

## **BeefTalk 500: Bulls Deserve a Good Vaccination Program**

*Bulls are not as tough as perceived, and meeting their requirements is critical to the success of the cowherd.*

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Bulls can get sick, too. As a kid, I remember finding our bull dead.

The bull was at the end of a grove of trees, the victim of blackleg. Not far away were two dead calves.

Young minds are impressionable, so that day left a mark. Today there is no excuse to lose cattle to blackleg.

The prevention is an adequate vaccination program that physically vaccinates the cattle. I don't know that there is a good database on bull morbidity or mortality because most herds don't have that many bulls.

For every bull, a producer may run as few as 10 cows or as many as 60 cows. The bull-to-cow ratio is variable depending on the terrain, age of the bull and general management protocols within an individual beef operation. It even may be difficult to call bulls a herd.

Bulls often are set aside and, in many ways, simply passed by. They are tough, don't seem to need as much feed and simply are neglected in the middle of calving. The cows and new babies get all the attention.

As they were sorted off to the bull pen, a quick glance assured soundness and the gate is swung shut. In some cases, the next bull review is when the gate opens up for spring breeding.

This is the wrong approach to sire care. Bulls are not as tough as perceived, and meeting their requirements is critical to the success of the cowherd.

Since a fair piece of change was spent gathering the bulls, it is important to start with an adequate balanced nutrition ration that allows for the normal growth of muscle and skeleton. Also, a little conditioning is not going to hurt.

Just like cows, mature weight is not realized as yearlings, 2-year-olds or even 3-year-olds. They need to grow.

Like good nutrition, bulls also need to have a good health program. For starters, every bull should have received all his calf vaccinations.

Verification of what the producer of the bull said is critical. What actually was included in the vaccination program?

For example, at the Dickinson Research Extension Center, all calves receive a vaccination plus a booster to protect against the bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) virus, bovine virus diarrhea (BVD) types 1 and 2, parainfluenza3 (PI3) virus, bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV), mannheimia haemolytica and pasteurella multocida.

Plus, and just as important, they are vaccinated against clostridium chauvoei (blackleg), septicum (malignant edema), novyi (black disease), sordellii, perfringens types C and D (enterotoxemia) and haemophilus somnus.

These vaccinations are given while the calves are on the cows. The cows also receive a complementary vaccination protocol that allows for maximum protection while on pasture for both the cow and calf.

All calves receive another booster when arriving in the feedlot. The heifers are grown out and slowly incorporated into the cowherd vaccination program.

Newly purchased bulls receive a repeat of the calf vaccination protocol to assure that all bulls that arrive are properly protected. New bulls are vaccinated to reduce clinical signs of foot rot and the size and number of liver abscesses caused by fusobacterium necrophorum.

The older bulls in residence at the ranch receive an annual booster (modified live) in May (equivalent to the prebreeding cow vaccination protocol), prior to mid-June turn out with the cows and are poured. All herd health should be discussed with your local veterinarian and customized to meet a producer's needs.

Bulls purchased outside of the local trade area certainly need to have their vaccination protocols reviewed and supplemented if needed. For example, the center's veterinarian recommends expanding bull vaccination protocols to include protection from bovine virus diarrhea (BVD), virus types 1 and 2, bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR "red nose," bovine herpes virus type 1) virus and parainfluenza 3 (PI 3) virus, campylobacter fetus, leptospira canicola, L. grippotyphosa, L. hardjo, L. icterohaemorrhagiae and L. pomona serovars.

The bottom line is to develop a good relationship with your local veterinarian and provide the health protection the bulls deserve.

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.

## Recommended Bull Vaccinations

Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR) virus  
Bovine Virus Diarrhea (BVD) Types 1 and 2  
Parainfluenza3 (PI3) virus  
Bovine Respiratory Syncytial virus (BRSV)  
Mannheimia haemolytica  
Pasteurella multocida  
Clostridium chauvoei (Blackleg)  
septicum (Malignant edema)  
novyi (Black disease)  
sordellii  
perfringens Types C & D (Enterotoxemia)  
Haemophilus somnus  
Fusobacterium necrophorum  
Campylobacter fetus (vibriosis)  
leptospirosis (Leptospira canicola, L. grippotyphosa, L. hardjo, L. icterohaemorrhagiae, and L. pomona serovars)