

Cow - Calf Health Management

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I am going back to where it is warm! You people tell us that we have some bitter winters and adverse weather in Wyoming. You had better take a look around! It was 10°F above zero when I left home and I do not think I have seen it that warm since I have been here!

My practice is predominately cow-calf operations. Our herds run from 250 to 2,500 brood cows. We are at an altitude of about 6000 feet for the winter pastures, and our summer pastures go up to 9,000 feet. I am in practice by myself, covering about 100 square miles. I do some in-clinic practice but mostly it is ambulatory. Our concept on cow-calf health programs is that we are there to produce marketable protein and to do this, I feel that it is my obligation to help the rancher get as much marketable protein as he can in his operation. In order to do this, we have concentrated our efforts in learning each individual operation's problems, how they operate, what kind of pastures they have available, what kind of range they are going to be on. We vary considerably; we have some desert and some good irrigated mountain pastures which have various problems. What fits one operation will not fit the next and I think it behooves us to learn as much as we possibly can about each individual operation and, not only the operation but the thinking of the manager, or the owner or the owner and manager! Sometimes these two fellows do not agree either and you have to get together with them and get them going down the same track. We work toward prevention on a herd basis and we try to encourage these people to sit down and visit with us, call us when they are having problems so that if we get in on the problems early, we can possibly get them stopped. If we cannot get them stopped, we can call in somebody who can help us. We treat the herd as a whole rather than individual animals. Of interest to some of you may be the fact that you have not seen some high parasite counts in some of these western cattle but to our amazement in some of our irrigated mountain pastures this is starting to become a problem in the west and at an early age. The summer calf still nursing the cow on some of these mountain pastures have parasite problems and we are working now to determine at what level it will be economical for us in these areas to worm

these calves; also how we are going to be able to do so on some of these mountain pastures where we do not have the facilities that we do for routine spring and fall work on a large number of animals. Virus problems, namely IBR and P₁₃, are increasing in our area. BVD is now starting to show up, not too much in our area in the cow-calf operations but we see some early problems in the young calves with IBR or P₁₃. Vaccinating the cow herds for IBR has eliminated some of the problem. Some preconditioned calves which develop problems later are probably some that have been immunized too young. One of the interesting problems that we are now seeing and are now working on is the predisposing of the very young calf to other infections when he is carrying P₁₃. He may not be sick from the P₁₃ alone and you do not see him or the owner does not call you in until this calf succumbs to some bacterial infection. When you start checking these cattle and wonder why this calf is sick at three weeks of age while still nursing the cow that has been immunized for several diseases. We have found several herds that when we started looking into this were having an early P₁₃ infection which reduced the ability of the animal to fight off other infections. Our weaning weights were gradually tapering off so we went to work and kept looking for various causes. We found that these calves had early P₁₃ titers and examining paired samples, we took temperatures randomly and found some with 106°F and 108°F fevers. The calves looked pretty normal and two weeks later they did not seem like the same calves: the hair coats were rough; they were not doing well now; and their noses were starting to peel. We took some of these calves, a random sample of heifers and steer calves, and treated them with Nasalgen^(R) when they were three to five weeks of age and they went out to mountain pastures. This fall they had an average of seven lbs. per animal weight gain. We think this is pretty good. We also reduced other sicknesses in this bunch of cattle in the summer time by the use of IBR vaccines on these calves and yearlings that are kept in this country. We have reduced predominately eye problems and a lot of our mountain foot rot and some other problems. It has been a great pleasure to be here in Milwaukee and I want to thank you.