

# Cow/Calf Feedlot Combined Session

Preconditioning  
Dr. Bill McElroy, *presiding*

## Preconditioning—History and Guidelines

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The need for a program to improve the well-being of the calf leaving its production site to better withstand the stress of movement through the channels of trade to the feedlot has been obvious for the last 50 years. The mere fact that 1-2% of all feeders die upon arrival in the feedlot is noteworthy, but the hidden losses are unestimable. The loss suffered from shrink, feed utilization, time needed for feedlot adaptation, labor and treatment costs are estimated to amount to \$15.00 to \$25.00 for every animal entering a feedlot. The catastrophic losses suffered when a high percent of the animals die are unestimable.

The chronological occurrences that occurred in developing the preconditioning program are listed with supporting evidence:

- 1965 The program was launched by Extension personnel in 1965 in Iowa with an educational program in the Tenco area (Ottumwa). Meetings were held for veterinarians, auction market operators and cattlemen. The first sale was held in Albia in 1965 with 500 calves offered for treaty.
- 1965 Nationwide publicity was given to the program with the following acceptance.
  - a. Acceptance by National Feeders Association.
  - b. Acceptance by Infection Disease of Cattle Committee of USAHA.
- 1966 A national committee on preconditioning was formulated and was held in Ames, Iowa where a format for preconditioning programs was outlined.
- 1966 Iowa veterinarians preconditioned an estimated 50,000 calves.
- 1966 Veterinarians in southern Iowa formulated a preconditioning program in their area.
- 1967 The First National Preconditioning Seminar was held at Oklahoma State University.
- 1967 Iowa veterinarians preconditioned 100,000 calves.
- 1968 A survey of western movement of cattle was conducted.
- 1968 The Second National Preconditioning Coordinating Committee met in Laramie, Wyoming.
- 1968 An estimated 200,000 calves were preconditioned in Iowa. Seventeen sales were held on only preconditioned calves.
- 1969 The Iowa Veterinary Medical Association organized the Bovine Practitioners Committee and launched officially a preconditioning program sponsored by the IVMA.
- 1969 A preconditioning committee was formulated by the American Bovine Practitioners Association and they have met every year in conjunction with the annual meeting of the AABP—as yet, they have no one single standard official plan.
- 1970 Iowa preconditioned over 300,000 calves.
- 1971 Meetings were held in every county in Iowa with members of the county cattlemen's organization and the county veterinarians.
- 1972 A video tape on preconditioning was made and exhibited in Iowa and other states.
- 1973 The Board of Directors of Iowa Cattlemen agreed to sponsor preconditioning programs. From that date, the number of calves processed increased to an estimated 700,000 in 1983. Many calves processed are not tagged. Sales of only preconditioned calves were held in 20 auction markets in 1980. Since that time the Iowa Cattlemens Association has been a vital part of the Iowa preconditioning program.
- 1973 The Extension Service of Iowa held preconditioning programs and demonstrations in every county in Iowa.
- 1974 A survey of 30,000 Iowa preconditioned cattle entering feedlots revealed favorable acceptance with a 10% morbidity and a 0.3% mortality.

- 1974-1980 Preconditioning now exists in Ohio, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, South Dakota, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Wisconsin, Missouri and Canada.
- 1980 Joint AABP and NCA Committees issued paper on recommended practices for the control of Bovine Respiratory Disease in cow-calf herd.
- 1983 The program has developed wide acceptance in Midwest states. It is a program that should exist in every state—veterinarians and cattlemen working together can make this possible.

