

For Immediate Release  
FAIR PLAY, SC  
June 1, 2013

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## **Health Management And Vaccination Programs For Beef Herds Part 1: Philosophy**

As hard as one might try, vaccination has never guaranteed absolute disease protection and never will. There are far too many factors involved which influence success or failure of a health management program. An awareness of these factors can help to increase cattle resistance to disease and decrease the disease challenge, contributing greatly to a healthy herd and successful beef production.

A vaccination program is much like buying automobile insurance. You pay for protection hoping that you never have to use it. The cost of this protection is the cost of the vaccine and the labor to gather and handle cattle. Certainly it is more cost effective to prevent disease rather than treat sick animals. However, like with automobile insurance, it is not biologically feasible to insure against every disease known to man. Even if it were possible, it would likely not be cost effective. Your goal then for a vaccination program for a beef herd is to raise the level of immunity in a sufficient number of susceptible animals to prevent epidemics and severe monetary losses as well as any reduced production.

Your vaccination program needs to take into account risks of disease exposure identified for your operation in your specific area. Once these risks are identified, a decision can be made as to the economics of buying protection (insurance) from that risk (chance of a disease outbreak). There are good and bad vaccination programs, just as there are good and bad insurance policies. The quality of a vaccination program involves the immune status of the animals, selection of appropriate vaccines, timing, and proper administration of vaccines. These four factors are somewhat within your control and should be used to your advantage. Because

you have the opportunity to manipulate these factors, concentrate your efforts on correctly doing those things under your control. However, we should keep in mind the importance of decreasing the field challenge as well as increasing effectiveness of our vaccination efforts.

Just because you have a certain amount of protection doesn't mean that you can be careless. You wouldn't drive your car over a cliff just because you had a good auto insurance policy. With health management programs, this caution means reducing the amount of field challenge by improved isolation, sanitation, and biosecurity practices. A successful program should not only strive to increase the resistance of the herd, but decrease the amount of challenge. Anything that you can do to minimize the challenge helps to achieve the desired effect of your health management program.

Finally, good health management does not all come in a syringe. Your attention to detail with vitamin, mineral, protein and energy nutritional status is critical to an animal's immune competence (ability to respond to your vaccination program and/or fight off a disease challenge in your environment). Minimize stress and maximize good animal husbandry practices at appropriate times in each animal's life cycle.

***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.***

One place to be especially careful with biosecurity is to not bring disease into your herd with your bull purchase. SPITZER RANCH strictly maintains a very complete health 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. Their health management program is published and you may go to their website, open last year's Bull Sale Catalog and review specifically which vaccines are used when; and their disease surveillance testing program. If you don't have access to the internet, then give them a call and they will send you a printed copy.

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the 2014 edition of the SPITZER RANCH PROFESSIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BRANGUS BULL SALE scheduled for SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2014. 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](mailto:spitzeranch@mindspring.com). Also be sure to visit their WEB SITE at [www.srbulls.com](http://www.srbulls.com) and you might enjoy their posts and QUOTE OF THE WEEK on Facebook.

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