Health Management for Stocker Cattle

2009 Georgia Stocker Workshops
University of Georgia Extension

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Objectives
Profitably raise weaned calves to target market weights
Manage cost of production
Manage feed and land resources
Upgrade cattle market value
Assure feeding/breeding performance
Beef quality assurance

Cost-effective program with successful outcomes

Successful Stocker Programs

- Cattle management PLAN
- Forage, feed and water management PLAN
- Labor and facilities PLAN
- Health management PLAN
- Marketing PLAN
- KEY: A planned program

Stocker Health Management

- Categorize cattle “RISK” at the start
- Planned receiving program
- Sound vaccination program
- Simple and applicable treatment programs
- Practice “low-stress” in all programs
- Workable facilities and labor
- Preparation and planning for success

Risk Categories for Stocker Calves

Low – yearling and weaned, preconditioned calves on sound nutritional programs
High – Unexposed
  Fresh, weaned calves from single source and naïve to environmental and health risks
High – Exposed
  Recently weaned, multi-source, commingled calves from auction markets under high stress
  Shrink – purchase weight loss, >7-8% BEWARE

Receiving Program

- First 2-4 weeks after arrival is most critical
- Stressors:
  Market - handling – trucking – processing
  Environmental changes – physical adaptation
  Nutritional changes – rumen function
  Disease challenges – immune system
  Social adjustments – commingling
  Human and Cattle dispositions
**Best Management Practices (BMP)**

- Receiving feeds and rations
  - High-quality grass hay and fresh, clean water
  - Clean, quiet, uncrowded receiving pen
  - Rest and adaptation
  - Limited, highly palatable, high-TDN feeds
  - Utilizable protein and minerals/vitamins
  - Adequate bunk space
  - Early observation for health and feed intake

- Disease prevention
  - Pull and isolate sick and injured animals early
  - Vaccinations
  - Metaphylactic antibiotics
  - Feed-medications for coccidiosis
  - Internal and external parasite control
  - Record-keeping of all procedures/treatments

**STOCKER VACCINATIONS**

- BMP – vaccinate 24 to 36 hrs. after arrival
  - DO NOT DELAY PROCESSING

Vaccines: Highly recommended
- IBR – PI3: Intra-nasal and systemic, MLV
- BVD – type 1 and 2, MLV
- BRSV - MLV
- Mannheimia-Pasteurella: Toxoid-Leukotoxoid
- Clostridial +/-

**VACCINATION STRATEGIES**

- Consult with veterinary services to develop a comprehensive, risk-based vaccination plan
- Categorize disease risk for groups of calves
- Proper vaccine selection, handling and administration
- Low-stress handling
- Establish reasonable expectations for vaccine efficacy and time for response
- Booster viral vaccines in 10 to 21 days

**Immunity to Disease**

Vaccines attempt to enhance immunity but are not retroactive

**Management of newly received or weaned calves during the first three to four weeks may very well determine the profit or loss of a stocker cattle enterprise.**
Point of origin
Receiving pens 2 to 4 weeks after arrival

Metaphylactic Antibiotic*
ID and records
MLV-killed vaccine (IBR, PI3, BVD, BRSV) 2nd MVL-vaccine
Pasteurella* Pasteurella*
Clostridial-5-way or 7-way Clostridial
Tetanus Toxoid**

Treatment for internal and external parasites (products should control lungworm) Dehorn*
High-quality, palatable feed and hay (the feed should contain coccidiostat) Implant

Remember, always follow Beef Quality Assurance (MS-BQA) guidelines.
*Decision should be made by your veterinarian when you plan your health program.
**If you use banding techniques for castration or if there is a history of livestock deaths because of tetanus on the farm.

Figure 2. Receiving calf health program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>METAPHYLACTIC TREATMENT</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Widely utilized in moderate to high-risk calves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proven to be cost-beneficial to reduce BRD, improve performance, and improve outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize in a strategic plan to reduce BRD:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cattle risk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operation history</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time/labor to treat cattle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Value of cattle</td>
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Feed Intake in Healthy Cattle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feed Medication Strategy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coccidiostat medication for prevention/control of coccidiosis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deccox</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rumensin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bovatec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporate in starter/receiving ration for 21 to 28 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost-effective in most stocker cattle operations</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parasite Management</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parasites have impact on health, immunity and performance of young calves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administer upon arrival processing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of products:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History, source and risk in cattle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted parasites – internal/external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of administration – PROPER</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost and benefit</td>
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Treatment Programs - Plan

A successful program for the management of sick stocker calves and yearlings must be simple and systematic: that is, a sick animal must be easily identified, and the treatment must be routine and require a minimum of judgement decisions by the working crew.

The key elements in this program include the following:

- Identifying sick cattle as soon as possible.
- Keeping adequate records.
- Evaluating sick cattle daily.
- Changing treatment, if necessary, until an improvement is noted.
- Systematic treatment of sick animals.

A stocker operator wanting to use this program should consult a veterinarian prior to implementing these procedures.

Information and Decision Management

- Record Keeping: Written, Electronic
- Animals must be individually identified to properly record and use information
- Necessary to identify all health management procedures and treatment events
- Necessary to make sound decisions for current and future backgrounding/stocker cattle investments

BEef QUALITY ASSURANCE

Anytime the inappropriate use of medications in meat animals leaves “drug residue,” that is WRONG. It is wrong because: many people are sensitive to certain drugs; some drugs can accumulate in body tissues and eventually reach a toxic level; and the consumers of meat and meat products have the right to purchase a clean wholesome product. A clean wholesome product is one free of “drug residues.” Many times newly arrived sick cattle will not respond to the same of the “approved” medications; some sick animals will not respond to the dosages recommended on the label or to the recommended route of administration. Experience has shown that using “unapproved” medications, changing dosages, and even changing the route of administration quite often can save the lives of sick animals. Doesn’t sound legal, does it? If you take it upon yourself to use “unapproved” drugs, change the dosage, or change the route of administration it is not legal. However, these procedures can be legal if you follow the guidelines established by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

FDA guidelines are very specific as to using drugs in food animals, and cover both “Within Label Usage” and “Extra-Label Usage.” FDA Guidelines for “Within Label Usage” restricts the use of a drug to the species of animals for which it is approved (beef cattle can receive only those drugs approved for use in beef cattle). In addition, the drug must be administered by the route(s) stated upon the label, and the drug must be administered at the dosage level stated upon the label. Any deviation from these guidelines will be considered as using a drug “Extra-Label.” Extra-Label drug usage is illegal unless the FDA guidelines are strictly adhered to. The “right” to use drugs in an extra-label fashion is strictly regulated by the FDA. Before extra-label usage can legally occur, the FDA requires that the following criteria be met.

PRUDENT EXTRA-LABEL DRUG USAGE

1. Careful diagnosis is made by an attending veterinarian within the scope of a valid veterinarian-client-patient relationship.
2. A determination is made that there is no marketable drug labeled to treat the condition diagnosed and that treatment at the label dosage is found to be ineffective.
3. Procedures are instituted to assure that the identity of the treated animals is carefully maintained.
4. A significantly extended period is assigned for drug withdrawal prior to marketing the treated animals, and steps are taken to assure that the assigned time frames are met and no harmful residues occur

Stocker Cattle Health Management

- Summary:
  - Recognize risk-levels of cattle types, ages, background, stocker operation and disease challenges and prevention expectations.
  - Develop and follow a strategic plan for risk-evaluation, disease prevention and treatment, and the influences of your management on outcomes.
  - Consult with veterinary and extension experts to make sound production decisions.