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COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
April 25, 2011

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by Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist and John Kirkpatrick, DVM, Professor Emeritus, Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine

Whittling at the Oklahoma Drought

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

Oklahoma is increasingly becoming a tale of two states as moisture in the eastern half of the state contrasts with continued severe drought conditions in the western half of the state. Easter weekend rains set up farther west than recent rains and many areas along and east of I-35 in Oklahoma received significant rain. Much of the I-35 corridor received 1 to 2+ inches of rain over the weekend. Parts of eastern Oklahoma that have received earlier rains are now looking at localized flooding threats. Much of the eastern one-third of the state has received from 4 to more than 10 inches of rain recently. Many areas, west of I-35, however, remain critically dry impacting the current wheat crop, crop planting conditions and pasture and hay production.

The good thing about this time of year is that moisture will have almost immediate benefits for those who receive rain. Producers who have held onto cattle can expect rapid increases in forage quantity and quality. Of course, starting with a forage deficit means that careful pasture management is needed to prevent overgrazing and pasture damage. Moreover, one rain does not eliminate the longer term moisture deficit and while the current rain buys critical time, it may not eliminate drought management needs depending on weather in the coming weeks.

Producers who received little or no rain may still see some benefits from rain in adjacent areas. Increased

pasture and hay production nearby may make more hay available for producers seeking to buy hay and may increase the availability and feasibility of relocating cows temporarily. Evaluation of these options needs to be part of each producer's comprehensive drought management plan. Perhaps most important, squeezing the size of the drought area will reduce drought forced sales of cattle and will lessen cattle market impacts. This will, in particular, help to maintain cull and breeding cow values for producers who may yet be forced to reduce stocking rates. Hopefully, the La Niña grip on the southern plains will weaken further and the drought area will continue to shrink.

Protecting More Calves from Respiratory Diseases and Reduce "Calf-Working Time"

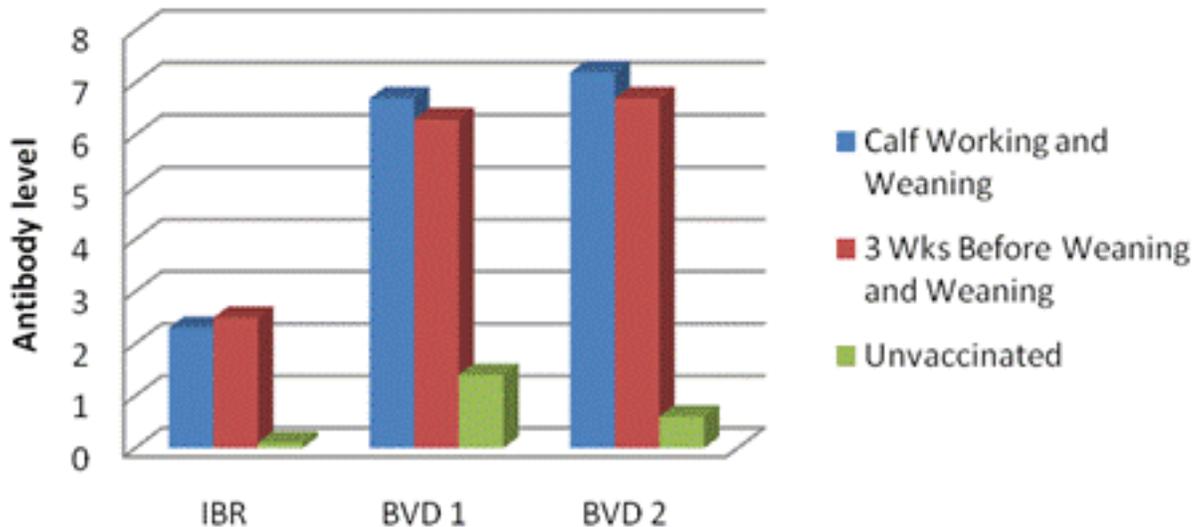
by Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist and John Kirkpatrick, DVM, Professor Emeritus, Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine

It soon will be time to "work" the spring-born calves. Research is available that suggests that the young calves may be vaccinated with products used for protection against the respiratory diseases (IBR and BVDV). By vaccinating the calves now, the first immunization takes place when there is very little stress on the calf, giving the calf an excellent opportunity to begin to develop cell-mediated immunity. The calf then is re-vaccinated at weaning time.

