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Health Management And Vaccination Programs For Beef Herds Part 2: Planning

With modern science it is certainly possible to plan a Health Management Program that minimizes risk of devastating financial loss in your beef operation due to disease. The key word involved here is “**plan**”.

Health Management And Vaccination Programs For Beef Herds Part 1: Philosophy briefly discussed disease challenge and resistance to disease challenge. We currently have excellent vaccines to many (most) of the disease challenges to which your herd is exposed. But there are many incidences where calves and cows are **not vaccinated** and therefore have little or no immunity to a disease challenge. Even worse is there are many beef herds where both cows and calves are **over vaccinated** and still have little or no immunity because the vaccines were administered incorrectly or at the wrong time in the production cycle.

Having a plan involves knowing what diseases your herd may be exposed to, when that exposure is likely to occur, and what vaccines are available and most effective in raising the resistance at the herd level far enough ahead of the disease challenge to provide the best level of protection. It is unlikely this plan will be adequate without the involvement of your Veterinarian in a real veterinarian-client-patient-relationship (VCPR). Additionally, the best plan will not create unnecessary work, but will be accomplished at times cattle will be gathered for other reasons. There are Veterinarians who are accomplished at developing Herd Health/Management Programs; find one in your area and follow his advice.

You may not have thought of it in this way but beef herd management can be visualized as a circle. Draw a big circle on a blank piece of paper which will represent a calendar year for

your cow herd. Place a *hash mark* at the top of the circle and date that *hash mark* as to when CALVING STARTS with a second *hash mark* with date and CALVING ENDS. Similarly add a *hash mark* for BREEDING STARTS and one for BREEDING ENDS. Finally add a *hash mark* for WEANING, which would normally be approximately 7 months from the mid-point of your calving season dates. You have just created a simplified production cycle for your cow herd. Of course you can add other dates to your production cycle, but those 5 dates give you the elements of a simple plan. {If your calving season is longer than 90 days, you will need to separate (at least on paper) your production cycle into more than 1 group; with no production cycle group longer than 90 days.} You and your Veterinarian can now go through and add details as to what management and health practices will be completed around your specific dates. Those might include pregnancy examination, de-worming, vaccinations for cows and/or calves and etc. As we continue next month with Part 3 in this series we will give examples of a beef herd with specific dates and what practices are accomplished on those dates.

NOTE: This is a very general outline of recommendations! Please contact your Veterinarian for specific questions on health practices for your beef herd. Every operation is unique and you absolutely must develop a relationship with a Veterinarian in your area. They will know best how to design a plan specifically tailored to the needs of your herd and the disease patterns prevalent in your environment.

SPITZER RANCH has invested many years and much management effort developing a Health Management And Vaccination Program which, in addition to a well-designed vaccination program, involves a rigorous testing program to drastically reduce risk of their customers being exposed to disease through their bulls. This program is published on the inside back cover of their 2013 Bull Sale Catalog which you can access on their web page. If you don't have access to the internet, then give them a call and they will gladly send you a printed copy.

Please make a note on your calendar for the 2014 edition of the SPITZER RANCH PROFESSIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BRANGUS BULL SALE scheduled for SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2014. Their SUMMER NEWSLETTER is currently in preparation. If you wish your name added to their mailing list for Newsletters and current Bull Test Performance Reports call 864/972-9140, write SPITZER RANCH, 1511 HWY 59, Fair Play, SC, 29643 or send an email note to spitzeranch@mindspring.com. Also be sure to visit their WEB SITE at www.srbulls.com and you might enjoy their posts and QUOTE OF THE WEEK on Facebook.

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