5m del 7-9-81

FACT SHEET

L-1857

HEALTH PRACTICES FOR SHOW CALVES

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Interest in raising show calves and the amount of prizes for participants have reached an all time high. Learning experiences in health care for calves can help those who pursue careers in the livestock industry to plan realistic animal health programs.

All calves raised for show purposes must be in the best of health. Disease prevention through an immunization program and parasite control will protect the time and money invested in raising the calf.

These health practices will assist in raising calves for show. Contact your local veterinarian for additional recommendations to keep calves healthy and growing. The veterinarian is equipped to properly immunize animals and assist with other problems.

Disease Prevention

Blackleg type vaccines The cost of preventive vaccines is small compared to the amount of money invested in a show animal. Immunization with a combined vaccine against blackleg (clostridial) diseases is recommended. These vaccines include the killed organisms of chauvoei (blackleg), septicum (malignant edema), novyi (black disease), sordellii and perfringens types C&D. This combined vaccine works best if given to steers and heifers 2 to 3 months old and followed by a booster at 6 to 8 months. If the vaccination history of an animal is unknown when you purchase it, don't hesitate to vaccinate. Blackleg-type vaccines may produce swellings or reactions, so vaccinate show animals in a less conspicuous area. Use an area in the foreflank on the left side. If a swelling or lump remains, it will be less visible to the judge.

Tetanus vaccine Two types can be used. A toxoid, or sterile preparation of tetanus germs, gives a lasting immunity. An antitoxin, which is a sterile solution of antibody globulins from blood of horses or cattle immunized against tetanus toxin, gives rapid but short term protection. Vaccination with tetanus toxoid is recommended for all show animals to prevent introduction of the disease through an unnoticed wound or injury. Any time surgery, such as castrating or dehorning, is performed, or if an animal receives a penetrating wound caused by a sharp object, such as a staple, nail, barbed wire or even careless foot trimming, use the tetanus antitoxin vaccine. This vaccine causes a rapid rise in protective antibodies to prevent tetanus.

Brucellosis vaccine This is for *heifers* only. A veterinarian must give the vaccination and identify each vaccinated animal by a tattoo and ear tag. A reduced dose of Strain 19 vaccine is used in Texas to prevent positive blood reactions when animals are tested at an older age. Beef and dairy heifers can be vaccinated at from 4 to 12 months, preferably before 6 months. If show calves supposedly have been vaccinated, check the ear for a brucellosis official tattoo. Animals vaccinated for brucellosis should *not* be revaccinated. Properly immunizing and identifying animals not only protects them against disease, but also facilitates obtaining the health papers needed for movement to shows and exhibitions.

Additional vaccines which might prove of value depending on local conditions or previous problems are:

Leptospirosis vaccine Use three- or five-way vaccine which protects the animal against the types of leptospirosis found in Texas. Vaccinate the calf at 2 to 3 months and give a booster every 6 months. If vaccination status is unknown at purchase, vaccinate the animal.

Respiratory disease vaccines These can be obtained as a combined vaccine to protect the show animal against runny noses, coughs and other respiratory symptoms caused by viruses that affect calves on a show circuit or stressed in winter. Contact a veterinarian for a recommendation on the best vaccines and the proper way to administer them. Since many of

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these are modified-live type vaccines, do not use alcohol or other disinfectants on the needles, syringes or vaccine vials.

Internal and External Parasite Control

Internal parasite control If animals need worming or show evidence of internal parasites, treat them as early as possible. Show calves require more care and sanitation because they are usually confined. Range calves with adequate range have less chance of becoming infected with stomach worms. There are several good worming drugs on today's market or available from your veterinarian. Worming products can be given by bolus, drench, injection or in feed. Follow directions on the label, but *do not* combine worming and grub or lice treatments. One worming should be sufficient unless animals are fed off the ground, or closely confined under unsanitary conditions where they can become reinfected.

External parasite control There are several good products for cattle grub control. Extension bulletin B-1306, *Suggestions for Controlling External Parasites of Livestock and Poultry*, can be obtained from your county Extension agent. Treat steers and heifers for grubs. The treatment can be applied as a spray, sponge-on, pour-on or spot-on. Apply treatments for show calves as soon after the first of May as possible, no later than September 1. A second treatment is sometimes needed to prevent the eruption of grubs that could result in a show calf being sifted. Follow the directions on the product. Do not treat calves under 3 months old or sick or stressed calves. Treatments are best applied in the evening, especially with the popular pour-on type. Evening application helps prevent blistering which may occur when calves are treated and left under a hot sun. Some of these products cause skin irritation and scurfing, so treat show calves several weeks before show time to prevent unsightly reactions which could detract from the animal's appearance.

