

Herd Health Programs for Spring Calving Beef Herds



Extension

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As calving approaches or has started for spring calving herds and the calving barn begins to fill up, now is a good time to develop or refine the current herd health program while waiting for the next midnight calving run.

For potential replacement females, the overall herd health program begins prior to birth and continues throughout her productive life while in the herd. A health program not only helps maintain healthy animals, it also serves as an insurance policy helping eliminate the chances of outbreaks that could be financially devastating.

One of the most important aspects to establishing a health program is working with veterinarians. They can help recommend products and vaccinations schedules that best fit an environment and livestock operation. They can also offer tips to help maximize a herd's response to vaccination and improve the overall protection. Developing a comprehensive herd health program for the entire year is important to guarantee adequate immunity is maintained throughout the year. Figure 1 represents a generic example of a herd health program for a spring calving herd. Keep in mind the chart is a place to start. It is a good idea to discuss specific products and vaccination timing with your local veterinarian.

Livestock Type	Pre-Calving	Calving	Branding	Pre-Breeding	Pre-weaning	Weaning	Preg-Check
Calves		*7-Way Clostridial or *C&D Clostridial	5-Way Viral killed or MLV ^{1,2} *7-way Clostridial *Pasteurella		5-Way Viral killed or MLV ^{1,2} *7-way Clostridial *Pasteurella	5-Way MLV Viral ¹ 7-Way Clostridial Pasteurella Parasite trt.	Brucellosis/Bangs vacc (Hfr) 4 – 10 mo. of age Somnus (fdlot str)
Heifers	Pre-calving scour vaccination. ³ *7-way Clostridial or *C&D Clostridial			5-Way MLV Viral ¹ Vibrio / Lepto 7-Way Clostridial *Parasite trt.			*5-Way killed Viral Vibrio / Lepto Parasite trt.
Cows	Pre-calving scour vaccination. ³ *7-way Clostridial or *C&D Clostridial			5-Way MLV Viral ¹ 7-Way Clostridial *Parasite trt.			*5-Way MLV Viral ¹ Vibrio / Lepto Parasite trt.
Bulls				Soundness exam Vibrio/Lepto/Trich 5-Way MLV Viral ¹ Parasite trt.			*5-Way MLV Viral ¹ Vibrio / Lepto Parasite trt.
Stockers			5-Way Viral killed or MLV ¹ 7-way Clostridial Pasteurella * Somnus Parasite trt.				

* Optional

- 5-Way viral vaccines typically protect against IBR, PI3, BRSV and BVD (I&II) respiratory viruses, with the option of killed vaccine or Modified Live vaccine (MLV). In general terms, MLV vaccines produce a better immune response.
- General recommendations are to use killed vaccines when dealing with calves nursing pregnant females. Some newer MLV vaccines are licensed for administration to pregnant females, provided they were previously vaccinated for that agent (BVD), as well as calves nursing those pregnant females.
- Do not vaccinate pregnant females two weeks or less in advance of calving date



In addition to working with a veterinarian, there are supplemental management practices critical to maintaining an effective herd health program.

This “Top Ten” list of practices includes:

1. Reading and following label directions for all vaccines, antibiotics, and parasite control products.
2. Follow proper Beef Quality Assurance guidelines, and place all shots in front of the shoulder.
3. Use very hot water (180 degrees) to sterilize equipment. Time isn’t as important as temperature. As long as it’s at least 180 degrees, simply fling and emptying the syringe three times will work – allow the syringe to cool approximately five minutes before using. Do not use disinfectants when administering modified live vaccines.
4. Keep all vaccines out of direct sunlight to protect from ultraviolet light damage, and store in a cool place – even when the product is loaded in the syringe.
5. Color code or mark syringes to avoid mixing or giving an incorrect dose.
6. Do not administer more than 10 cc of product per injection site
7. To maintain maximum effectiveness, mix only enough vaccine to be used in one hour or less.
8. Choose the correct needle for the job, and replace needles often.
9. Observe the proper withdrawal times for all antibiotics.
10. Keep records of vaccinations, medications, and feed additives used.

Herd health programs are a coordinated effort between your veterinarian, manager, and processing crew. Following the guidelines listed above will help guarantee a proper vaccine response and improved protection for the herd. Additional herd health components not discussed in this article also include adequate nutrition, a sound mineral program, and proper herd management. As natural and organic marketing opportunities continue to grow, beef producers are challenged to maintain herd health while minimizing or eliminating the use of antibiotics. Thorough herd vaccination programs are a critical component to meeting the guidelines for these programs.



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