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1929



SINCE

SPRING DEWORMING: MAXIMIZE YOUR INVESTMENT THIS YEAR

A LONG-ACTING DEWORMER LOWERS HANDLING TIME, INCREASES ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The benefits of deworming cattle are well known: increased weight gains and breeding efficiency, reduced pasture contamination, improved immune status and more. Using an extended-release dewormer, however, can be the game changer needed to realize the greatest return on investment.

An extended-release dewormer boasts the unique ability to control parasites on both a short- and long-term basis. “Injectable extended-release dewormers are essentially two doses in one,” explained Joe Gillespie, DVM, Boehringer Ingelheim. “The first dose is much like a conventional dewormer in that it works on parasites immediately. Then, the second dose, which is protected in a polymer, is released in the 70- to 100-day range.” After 150 days, the drug is eliminated from the body.

“If your cattle are on grass for longer than two months, it’s definitely an option worth considering,” Dr. Gillespie continued. “Over the course of a grazing season, cattle will better utilize forage and other resources — and ultimately, gain more weight. It’s also a great way to save on labor costs since producers won’t need to bring animals back from pasture for reapplication.”

DEBUNKING RESISTANCE FEARS

There have been concerns that an extended release dewormer could create parasite resistance more rapidly than a standard dewormer. However, the extended release holds the second dose and releases it the same as if an animal were given another application. “The active ingredient is removed from the body in much the same way as current endectocide dewormers on the market,” noted Dr. Gillespie.

To help manage the development of resistance, Dr. Gillespie recommends talking to your veterinarian about refugia. Refugia (in which a percentage of the herd is selectively not dewormed) is recognized as a key factor in delaying the onset of parasite resistance. Leaving a portion of the parasite population in “refuge” from dewormers reduces the drug-resistance selection pressure caused by a single dewormer.

PUTTING EXTENDED-RELEASE DEWORMING TO THE TEST

Rob Gill, manager of eight cow-calf operations and an 11,000-head feedlot located throughout Wyoming and surrounding states, decided to put an extended-duration dewormer to the test. “We treated one group of heifers with just a drench and pour-on, and the other group received an extended-duration dewormer. Heifers that received the longer-acting dewormer were about 32 pounds heavier coming off grass in the fall.”

Gill says that while producers may frown upon the initial cost of a longer-acting dewormer, there’s a significant payoff between the lower stress levels and added weight gain. “We treat cattle before they go out to pasture, and we don’t have to touch them again until they’re in the feedlot,” he added. “The dewormer is worth our investment because it keeps parasites out of pastures, resulting in better weight gain that carries through to feedlot performance.”

THREE TIPS FOR ANY DEWORMING PRODUCT AND PROGRAM

No matter the type of product you choose, Dr. Gillespie recommends adhering to the following practices to get the most out of your dewormers:

1. Use diagnostics to evaluate parasite populations and product efficacy. A **fecal egg count reduction test, or FECRT**, is a standardized diagnostic tool that can evaluate the efficacy of your deworming products. Typically, a 90% or greater reduction in the fecal egg count indicates that your dewormer is performing the way it’s supposed to. A coproculture can help find the species of parasites most prevalent within the herd, so you can implement a targeted approach to parasite control.

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2. Read the product label closely to be sure it offers the protection your herd needs. Each class of dewormers has its own strengths and weaknesses, and certain classes are more effective against specific parasites. By performing regular diagnostic testing and paying close attention to product labels, you can determine how effective each dewormer will be at controlling the key parasites in your herd.

It's also difficult for the dewormer to do its job if not administered correctly. Read the label to be certain the product is stored correctly, the dose you're administering is accurate for the weight of animal you're treating, and your equipment is properly functioning prior to treating the animals.

3. Work with your herd veterinarian. Every producer's situation is unique; no two herds are the same, and neither are their parasite burdens. That's why consulting your veterinarian is so important. He or she can help evaluate your operation's needs and recommend a deworming protocol and product(s) based on the findings. Your grazing season period, the age and class of your animals, your operation type and the grazing history of the pasture are all considerations to discuss.

Boehringer Ingelheim

THE IMPORTANCE OF VITAMIN A FOR CALF HEALTH

VITAMIN A DEFICIENCY CAN HAVE MANY SYMPTOMS IN YOUNG CALVES. THEY CAN RANGE FROM WEAKNESS TO A DAMPENED IMMUNE SYSTEM.