Ticks and flies These should not be a severe problem in properly groomed and handled show calves. Body ticks seek soft parts of the animal: under the tail; the inside of the rear legs near the body or the skin under the foreleg. Check these areas. Two types of ear ticks cause problems in Texas, the *gulf coast ear tick* and the *spinose ear tick*. As the names imply, these ticks generally are found on or in the ear. The spinose ear tick gets inside the ear and may go unnoticed, so inspect frequently to prevent a serious buildup. Again, refer to Extension publication B-1306 for recommended insecticides and proper usage.

Horn flies and common stable flies bother livestock. Control these through sanitation and by cleaning up fly-breeding areas in manure. Use a hand sprayer with fly spray to control the flies on the animal and in the stalls. Hand application of dust or hanging dust bags where the animals must rub under them will also help control flies.

Lice More abundant during the winter and spring months, lice cause animals to rub and scratch from irritation and itching. The loss of hair and resultant unthriftiness in an affected animal can be prevented by applying ready-to-use insecticides, sprays, dusts or pour-on treatments. Lice usually affect other animals in the herd so treat all animals that are in contact with each other. Some products require a second application 2 weeks later to kill the new lice that hatch from the nits or eggs attached to the hair. Do not treat animals less than 3 months old or those that are sick or stressed. Follow the directions on the product.

Miscellaneous Problems

Additional problems may occur in calves being fed for show. Seek professional assistance before allowing an animal to progress to a stage where treatment is difficult or impossible and possibly die.

Bloat This is caused by gas failing to escape from the first two compartments of a calf's stomach (rumen and reticulum). Most bloat in club calves is minor and does not require emergency treatment. Keep mildly bloated calves on their feet and moving to allow gas to escape. Dry hay, even in small quantities, will help prevent bloating. In acute bloat where the calf is down or having difficulty breathing, call a veterinarian for professional advice on what to do until he or she arrives. A severely bloated animal may die a few minutes after it falls. The usual signs of bloat are swelling of the left flank behind the ribs and in front of the hip bone. An animal may froth at the mouth, fight for breath and go down in convulsions. At this stage, little can be done other than to puncture the animal so the gas can escape. While awaiting veterinary assistance for an animal that is bloating rapidly, place a piece of broomstick or pitchfork handle about 1 foot long in the animal's mouth like a horse's bit. This encourages chewing and tongue movements and helps the animal belch. A large stomach tube or piece of ½" water hose can be passed, but do not let it enter the trachea. This helps in ordinary bloat, but is of little value in foamy bloat where gas is trapped in the rumen contents. Also, keep the animal walking, preferably uphill, with its head held high to help the gas escape. Again, as a last resort, the animal can be punctured or tapped. The resultant wound is usually hard to heal because of infection from rumen contents, but the procedure may save an animal that would otherwise die.

Founder This ailment is an acute inflammation of hoof tissues (laminae) and can cause lameness. In show calves, the primary cause is overfeeding a grain ration. Other causes include eating spoiled or moldy feed or continued standing on concrete floors with insufficient bedding. It may be mistaken for foot rot or other foot injuries, but because of the pain, a foundered animal moves stiffly with its back arched and hind feet further forward than normal and with the forelimbs also more to the front.

Veterinarians generally prescribe antiinflammatory drugs and antihistamines for acute founder. Naturally, excess grain should be removed. Standing the animal in cold running water will relieve the heat and pain in the hoofs temporarily.

Foot rot This condition usually is noticed when an animal starts to limp. It may affect one foot or more. Close examination of the foot may show an infection between the claws, or a foot that is swollen and hot to the touch. Common foot rot is caused by a bacteria which enters through a break in the skin or hoof horn. It should respond to long-acting sulfa boluses, but healing can be enhanced by a thorough cleansing of the area and local treatment with antibacterial ointment or 5 percent copper sulfate under bandage.

