

Haskell County Animal Hospital

Animal Health Update

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You Can't Push Management Through a Syringe

In reading the professional and lay journals that come across my desk I wonder how it is that we could ever lose money feeding cattle. Scientific articles and advertisements proclaim terrific returns on your investment.

Implants can return you up to \$25, viral vaccines can benefit \$10-15 an animal. Seven dollars and fifty cents back in your pocket when you use Pasturella vaccines. I can't remember seeing a specific number when using blackleg vaccines, but I'm sure somewhere there is a figure.

Mass treatment studies show you can get better returns than some high-flying stocks like Yahoo! Add an ionophore like Rumensin to promote growth and Tylan to reduce liver abscesses and we're well on our way to getting rich. As long as we are using feed additives, add Deccox for coccidiosis and MGA to eliminate riding and here is a couple more dollars in our bank accounts.

Institute a Beef Quality Assurance program that prevents cutouts, bruises and dark cutters and the packers will surely give us more money.

Might as well make those reservations for that cruise you've always wanted because there is no way we could lose money. Right? --- Wrong!

You can't push management through a syringe. Even though all of these products and procedures do show positive returns they will be minimal or even negative unless all management procedures are followed.

Unfortunately, a large portion of these management breaks can occur before you own the cattle. Management begins the day a calf is born. Proper care of the cow such as nutrition, health and husbandry are required for that calf to meet its potential. Poor management of the newborn or young animal will have lifelong effects on performance. Each management break will have sustaining effects on subsequent production phases. Parasitism, respiratory or enteric disease and nutritional deficiencies can have dramatic effects on the potential performance of an animal. Once any of these conditions occur, potential profit is removed.

Animals that have had poor management prior to entering the feedyard will not perform as well as or produce as much return on your investment as those that did have proper care. Just purchase calves that have had the proper care and your problems are solved. That is easier said than done if not nearly impossible.

About all you can do is ensure that you follow proper management steps after you purchase the animals. Nutrition is one of the most important, if not the most important management consideration. An animal deficient in any nutrient will not respond to vaccinations or treatment programs as well as an animal with proper nutrition. Implant programs will also suffer without proper nutrition.

Stress is also a very important management consideration. Animal stress is an insidious robber of potential profits. Stress may be the greatest underlying factor in animal health. Some stressors in beef production are unavoidable but most are not. The stress of trucking is unavoidable but overcrowding the truck is. The stress of working cattle is unavoidable but ramming and jamming cattle at processing is. Weather stressors can't be changed but they can be reduced with bedding, windbreaks, sprinklers, and etc. These are just a few examples of how you can reduce stress in your cattle.

There are many management factors to consider other than what we can put in or on an animal that are profit builders. It is often the little things that make a difference, not just the obvious. If you want to improve your profits don't push management through a syringe.

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