**Side effects of preconditioning program:**

- (a) It is a program sponsored and conducted by practicing veterinarians and state cattlemen's associations. It is part of a herd health program. It is not just a vaccinating program. It is a management program.
- (b) Increased adoption of recommended practices are the results of the program.
1. Use of better bulls in an attempt to increase weaning weight of calves. In states where the program has been in effect for a few years, calves are weighing 50 to 100# more at weaning age.
  2. Over 30% of cattlemen are now implanting—also there is a decided increase in numbers that are castrating and implanting at birth. Chemical castration has created a good deal of castration at an early age.
  3. Increase in number of cows vaccinated prior to breeding season (estimated 30% of all cows).
  4. Increased number of animals "worked twice" to avoid stress.
  5. Decided decrease in grub population.
  6. Every year producers average a \$2.50-\$4.00 per 100# bonus for PC calves. Average cost for processing and feeding a calf in 1983 was \$5.00-\$7.00 for veterinary service and \$25.00-\$30.00 for feed for a 30-day period. Average calf gains a 2#/day during preconditioning period. Many gain 3 to 4#/day.

**It is a program that needs constant continuing educational programs for both the veterinarian and the cow-calf producer. It needs monitoring to detect trouble spots before they become insurmountable.**

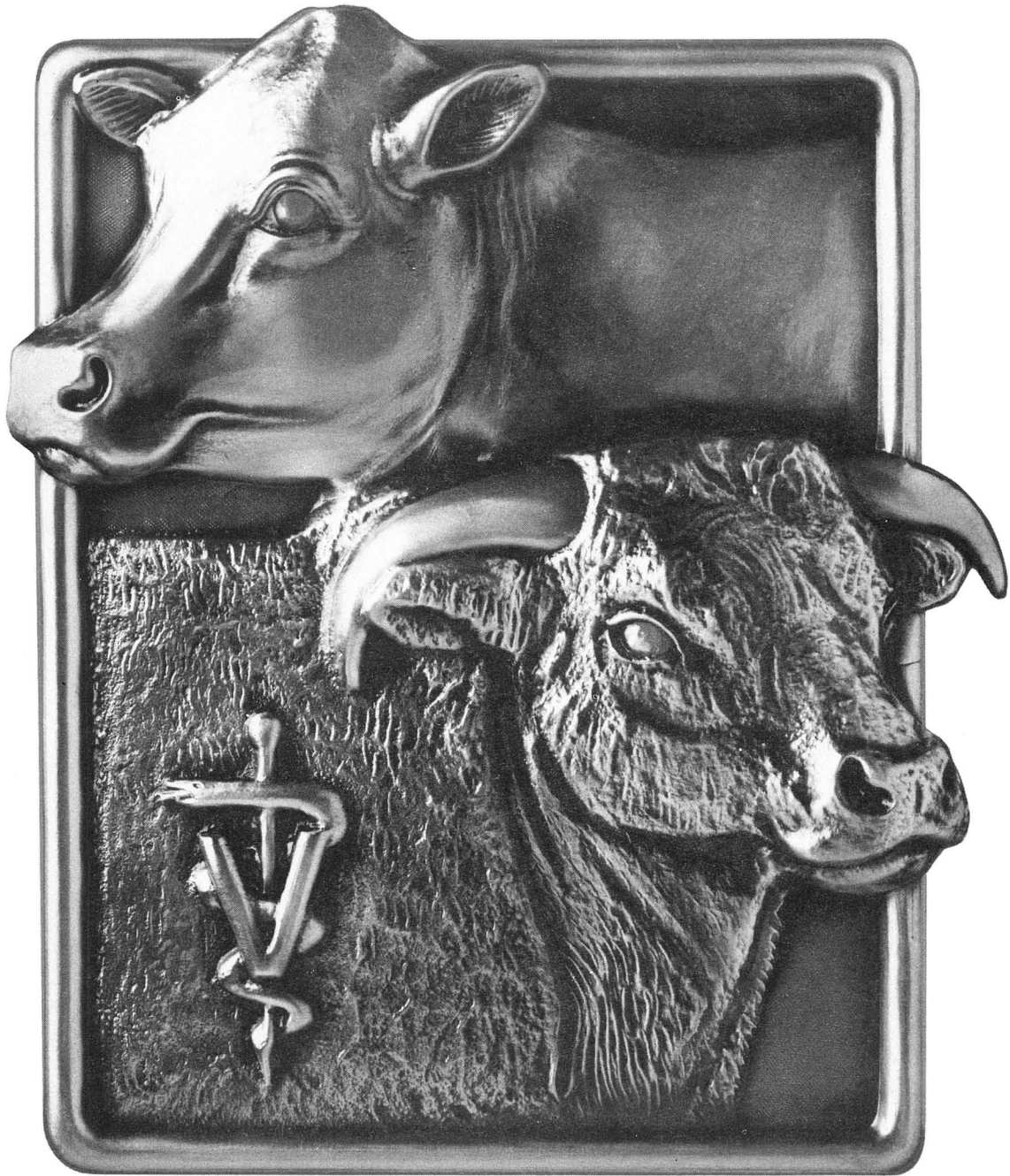
- (c) Problems and needs in the preconditioning program:
1. Veterinarians in some states are not in agreement with recommended procedures and veterinary associations are not working with cattlemen associations.
  2. Failure to have certificates filled out properly.
  3. Veterinarian dispensing tags to producer to apply to