Vitamin A is critical in reproduction, growth, and health in cattle. Though green grass is rich in the precursor to vitamin A, beta carotene, deficiency in vitamin A may be of concern due to recent years of drought. National recommendations for vitamin A supplementation assume cows have been eating lots of green grass for a significant portion of the year, building stores for critical processes such as vision, helping cows stay healthy while pregnant, and general cattle health. It is essential to monitor for signs of vitamin A deficiency as it can be a major factor in the success of your calf crop this year.

Young calves with vitamin A deficiency may display signs ranging from weakness to a dampened immune system, leading to increased susceptibility to disease (especially diarrhea.) Vitamin A is important in epithelial cells, such as those in the eye and those lining the gut. Some signs to look for are:

- Increased illness, including diarrhea and pneumonia
- Reduced feed intake and growth
- Rough hair coat
- Weak and uncoordinated
- In extreme deficiency, a white film over the eye (xerophthalmia)

Access to colostrum is one of the most important parts of establishing vitamin A status in newborn calves. Did you know newborn calves have virtually no vitamin A in their body? Vitamin A cannot transfer to the calf in utero, but colostrum is rich in vitamin A and will establish vitamin A stores in newborn calves. Vitamin A stores begin to be moved for colostrum production before calving, so it is important to consider vitamin A supplementation in your cows during late gestation. Stored feedstuffs, like cornstalks and hay, are likely low in vitamin A, so they should be supplemented with vitamin A to ensure calves obtain adequate vitamin A in the colostrum and milk.

In the unfortunate event that calves are stillborn or die, a diagnostic test should be run to understand if vitamin A deficiency is a concern. Also, producers should inform the lab if the calf had colostrum so the appropriate reference ranges can be used in diagnosis.

If a vitamin A deficiency is diagnosed, injectable vitamin A may be an option to increase vitamin A status rapidly. Injections will not be a long-term fix, and underlying reasons for deficiency should be fixed to maintain vitamin A status.

Beef Magazine

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UNDERSTANDING PRICE SLIDES WHEN BUYING AND SELLING FEEDER CATTLE

A PRICE SLIDE IS MOST EFFICIENT WHEN IT IS ROUGHLY EQUAL TO THE MARKET DISCOUNT AS CATTLE GET HEAVIER.

Everyone who buys or sells feeder cattle regularly understands that in most markets the price per pound decreases as cattle get heavier. This can create a challenge for pricing cattle in situations where weight is not known with certainty. This applies to forward contracts, internet sales and cattle that are sold off the farm but are hauled to another location to determine pay weight. In these situations, cattle are often sold with a base weight, and a price slide is utilized to adjust price as the weight of the cattle exceeds that base weight.

As an illustration, let's consider a backgrounder that sold cattle via an internet auction with an advertised base weight of 800 lbs. and a price slide of \$8.00/cwt. Let's further assume that the cattle sell for \$240.00/cwt in the auction and will be hauled to a weigh station the following week to determine the pay weight.

If those steers were to weigh exactly 800 lbs., no price adjustment is needed. The pay weight is 800 lbs. and the price is \$240.00/cwt for a total of \$1,920 per head. However, if the cattle weighed 850 lbs., the price is adjusted downward because they are 50 lbs. above the base weight. With an \$8.00/cwt. slide, the price would be adjusted downward by \$4.00/cwt. (50 lbs. is half of a cwt.). With a pay weight of 850 lbs. and an adjusted price of \$236.00/cwt., the per head total is \$2,006.

Price slides can get much more complicated than this, but this simple illustration captures the process well enough for this discussion. As long as the price slide is not so large as to actually result in a lower value per head, the seller is typically happy to have more pounds to sell. In the previous example, the cattle sold for \$86.00 more than they would have had they weighed right at the base weight.

Now I want to focus this discussion on the difference between the artificial price slide used to adjust the price for cattle weighing above the base weight and the actual market price discount as cattle get heavier. The table below illustrates this point in relatively simple terms. Suppose the market price for an 800 lb. steer is \$240.00/cwt. and the market price for an 850 lb. steer of the same type and quality was \$235.00/cwt. This would imply that the actual price discount in the feeder cattle market was \$10.00/cwt. and the market value of those 850 lb. steers would be \$1,997.50 per head (850 lbs. x \$235.00/cwt.). If a seller advertised that group of steers with a base weight of 800 lbs. and a \$10.00/cwt. price slide, the price slide and the market discount for weight would match perfectly. The final price would be the same despite the fact that the pay weight exceeded the base weight. This scenario is shown in the middle row of the table below, but this will not be the case when differences exist between the market discount for weight and the price slide.

