

Health Programs and Problems Encountered with Incoming Calves and Yearlings in the Feedlot

O. E. Hundley, D.V.M.
Fairview Veterinary Clinic, Inc.
Route 1, Box 11-B
Lexington, Nebraska 68850

Good afternoon.

I would like to preface my stated title with two statements.

(1) The health programs and pen arrangements I recommend are not what you will see if you visit us in Central Nebraska. If the cattle are making money, the cattle feeders build more pens without regard for health care; if the cattle are losing money, they can't afford to spend money on health facilities.

(2) Those things I recommend to you today may or may not work in your area; if your feedlots are like ours, nothing works all the time.

With these thoughts in mind I would like now to proceed with some observations and opinions we are using at the present time.

Perhaps a little background would help clarify our practice. In 1960 we built an animal clinic primarily for large animals. Adjacent to the sick pens we built a processing area with the idea in mind that it was better to process the feedlot cattle on arrival rather than at any later date. In 1960 this was contrary to most of the information that was being printed. They said to rest and feed the cattle for 10-14 days before working them. Our idea was that they were already stressed and that the processing didn't add that much to the existing problem. It has been interesting to see that through the years the feeders and those who research have shifted their thinking to where most of our clients do process on arrival. It used to be that our cattle feeders would get their cattle in, then after 10-15 days they would call in their neighbors for a branding party. I'm sure you have had clients who have had cattle that they didn't get processed because of other pressing things like silage, haylage, or a lack of help at the right time. Because of this delay their cattle broke with one of the diseases they intended to immunize against. It was our thinking that we could be of service by having a good facility and a crew to process the cattle. We do have three veterinarians, an office lady, a vet tech graduate and two laymen and some part-time assistants. One vet and the lay help process most of the cattle we are called on to take care of. This may sound funny to some of you Texas veterinarians, but you must remember that two or three of your bigger lots would hold all the cattle in our practice area. One advantage of a vet do-

ing the vaccinating is that he observes the cattle prior to processing and can make pen recommendations such as worming, vitamin A, antibiotics, etc., while processing. Another advantage is that we get to use our vaccine of choice which we know has been stored properly and we give it according to manufacturer's recommendation with fairly sterile equipment.

I have seen cattle that for one reason or another got out of their pen, so if they were processed on arrival, they at least had a brand for identification.

As you view the slides in a little while, please bear in mind that this was the first commercial-type operation that we were aware of and others have since improved on our ideas. We are still pleased with the dipping vat which some truckers call the "grub tub," even though the pour-ons have made their appearance. Another feature we like are the "hip huggers" or the shims we use for narrowing the work alley for smaller cattle.

Another simple addition that has worked well is a small farm scale. We can weigh the incoming cattle if the owner wants and if we see that they have shrunk more than 1/15 of their weight we can expect trouble. We soon found out that the cattle feeders wanted to stop by the clinic on their way to grass in the spring to see what the cattle gained during the winter. After being weighed we usually get to implant, vaccinate for pinkeye, and maybe dip them. In the fall they come back to the clinic to re-weigh to find out the cost of their pasture gain, and for added booster injections and another visit to the "grub tub." We have found that D.E.S. implants will consistently give us an extra 40 lbs. coming off grass.

I wouldn't imagine that cattle beyond the age of yearlings cause you much trouble but calves are something that challenge us all. We would much prefer our clients to buy weaned calves but a lot of them forget the trouble they had last winter. We do like to process those calves on arrival and feel that our responsibility should include the first 30 days in the lot. One thing that has helped us, I think, is that we do feed cattle in three or four commercial lots and do make recommendations as to the starter feed we would like to have fed to our cattle. The feedlot manager can see how our cattle take off. He can compare those cattle with others arriving about the same

time. We tell the feedlot manager that we bought weaned calves and that they were processed on arrival. We would like to see him start our calves on a ration without silage. I recommend a 20% chopped hay, 18% beet pulp, 5% dehy., 10% protein, 1.5% salt, 0.5 Ca carbonate and the balance of the ration to be made up of the grain that he will be fattened on. I suppose that here in Georgia that would be grits but in Nebraska it's corn. Why get him used to oats, then after his rumen bacteria is ready for oats we change to another grain. The calves may not eat much but what they do eat is crammed with energy. I tell them that after the calves eat 15 lbs. apiece of this ration for three consecutive days, then he can start blending in his No. 1 ration. This is essentially the same ration I would use in the sick pen.

If the calves have horns or happen to have a few bulls on them, these are two things that can be put off till a later date. If my calf gets sick I would like them to keep records on what he was given and when. Don't

market him prior to withdrawal periods and if he gets urinary calculi I will pay for a Cal Phos test of his blood regardless of what the nutritionist says about your ration being balanced in every way. It could be that some of the nutrients were not absorbed or assimilated. If he loses an animal I would expect him to have him autopsied in a reasonable length of time.

I would prefer that they put my calves in a shallow pen with feed bunks on one side and water on the other, that way as he circles he will run into feed and water. I also hope that he doesn't put them on their main feed alley where the feed trucks will scare the devil out of the new arrivals.

Questions

1. Is there an advantage other than a profit motive for a large animal practitioner to dispense?
2. What are bovine hip huggers?
3. What is one advantage of a veterinarian being present during the processing?
4. Can an implant increase the daily gain even on grass?
5. What is a grub tub?

