COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

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Wheat Pasture Conditions and Feeder Marketing Strategies

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Most of the state of Oklahoma has received significant rain in the last 10 days. Many areas received one to two inches with some areas getting significantly more. The timing was good in that most of the wheat is planted with much of it up and the response to this moisture should be good. At this time, there is very little wheat pasture ready for grazing but this rain will help pasture develop, if somewhat later than planned. I expect that, similar to last year, we may see slow but steady wheat grazing develop through the winter with stockers dribbling out to pasture all winter.

Feeder prices in Oklahoma are likely at the seasonal low and are expected to strengthen a bit in the last part of the year. Relative feeder prices provide several distinct signals to cow-calf, stocker and feedlot producers. Last week in Oklahoma, the cheapest feeder animal up to 850 pounds, on a $/cwt. basis was a 600 pound steer. At this time, there is relatively little demand for such an animal. It is a bit too heavy for traditional stocker programs and too light for feedlots to want to feed a lot of expensive corn to. There is also a relatively sharp break above and below 500 pounds. These price signals suggest several strategies for cattle producers.

Obviously feedlots want to buy and place heavier animals. Currently the price is a bit higher for animals 700 - 800 pounds compared to 600 pounds. Moreover, this feedlot demand keeps the normal price break to a minimum up to weights over 900 pounds. In general this gives stocker producers lots of flexibility to implement various stocker programs. Based on current prices, a short term program starting with a 600 pound steer, could put on 200 pounds of gain with no rollback in price. At current prices, that results in a value of gain of $1.09/pound. This may work well with late wheat pasture for a short winter grazing period. Alternatively, although there is more price rollback for the lightweight stockers, there is good value of gain in owning animals for a long period of time and adding lots of weight. This is even more true given the current premium on Feeder futures and the ability to lock in a good margin on stockers. A 475 pound steer purchased this last week can be locked in against the May Feeder futures with a value of gain of roughly $1.05/pound when sold at 800 pounds.

For cow-calf producers, it depends on weaning weights. If the calves are less than 500 pounds, there is little advantage to putting a small amount of weight on. The value of another 50-100 pounds is between $0.55 and $0.70/pound. However, if these animals are retained to heavier weights, the value of gain rises. The point is not to sell into the 600 pound market for which there is little demand. Either sell them lighter for stocker demand or retain them to 700+ pounds for feedlot demand.

Vaccine and Equipment Care and Handling

by John Kirkpatrick, DVM, Professor Emeritus Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine

Several millions of dollars have been invested to deliver to the livestock producer safe and efficacious vaccines. It behooves us to handle these products in a manner that will maximize the immune response in the healthy animal.

Let's review a few simple steps to help insure that we don't drop the ball by something we did or did not do that could negatively affect vaccine efficacy.

1. Purchase only federally licensed vaccines from a reliable source that is conscientious about the ordering, timely receiving and shipping, and storing vaccines they are going to sell you.
2. Purchase the proper vaccines for the cattle you are vaccinating – consult your veterinarian and/or read the directions carefully.
3. Keep vaccines refrigerated at all times (36 degrees to 44 degrees F). Keep in an ice chest and out of the sun at chuteside.
4. Mix only enough vaccine that will be used in a timely period (less than 1 hour) and discard any unused product by burning containers.
5. Reconstitute modified live virus (MLV) vaccines with clean transfer needles. Using a bleeding needle is highly recommended because they are cheap and disposable (see your veterinarian).
6. Do not mix two different products in the same syringe unless it is part of the package, i.e. IBR / Leptospirosis vaccine.
7. Use only new needles to fill and refill syringes.
8. Consider using multidose disposable syringes that automatically draw from the vaccine vial, especially for modified live virus (MLV) vaccines. When using this method keep the vial in use in a vial shroud or cover to insulate and protect from sunlight.
9. Use the proper needle gauge and length. 16 gauge X 5/8 or 3/4 inch for all subcutaneous (subq) injections. Use 16 gauge X 1-inch needles for intramuscular (IM) injections in young cattle. A 16-gauge X 1 1/2 inch needle is used for IM injections in adult cows and bulls. Always use sharp needles – burrs take in hide, hair and debris resulting in injection site infections and abscesses.
10. Use the proper injection site as described by the product insert. Always use the subcutaneous route of administration when a choice is given between subq and IM. All injections are to be administered in the neck area.
11. Syringe cleaning
    a. Don't use alcohol, disinfectants, or detergents in syringes used for (MLV) vaccines.

    b. Do use hot water (distilled), more hot water as a rinse, dry on clean paper towels, silicone oil, and store in a clean dry area (baggie).

Wash the outside first with the needle and needle cover on. Wash your hands thoroughly, break the syringe down, and perform the cleaning procedure.

The take home message:

We the beef producer, the vaccine company, and the veterinarian have a mutual responsibility to produce a quality, drug free and economic product for the beef consumer.

Using quality vaccines, proper handling and administration, and using clean functional equipment healthy cattle will develop immunity when vaccinated thereby decreasing as much need for antibiotic therapy and increased injection sites.

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