparation, which was initiated when an ear tag was placed in the calf at birth. Not everyone agrees, but market signals today point to opportunity for age- and source-verified calves.

The ear tag and calving book are today's starting point for marketing calves. Being able to present the calves as being age and source verified is a positive factor.

The calves also need to be preconditioned because preconditioned calves are the norm, not the exception.

At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, in response to the recommendation of our local veterinarian and in preparation for fall shipping, the standard protocol is to vaccinate the calves before spring turnout to pasture with a seven-way clostridial. This includes 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 turnout for infectious bovine rhinotracheitis, bovine viral diarrhea types I and II, bovine respiratory syncytial virus and bovine parainfluenza 3. 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 *Pasteurella Haemolytica-Multocida*. These numerous vaccinations seem rather cumbersome and the names rather long and complicated, but with today's combined vaccines, the process is simple.

Many veterinarians and distributors can guide a producer to the appropriate health protocol that fits the local area. Once a proper vaccination protocol has been established for the calves, the desire to have bunk-broke calves that are quick to find water and feed on arrival are always in demand.

These calves adapt well and adjust to new feedlot conditions. Dumb, newly weaned calves have to learn what life means without mom. They do learn, but the learning curve is steeper and comes at a greater cost once the calves leave the home ranch.

The process of preparing calves for market does not change the anticipation or remove the nervousness associated with marketing the annual calf crop. Daily, weekly and monthly market swings make the annual sales event a crucial day in the life of a farm or ranch.

Perhaps the best advice is to group calves following proper preparation for the market and then market one set or group at a time. While the thrill of seeing all the calves trucked to the sale barn and sold is exciting, it might make better sense to partition selected groups of calves through a series of days and with specific markets in mind.

The bottom line remains. Calves will bring what the market needs, but no more or less.

Finding and presenting calves at their best won't hurt. Soliciting and letting a few extra buyers know the calves are coming can be helpful.

Also, there are some new players in the market. If your calves are appropriately age and source verified and packaged right, you are on the right side of the equation.

Remember, marketing calves starts with a calf book. If you don't have one, please call.

May you find all your ear tags.

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

**Getting Calves Ready for Market?**

**– DON'T FORGET –**

**Market Preparation Starts When an  
Ear Tag is placed in the Calf at Birth**

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