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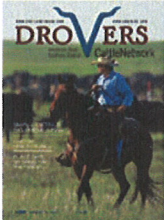


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Healthy Heifer: Start scours prevention at preg-check

By a Drovers CattleNetwork news source | Updated: September 8, 2011

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Calving season is still a few months away, but producers who take steps to prevent scours now will reap the benefits of healthier and better-performing calves in 2010.

Scours continues to be a leading cause of calf mortality, killing thousands of calves every year. Calves that survive scours typically have reduced growth rates and gain, and are more likely to perform poorly throughout their lives. The combined effects of scours—death loss, treatment costs and poor performance—can add up to thousands of dollars in economic losses each year.

Dr. Mike Moore, professional services veterinarian, Novartis Animal Health, says the continued prevalence of scours suggests producers need to be more aggressive with their prevention programs.

"Fall is really the time when scours prevention should begin," said Moore. "There are a few simple things producers can do when cows come off pasture that will help protect next year's calf crop from scours."

Moore reminds producers that proper nutrition is a cornerstone of cow health and scours prevention. "When cows come off pasture, it's important to adjust rations so that you're providing a balanced diet that includes micronutrients along with plenty of energy and protein," he said.

"Cows should also be vaccinated for scours during fall preg-check," said Moore. "Vaccination needs to cover the common causes of scours including E. coli, rotavirus, coronavirus and Clostridium perfringens Type C."

Moore suggests that if producers have a history of ulcers in their herds, they should consult with their veterinarian and consider vaccination for Clostridium perfringens Type A as well.

"Vaccinating cows at preg-check provides the advantage of convenience since producers are already working animals," said Moore. "Plus, it allows more time for the cows to build protective antibodies."

Cows build antibodies in their blood before passing them down through colostrum, and antibodies move from blood to colostrum four to six weeks before calving. Vaccinating as early as possible will optimize antibodies in the dam's colostrum.

"That's one reason many veterinarians and producers prefer Scour Bos,® because you can vaccinate sooner than you can with any other scours vaccine, ensuring circulating antibodies are as high as possible before they are transferred to the colostrum," said Moore. "And by vaccinating early, you eliminate the need to handle cows too close to calving."

Cows should be vaccinated 8 to 16 weeks before calving with Scour Bos 9, followed by a booster dose four weeks prior to calving with Scour Bos 4.

"Preventing calf scours requires careful management of the dam, the environment and the calf," said Moore. "And it starts in the fall with good nutrition and immunizing the dam early enough in order to deliver passive immunity via high levels of maternal antibodies passed to the calf through colostrum."

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