

Panel Discussion

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Question: How do you decide when to use BVD vaccine?

Answer: We do have lots of BVD and we have more going on right now than I have ever seen before. This is true in the cattle we have had brought in from all parts of the nation. We have had a lot of BVD this year. I don't know how to explain it. For one thing, diseases do run in cycles. However, I would say if you don't have a history of BVD vaccines, don't vaccinate against it. Make sure that if you get it, confirm it by virus isolation. One other thing I would like to tell here is the fact that all vaccination programs seem to show better than none at all. Of course, this depends on the yards that they go into. I don't think that you can find a clean yard unless they feed just once a year.

Question: How do you keep your calves from crawling out of the pasture when they are weaned?

Answer: These pastures are divided into sections and they have an excellent fence around them, so that is no problem. The calves that they wean at the ranch in Wyoming are left there because there is more grass, and we leave the steers until the following year and bring them back as feeder cattle. We also keep our replacement heifers in that area. We don't bring them back to the ranch headquarters. We feed the cattle up there and then turn them out on the meadow. They seem to get along real well that way. At ranch headquarters, they have a real good fence around it. We have five wires which are tight and the calves don't get out. We put the heifers in one pasture and the steers in another. We do not have any problem with them getting out.

Question: What do you feed the steers that you carry over through the winter?

Answer: You might say that it depends on the weight of the calves coming in, and what we would like to do with them. The ordinary ranch operation is keeping these calves, running them as yearlings. We are interested in the summer gain. Concentrates cost us money in that country. We don't have the corn or the silage. We have to make do with what we have. If we can put up a good type of hay or alfalfa we can generally feed that with satisfactory gains over the winter. We have the high mountain valleys, and we have the irrigated lower valleys with alfalfa, and we have a continual problem—they take these light calves down and put them on alfalfa and we can put a good gain on. We talk about gain—but to me, what is this gain? If we are going to run these calves over the summer, we want red meat and bone put down on these calves. If we are going to put a pound a day of fat on them, we can put a pound and a half a day on them; alright, that is fine. That is a good winter gain. Take them out and turn them out on the pasture in spring and have them put on about 80 or 90 pounds in the summer, it simply is not a profitable operation. If we could get a nutritionist—with what feed is available—to tell us how to either supplement this feed, add to it, so we can put red meat and bone on these calves, then we can go for it.

Question: What advantage is there to dehorning some of these that are going to be marketed at an early age?

Answer: I don't think anymore that they care whether we dehorn or not.