If the artificial price slide is less severe than the market discount as the cattle get heavier, then the seller is actually better off if the pay weight exceeds base weight because the lower artificial price slide would result in a smaller price discount due to the additional pounds. This is illustrated below with the \$8.00/cwt. price slide and note that the final value per head is higher for these steers. Previous research has found evidence that sellers tend to underestimate weights in these situations. Conversely, if the market discount is greater than the price slide, the seller would actually receive a lower final price than had they advertised the cattle with the higher base weight to begin with. Note that the \$12.00/cwt. price slide below, which exceeds the market discount, results in a lower final value. In situations such as this, sellers have no incentive to overestimate weight.

BASE WEIGHT	SALE PRICE	PAY WEIGHT	PRICE SLIDE	FINAL PRICE PER CWT	FINAL VALUE PER HEAD
800	\$240	850	\$8 per cwt	\$236	\$2,006.00
800	\$240	850	\$10 per cwt	\$235	\$1,989.00
800	\$240	850	\$12 per cwt	\$234	\$1,989.00

In theory, price slides used for selling cattle with weight uncertainties should evolve with the market. But my experience has been that they are often slow to adjust, whereas market conditions change very quickly. The key point from this discussion is that a price slide is most efficient when it is roughly equal to the market discount as cattle get heavier. In those situations, there is no incentive for sellers to underestimate weight when selling cattle on a slide and there is little true penalty if they do. Buyers and sellers both need to understand the implications when prices slides and market weight discounts diverge, as this can have an impact on both parties.

WEANING CALVES: AVOID THESE 3 COMMON PITFALLS

HAVE YOU DEFINED WHAT SUCCESS AND FAILURE LOOK LIKE WHEN WEANING CALVES?

Success might look like live, healthy calves who put on weight with minimal intervention. On the flip side, failure may be calf mortality, sick or stressed calves, a high rate of treatment and less weight to sell. No matter your definitions, having a plan in place can help you avoid weaning pitfalls and, ultimately, failure during this critical time frame.

Make plans now to avoid these 3 pitfalls when weaning calves:

PITFALL #1: NO PLAN FOR WHEN TO WEAN CALVES

Too often, we just go out and wean. We find a break in the weather and decide it's time. The 'just do it' mentality may work out, but much like you plan for breeding and calving every year, you should plan when to wean calves.

Develop a flexible plan at least a month in advance. Planning ahead a month gives you time to order feed, work on your health program, order vaccines and more. Part of your health program may include pre-weaning vaccines that can be administered well in advance of weaning day to boost immunity.

PITFALL #2: FACILITY FAILURE

Prepare facilities for calves trying to get back to their mothers. If calves are in a fenced area, check and reinforce fences as needed to prevent calves escaping. For corral areas, be sure gates are secured and without gaps.

Another aspect of facilities is the environment. Small, tightly confined areas with mud are not ideal for weaning calves. Give calves a stress-free space with plenty of room and grass.

Placement of cattle feed bunks and space are also critical.

We often put cattle feed bunks in a place that's convenient for people, not for cattle. Place feed bunks in an area where calves will run into them, not just a place that's convenient.

Cattle feed bunks should be placed perpendicular to fence lines so calves can bump into feed as they are circling the fences. To prevent calves from competing for bunk space, provide 12 inches of bunk space for hand-fed feeds like Purina Precon Complete Feed and 6 to 8 inches of bunk space for self-fed feeds like Purina Accuration Starter Complete Feed.

PITFALL #3: HIGH CATTLE WATERERS AND HAY FEEDERS

Beyond making sure calves can find water sources and ensuring there is clean, fresh water available for all calves, another common pitfall is water accessibility.

Make sure your cattle water trough is not too tall. Don't assume that 400- or 450-pound calves are going to be able to reach the same cattle waterers set up for 1,200-pound cows.

The same concept applies to cattle hay feeders.

If the hay ring is out, and the round bale is in the hay ring, but the calves can't reach the tower of hay in the middle – you've got a problem.

Check your cattle hay feeders to ensure they aren't too tall or deep for the shorter necks of calves. If hay is out of reach, do what you can to spread hay from the center toward the outside of the hay ring.

PLAN TO DRIVE FEED INTAKE

My top piece of advice when weaning calves? Have a plan to maximize feed intake.

The end goal is to drive intake and get calves eating the nutrients they need to stay healthy. Anything you can do to set calves up to eat at target intake levels will help them have a higher chance of success.

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