

Yancey Common Times Journal

November 3, 2021

Talking Points for Cow-Calf Herd Health Management

With any type of livestock, properly managing for health of the animals is essential. At the upcoming “Yancey County Premiere Cattle Producer Herd Health Management Program” we hope to help producers learn more about recommended beef herd health management practices. Here are a few points to consider related to managing herd health, and a brief introduction to what you can expect at the upcoming program.

Death of the animals following improper herd health management protocol on the farm is the worst potential outcome. If a calf dies on the farm of a cow-calf producer, a farmer will not receive anything for their hard work. Losing even cull cows before they make it to the market comes with economic loss to a beef farmer. As bad as death loss is, that is not the most common outcome of failures in beef herd management.

There are also unseen “costs” as a result of improper beef herd health management. Consider just a few examples. Failing to preventatively vaccinate calves, failing to feed the right mineral, or even improperly feeding recommended mineral to calves can result in production losses that are often not realized. When this is the case, calves are more likely to become sick due to a weakened immune system. Calves are especially likely to become sick at times of high stress (i.e. during weaning, moving, selling, or shipping). Sick calves don’t grow or perform as well as healthy calves. They take more inputs, time, and resources to get them ready for market.

Since calves are sold by weight, fewer pounds of beef from sick calves combined with higher input costs, and increased time to reach a target market weight can greatly reduce their economic profitability.

For another example, consider that many reproductive issues in cows can be prevented implementing recommended pre-breeding vaccination practices. No calf or calves on the ground means no income. An unproductive cow will often have 3-4 years of inputs and time before she is culled. It is a pretty big savings in expenses if culling can be avoided by simply putting in place a pre-breeding vaccination protocol. Also, consider that the outcome could be worse when it is the bull that has a health issue. With typically 1 bull per herd in our area, reproductive issues can be very devastating. Simply taking the bull each year for a breeding soundness exam or BSE, and following the recommended pre-breeding vaccination protocol are herd health management practices that may avoid major herd productivity issues.

For beef producers that would like to learn more about recommended vaccination protocols, and other recommended herd health management practices, consider attending the upcoming Yancey County Premiere Beef Producer Herd Health Management Program. It will take place Tuesday, November 16, 6 pm at the Yancey Senior Center located at 503 Medical Campus Dr. in Burnsville. Dr. Jessica Scruggs from “Cowee Cowgirl Mobile Veterinary Service” will be presenting. A meal will be provided so pre-registration is required. To learn more, or to register, contact the Yancey County Extension Office by calling 828-682-6186.