- cattle.
4. Calves getting sick at weaning time (if processed, the veterinarian is blamed.).
  5. Failure to recognize that weaning is the biggest stress—improperly weaned calves results in post vaccination problems.
  6. Cattlemen not monitoring sale entries to identify problems prior to sale such as recently castrated animals, etc.
  7. Veterinarians insisting on reprocessing calves in the feedlot—within 30 to 60 days from initial processing.
  8. Auctioneers calling every calf in sale a PC calf.
  9. Producers stating they didn't get paid for their trouble without any proper proof or records to back up their statements.
  10. Producers are at the mercy of the auction markets if they don't monitor the sale or have sufficient animals to have a sale of only preconditioned calves. Preconditioned calves commingled with "tourist" calves normally do not demand a higher price. No calf should be considered preconditioned unless weaned at least 30 days and accompanied by a preconditioning certificate.
  11. There is a crying need for a means whereby a producer can sell his calves in a manner where they are not commingled at sale time. A teleauction will provide this opportunity.
  12. Cow-calf producers need to develop pride in their product to develop the best product possible for the cattle feeder and have the desire to follow up on the performance of these animals in the feedlot. The program needs to be computerized to aid in accomplishing this need.

The preconditioning program has provided for:

- (a) *The cow-calf producer*—a program whereby he can obtain a \$25.00 to \$50.00 bonus for each animal plus a program that enables him to put enough added weight on the animal to pay for the costs. Last, but not least, it is a program that develops a sense of pride in the cow-calf producer's product.
- (b) *The cattle feeder*—an animal that has curtailed morbidity and mortality, less time for feedlot adjustment; an animal that does not need to be processed upon arrival and the cost of labor and drugs in treatment of sick animals has been curtailed.
- (c) *The veterinarian*—a vehicle to institute herd health programs in all beef herds.

**In summary, preconditioning has proven itself to be a beef improvement program. It is difficult to understand why every beef producer doesn't precondition his calves.**



## Announcing the AABP Award for Excellence in Preventive Veterinary Medicine

The American Association of Bovine Practitioners and MSD AGVET invite you to participate in the only awards program that recognizes outstanding efforts in bovine preventive medicine.

Awards will be presented to two practitioners each year. One will be given to the outstanding program in beef production. The second award will honor an equally sound program for dairymen.

A \$1,500 general fund scholarship contribution will be made by MSD ADVET in the name of the award recipient to his/her veterinary college of choice. Plus, each award will include a specially designed bronze plaque in bas-relief.



Entries are judged by an AABP panel solely on the merits of the individual programs.

To obtain an entry form and additional information on this year's awards program contact: Harold E. Amstutz, DVM, AABP Executive Secretary/Treasurer, Box 2319, West Lafayette, Indiana 47906.

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