

LARGE ANIMAL NEWS – OCTOBER 2000

Herd Maintenance: Before we get too far into winter it might be time to review your routine herd disease prevention strategies. These might include vaccinations, deworming, louse control, and good barn ventilation maintenance.

At one time most dairies were regularly whole herd vaccinated for pneumonia and abortion causing agents. Due to the incidence of problems many herds have had to change vaccinating strategies or frequencies. If you are a herd who still whole herd vaccinates for pneumonia in spring and fall, it will be time to do so again soon. If we have vaccinated your herd in the past, then we most likely have your herd on a reminder program so we will contact you at the appropriate time for the job to be done. To be most effective, whole herd vaccinating needs to be done twice a year.

A temptation with low milk prices is to try and cut back on vaccines used. Commonly used vaccines include respiratory vaccines, J5 vaccine for coliform mastitis, pinkeye vaccine, scours vaccine, and clostridial vaccine. We need to remember that most vaccine programs in a herd started for a reason. We find that herds which stop vaccinating in an effective manner ultimately lose a lot more than they gain.

A reasonable thing to do, however, is to actually sit down and put your vaccination program on paper. Start with those vaccines used in calves, and work your way up through the adult lactation cycle and vaccines used at various times. This exercise can serve several purposes. First, if you can't do this then that should change. Ask the veterinarian responsible for maintaining your vaccinations to do so with you. You should know what is being done in your herd and more importantly why. Maybe there is some 'fat,' which can be cut out of the program.

The second reason to review your program is to find weak points in the program. Most vaccines require proper timely boosting. If this isn't being done properly, sometimes beginning as calves with some vaccines, then you may not be getting the most protection that you should later in life for your cattle from that vaccine.

Finally, there may be a better strategy for vaccine use in your herd. Herd arrangements and problems change with time. We may be able to use different vaccines to achieve better protection, and maybe at a lower cost. Also it is possible to give too many vaccines at one time. Cattle immune systems can only handle so much 'work' to do at once. Too many vaccines given at one time can overload the cow so that she cannot respond to them all. This results in little or no vaccine response (no immunity). Too many vaccines at once can also make a cow sick. The last thing you need is a bunch of cows dropping way down in milk because of shots given. Timing vaccine use strategically can eliminate these problems.

The final point to remember about vaccine use: The vaccines we use actually do work, but they're not a 'cure-all'! If you still battle a problem while vaccines are being used properly, then we have to look elsewhere. **Prevention involves maximizing immunity and minimizing exposure.** Vaccines merely suppress disease. If you still face a problem while proper vaccines are being used, then animal exposure to that disease

is overwhelming. Let's take a look at the whole picture and try to figure out how to reduce disease exposure.

Parasite control: As a general rule we do not recommend whole herd deworming. The exception would be if you were going to pour-on the cattle with a product which also will kill lice. Remember that if you are going to do this, you need to pour-on ALL of your cattle. It doesn't make sense to pour-on your adult herd, only to bring in a heifer later that will re-infest the herd with lice.

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