The July, 2008 issue of the Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association contains the results of the study comparing a "calf-working" vaccination with the traditional "pre-weaning" vaccination. Oklahoma State University veterinary scientists cooperating with the Noble Foundation of Ardmore studied the timing of modified-live virus vaccinations in beef calves. For years, the recommendation for the timing of modified-live vaccines called for the vaccine to be given after maternal passive immunity antibodies had disappeared from the blood of the calf. It was thought that maternal antibodies (received in the colostrum) would interfere with the effectiveness of the vaccine. Therefore most viral vaccines were not given until the calves were at least 4 to 5 months or older.

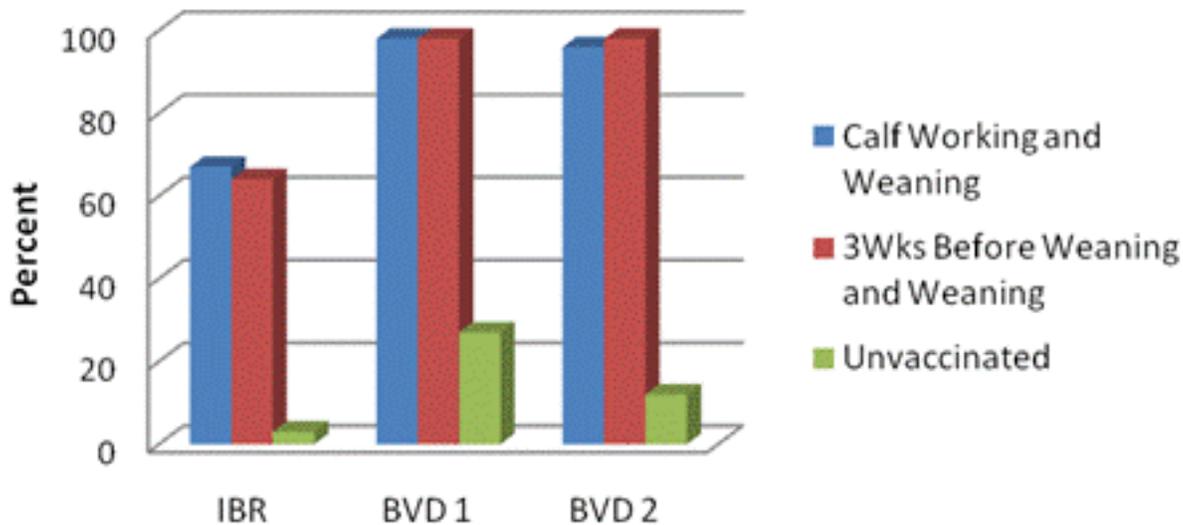
However, the OSU/Noble Foundation research has shown otherwise. They vaccinated calves at 67 days of age (calf working) and re-vaccinated them at weaning (190 days) and compared that with vaccinating at 167 days of age (3 weeks before weaning) and boosted at (190 days) weaning. The result with both vaccination schedules was very similar and improved serum antibody titers compared with un-vaccinated control calves.

Mean serum antibody levels against IBR and BVD virus in calves 42 days after weaning



There was no difference in the percentage of calves protected by the vaccine due to the timing of the first vaccination.

Percent calves with detectable antibody levels on day 42 after weaning (feedlot shipment)



Not surprising was the fact that the vaccinated calves had lower treatment costs and less mortality in the feedlot than the non-vaccinated control calves.

Before the study was initiated, all cows and replacement heifers were vaccinated after calving and 30 days

before breeding with a modified live vaccination for IBR, BVD types I and II, PI-3, and BRSV. This research suggests that the first vaccination with a modified live virus vaccine can be given at normal "calf-working" time, if boosted again at weaning. The calves would not need to be gathered at a separate time (approximately 3 - 4 weeks prior to weaning). The cows that nurse these newly vaccinated calves should have already been protected with a modified live vaccine against these same respiratory diseases. This data has led to an acceptable option for value added calf pre-conditioning programs such as the Oklahoma Beef Quality Network. Hopefully, more calves will be vaccinated for the respiratory diseases and improve the health and quality of Oklahoma-raised calves. Source: [Kirkpatrick, et al. 2008. JAVMA Vol. 233, No. 1, Pages 136-142.](#)

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