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## BeefTalk: Vaccinating Pays

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Fall, as many cattle producers know, is tough on calves.

Calves don't even realize that the lazy days of summer and the cool days of fall abruptly end for them at weaning. There probably is no time more critical than the days following weaning, and a management regime should be in place to help every calf through it. Let's talk about vaccination programs that will assure a calf of adequate immunity to withstand the rigors of life off the range. Ideally, those calves should have received a vaccination program at some point throughout the summer and be boosted at weaning.

Before spring pasture turn out at the NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center, we dehorn (if needed), castrate and vaccinate with a seven-way clostridial product. At least two weeks before weaning, we give calves their initial IBR, BVD, BRSV and PI3 viral plus a haemophilus somnus, plus the seven-way clostridial booster. Upon weaning, a 4-way viral (IBR, BVD, BRSV, PI3) booster is given. If calves are not vaccinated prior to weaning, the vaccination protocol should start at weaning and follow Beef Quality Assurance guidelines.

One of the concerns often expressed by producers is that the weight loss from working calves is too great to justify vaccinating. Coincidentally, Lee Manske, Dickinson Research Extension Center range specialist, weighed calves on

range studies three times within seven hours this summer to get an estimate of weight change while working calves and also obtain an estimate of milk production of cows involved in range systems.

Interestingly, calves weighed off pasture, separated from their mothers, sorted three times, left stand in the lots with no feed or water for approximately 6 hours and weighed again only lost 8.7 pounds (2.8 percent of body weight). Even more remarkable, within twenty minutes of being reunited with their mothers they regained 8.5 pounds. So all the weight was regained following nursing and the calf was totally recovered from the handling process.

This suggests that calves worked in good facilities do not lose enough weight to even consider not vaccinating. Don't confuse the weight loss of shipping cattle (shrink) with routine handling of cattle. As a result of good vaccination programs, the likelihood of a loss due to the death of a calf is greatly diminished.

Do sick cattle cost you money? Obviously, the answer is yes. How much money? In the last three years of retaining ownership at the center, calves that were actually finished had a net return of \$49.13 with \$1.27 treatment costs. If a calf left the lot because of poor performance that reflected poor health, the calf lost us \$121.68 with \$4.94 treatment costs. When a calf actually dies in the feedyard, our experience indicates that the Center lost an average of \$612.19 with treatment costs of \$14.07. In other words, when we placed 100 calves on feed, the Center subtracted more than \$6 from the net profit on each calf in the pen every time one calf died. If a second or third calf died, the impact on pen profit is even more dramatic.

Vaccination will not prevent all calf death loss; however, when I invest \$5.57 per calf in vaccine, I up the odds that profit will fall my way, not the way of the grim reaper.

Your comments are always welcome at [www.BeefTalk.com](http://www.BeefTalk.com) For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to [www.CHAPS2000.COM](http://www.CHAPS2000.COM) on the Internet. In correspondence about this column refer to BT007.

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## Net Return For Feeding Calves

NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center



\* Calf with health-related problems sold early to "realize" any remaining value.

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