

For Immediate Release  
FAIR PLAY, SC  
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Contact: Doc or Patricia Spitzer  
[spitzeranch@mindspring.com](mailto:spitzeranch@mindspring.com) or  
(864)972-9140 or (864)710-0257

## **A Profitable Weaning And Preconditioning Program**

Many fall-born calves will be weaned soon and you must begin planning now if that event is to contribute to enhancing your profit. Weaning and the following 60 days can be very financially rewarding if done correctly. While there are thousands of ways to do things wrong; one must also recognize that there is more than one way to do-it-right. The following is one way that has worked for Spitzer Ranch and several of their bull customers. Furthermore, this system will not be profitable unless you are retaining ownership on your calves or have enough to market a "load lot". That takes 48,000 pounds, or 60 to 65 steers weighing 750 to 800 pounds. Many smaller but profit minded operations have realized that cooperating with a neighbor, or two, to gather that many calves is generally financially beneficial to all involved.

The recommended program is a two-part program and the two are interdependent - meaning they must be done together to achieve success. Part 1 is a VACCINATION SCHEDULE and part 2 is NUTRITIONAL MANAGEMENT.

### **VACCINATION SCHEDULE**

Ideally the first round of vaccinations should be at an average age of **two to three months**. At this time vaccinate with a 7-Way Clostridial (Blackleg) vaccine and a Modified Live vaccine containing IBR-PI3, BVD, BRSV and 5-Way Leptospirosis. If calves were not castrated at birth, do it now and implant all steers; unless you have found some way to make an all natural program pencil a profit. While these vaccination recommendations will generally work in most areas you should always consult with your Veterinarian as to what is necessary and appropriate for your specific operation.

Finalize your weaning date and back up 4 weeks to gather calves for a **pre-weaning** round of vaccinations and then return them to nurse their mommas. At this time repeat all vaccinations with a 7-Way Clostridial (Blackleg) vaccine and a Modified Live vaccine containing IBR-PI3, BVD, BRSV and 5-Way Leptospirosis. Additionally administering a dose of 1 Million International Units of Vitamin A (only 2cc of a 500,000 IU VIT A/ml product) is cheap insurance against any potential deficiency. Re-Implant all steers as the previous implant has now played out. If you plan on advertising these calves as PI-BVD Free (optional) this is a good time to “ear notch” and send samples to an accredited laboratory.

At **weaning**, again repeat vaccinations with a 7-Way Clostridial (Blackleg) vaccine and a Modified Live vaccine containing IBR-PI3, BVD, BRSV and 5-Way Leptospirosis. Additionally treat calves for grubs and de-worm using one of the endectocide pour-on deworming products. As previously stated the round of vaccinations at two to three months of age is highly recommended while the **pre-weaning** and **weaning** vaccination schedules are critical. This may seem like more work, but doctoring sick calves or, a disastrous loss of one or more calves, today valued at \$1000+, is certainly much worse than a little extra labor and time. With the “three round” vaccination schedule (two to three months, 4 weeks pre-weaning and weaning) neither the Spitzers nor those customers using that program have doctored a sick calf after weaning for many years. They just do not get sick, but part of that is also the management program which follows.

## **NUTRITIONAL MANAGEMENT**

Beginning at 4 weeks **pre-weaning**, introduce creep feeders containing a highly palatable ration into the pastures. This ration should be balanced and must contain Rumensin for both bloat control and to control coccidiosis infection. A commercial ration is fine but a “home mixed” ration of roughly 60% soy hulls, 30% corn gluten feed and 10% cottonseed hulls

(balanced for all nutrients) with Rumensin added, is generally cheaper and works very well. If you are not experienced with balancing rations get help from a Nutritionist or an experienced Veterinarian. Calves will initially eat very little of this feed, but will be consuming 4-6 pounds per day by the end of the 4 weeks at weaning time.

On **weaning day** pull creep feeders, without creep panels, into the pens and back them against a fence where calves have to either find them or detour around them. Provide clean water and the absolute best hay you have “free choice”. Experience shows calves will be done bawling in 2-4 days and then it is best to move them to pastures {crab grass or millet(summer) or small grains (winter) are wonderful weaning forages}, but continue to offer both the hay and the feed for the **next 60 days after weaning** or to shipping date. Many recommend a 45 day post weaning feeding period on the ranch, but experience indicates you will make more money if that is a 60-day period. There are premiums to be had for preconditioned calves that have been appropriately vaccinated and know how to eat. But, it will take a little effort on your part to sell those calves into a system that will reward you for your efforts.

These calves will **gain 2.5 to 3.5 pounds per day for the 60-day post weaning period.** (The Spitzer’s 2012 born bull calves actually gained 3.57 pounds per day for the first 56 days right after weaning.) That equates to adding roughly 180+/- pounds to their weaning weight so if they wean at 600 pounds they will weigh 780 pounds at shipping. If gain in this system costs you \$1 per pound (extreme), and steers are worth \$1.50 per pound; you just made \$.50 for every pound those calves gained for the 60-day post weaning period. Several Spitzer Ranch bull customers have used this program for many years now and while profits have varied from year to year depending on calf selling price and feed cost, it has always been a profitable venture.

If you don’t have a cow herd with the genetic potential to wean 600 pound+ calves, the 2014 edition of the SPITZER RANCH PROFESSIONAL CATTLEMEN’S BRANGUS BULL

SALE is scheduled for **Saturday, February 22, 2014**. Why not mark your calendar right now so as not to miss out on what may just be the best set of Performance Tested Brangus Bulls to sell in 2014. If you wish your name added to their mailing list 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). They publish two Newsletters each year which always provide current Bull Test Performance Reports as well as educational tips, inspiration and insights into a variety of timely topics of interest to those cattlemen whose goal is increased profitability. Also be sure to visit their WEB SITE at [www.srbulls.com](http://www.srbulls.com) and additionally you might enjoy their posts and QUOTE OF THE WEEK on Facebook.

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