Acidosis Also called "grain overload", this is fairly common in calves being heavily fed for show. The usual cause is excessive intake of high-energy feed and the production of acid causing increased acidity in the paunch. The destruction of certain rumen bacteria by the increased acidity impairs motility and leads to dehydration. In acute cases, indigestion and loss of appetite usually appear 8 to 12 hours after feeding and the normal paunch movements become slower. As in bloat prevention, feeding good quality hay will prevent most of these disorders. Oral treatment with fluids containing sodium bicarbonate, together with intravenous injections of electrolyte solutions containing bicarbonates will prevent further dehydration and assist in reestablishing the acid-base balance. Seek professional assistance since the animal can die after just 1 day.

Ringworm This is caused by a fungus infection of the skin and is more common in young stock. It can be spread rapidly from animal to animal or by brushes, curry combs or contaminated surroundings. Ringworm usually infects skin around the eyes, ears and neck, but can spread to other parts of the body. The appearance of round, scaly, bald patches from 1 to 3 inches in diameter indicate ringworm. Treatment consists of repeated applications of strong tincture of iodine, although in recent years, products such as Captan® or 75 percent thiabendazole have been used successfully. Several treatments recommended in a recent veterinary article for bovine practitioners include: (1) 0.5 lb. Captan® in 20 gallons of water administered by a pressure sprayer; (2) Chlorox® applied directly to the lesions; (3) thiabendazole mixed with dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) to increase penetration and absorption, for topical treatment. Consult a veterinarian before using these products since none are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as cattle medications. They can be used, however, under veterinary prescription. Scrub the areas with a mild soap to remove the crusts before treating. Disinfect all brushes, combs and other equipment such as halters to avoid spreading the infection to other animals. Ringworm can be spread from animal to human, so take adequate sanitary precautions after treating an infected animal.

Warts These can be unsightly on a show animal and early removal is recommended. Warts are caused by a virus thought to be spread by direct contact or by contaminated equipment, fences, stanchions or feed troughs. Warts commonly grow on the head, neck and shoulders. Small single warts can be removed by tying them off, if a string fits tightly at the base. Use strong dental floss or fishline. Some warts may require surgery. Vaccines are recommended for numerous warts. Separate warty animals from others until recovered to prevent spreading.

Scours This term applies to diarrhea or loose watery bowel movements in an animal. There are many causes of scours including dietary, virus, bacterial and parasitic. Scours in show calves usually is dietary and can be prevented by good management and proper feeding. Avoid overfeeding, feeding too much protein, feeding or watering from dirty pails or feed troughs, and abrupt changes in type and consistency of feed. When scours occurs, the treatment depends on the symptoms and character of the feces since a thin water excretion may require a different treatment than black or bloody feces. Treatment of ordinary dietary scours consists of correcting the sanitation, withholding feed, replacing body fluids with electrolytes, and giving antibiotics to prevent further infection of the digestive tract. Once scours are controlled, do not overfeed too soon; this would further damage the digestive tract. Scours which contain blood might be caused by coccidiosis, and should be treated with specific antibiotics to control this parasite.

Basic First Aid Kit

A simple first aid kit for traveling show animals can be effective. The following items are suggested for a starter kit which can be expanded as needed. Include a small wooden box containing first aid materials as part of the show equipment. This kit will provide the basic needs for treating cuts, tears, superficial hemorrhage or other minor problems until further assistance can be obtained.

Item	Quantity
Disinfectant solution (concentrated)	8 oz. in plastic bottle
Tincture of iodine	4 oz. bottle
Adhesive tape	1 roll, 1" wide
Cotton, sterile	1 roll
Bandage, vetrap	1 roll, 3" wide
Liquid soap	1 pint
Bandage scissors	1 pair
Small scrub brush	1
Plastic pail	1
Mineral oil	1 pint

In addition, items such as a drench gun, balling gun, sterile 25 cc and 60 cc plastic syringes and needles, and a 6-foot section of hose for bloat can be carried. Antibiotics or other injectable drugs can be procured from fresh stock if needed, since they will lose potency if kept long without refrigeration. Medicines, shots and treatments of valuable show animals are best used following the recommendations of a licensed veterinarian knowledgeable in bovine medicine. A proper diagnosis of the problem followed by a recommended treatment will help a sick or injured animal recover rapidly. It will also help prevent the spread of contagious diseases. All producers, especially junior stock producers, should get to know their local veterinarian. He or she will gladly assist you with the health of your show animals.

Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, The Texas A&M University System and the United States Department of Agriculture cooperating. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914.
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