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The time is fast approaching in the annual cow-calf cycle when thoughts shift from production to marketing. Now is the time to start thinking about preparing calves for market.

One might say this is old hat by now, but it really isn't. The need to provide protection for calves, whether one weans them at home or sells them right off the cow, is a vital part of successful management.

At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, the calves receive vaccinations for infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR), bovine viral diarrhea type I and II (BVD), bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV) and bovine parainfluenza 3 (PI3). These viral agents typically are present and can negatively affect calves.

Protection from these viral agents is available as a combination vaccine containing all four agents (thus the common saying four-way) in various product formulations from several vaccine companies. Killed and modified live products are available, but need to be administered according to the well-displayed, easy-to-read labels that the companies provide.

In addition to the viral agents, the primary bacterial agents that have a likelihood of being present are *pasteurella haemolytica*, *pasteurella multocida* and *hemophilus somnus*. Just as in the viral agents, several formulations combine the bacterial agents with other viral vaccines or common clostridial vaccines. The clostridial vaccines are started at branding and, generally, are the first vaccination the calves receive.

Why the thought or expression "old hat"? Well, the discussion of calf vaccination has been front and center in educational programs for well over the average of today's career.

Most veterinarians and animal scientists employed today have grown up with these very effective tools in the tool chest, which primarily are very improved and effective vaccines. The precursor, at least for me, was the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association's (NDBCIA) Green Tag program.

Recently, I reviewed the Green Tag program brochure that was produced for the NDBCIA in the late

1980s. The educational piece says, "Preconditioning includes a complete health management program which prepares the calves to better withstand the stress and adjustment they need to undergo when they leave the home farm or ranch in route to the feedlot. Calves are castrated in most cases, dehorned, vaccinated against common shipping and feedlot diseases, treated for grubs and lice and had the opportunity to accustom themselves to water troughs and feed bunks. Additional practices are encouraged, which include implants that stimulate the natural growth processes, complete herd health programs within the cow herd and strong relationships with professional veterinarians and animal scientists."

Those details are important today, so one could assume not much has changed. The main principle remains protecting calves. This protection for calves is paramount. The protection plan needs to start with a strong calf vaccination program, followed by a preweaning vaccination protocol and vaccination again at weaning. With improved vaccinations available and more vaccination programs readily attainable, it is very important that producers follow the labels and protocols developed by the vaccine producers. The end result is calves that can withstand the rigors of life without mom and adapt readily to whatever system the calf ends up in.

This is important for everyone connected to the beef production cycle: the calf, the producer, the feeder and, ultimately, the consumer. The NDBCIA has long touted the need for good herd health to sustain the continued production of high-quality meat protein for the consumer.

A good vaccination program is a major component of attaining that goal. What's in your veterinary case?

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.

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# **Calves That Excel**

**Superior Genetics**

**Sound Management**

**Preconditioning**

**Tag Identification**

**Certification**

**Marketing Strategy**