

Beef Newsletter

VACCINATIONS AND PRECONDITIONING

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Our beef herds are now coming in from pasture, and this is the time when we prepare our calf crop for weaning, sale, or further feeding. It is also the time when we will identify the heifers that will become our future brood cows.

Before we get to the topic of fall vaccinations, let us consider those other important preconditioning steps that we can take to reduce disease rates, eliminate post-weaning growth reduction, and enhance the response to vaccination. If we can do these things, we should achieve the ideal combination of price, sale weight, and number of calves sold to make the best possible profit from this year's calf crop. We will also get our replacement heifers off to the best possible start.

We know that groups of preconditioned calves experience lower disease rates and higher weight gains on feed than non-preconditioned calves. Part of the reason for this is that vaccines have had the opportunity to increase immunity **before** calves are stressed by weaning, shipping, and mixing with other cattle (and their infections) at sales and during transport. **Buyers pay more** for vaccinated calves and for calves that look healthy, especially when prices are under pressure; however, the benefits begin before the calves leave the farm, and also extend to heifers retained as herd replacements below).



Introducing calves to hay and grain prior to weaning allows them to learn to eat from a bunk or feeder and to drink from a trough or automatic water bowl before the milk supply is cut off. It also allows time for the population of bacteria in the rumen to adapt to the change in diet from milk and grass to a diet of solid feed. This in turn helps to maintain feed intake during the stress of weaning, so that calves continue to gain weight on weaning day. After calves have been on feed for 3 weeks, they are ready for vaccination, provided that the cows were vaccinated in the spring before breeding. In this case, weaning would ideally follow 2 to 3 weeks later after vaccination. Where cows are not vaccinated, calves should be vaccinated after weaning (see Fall Calf Vaccinations).

Calf Vaccinations

Protection against viral respiratory diseases (IBR, PI-3, BRSV) and Bovine Virus Diarrhoea (BVD) is achieved by vaccination. Modified live virus vaccines induce a broad range of immune responses to enhance resistance to these diseases. **Pyramid 5 + Presponse** also includes an important bacterial antigen involved in the shipping fever complex. IBR and BVD can cause abortion in pregnant cows; therefore, although vaccination prior to weaning is ideal, because vaccinated calves can shed virus for a short time after vaccination, vaccination of calves should be delayed until after weaning in herds where the cows have not been vaccinated. In herds where cows are vaccinated, calves benefit from being vaccinated prior to weaning. The time to vaccinate cows with modified live vaccines is in the spring prior to breeding, but cows can be vaccinated at any time with a killed virus vaccine (Triangle 10) if need be.

Vaccine Recommendations

For Stocker calves: **Pyramid 5+Presponse** (IBR, PI-3, BRSV, BVD + Mannheimia), **Pyramid FP5**, or **Express FP5** (IBR, PI-3, BRSV, BVD).

For calves retained as replacement heifers: **Express FP 10** (IBR, PI-3, BRSV, BVD + Leptospira)
When vaccinating pregnant cows and bred heifers NOT previously vaccinated with Express or Pyramid vaccines, use Triangle 10, with a booster dose 3 weeks later.



Central Ontario

VETERINARY SERVICES

Please contact our office by telephone or email to place your fall vaccine orders.