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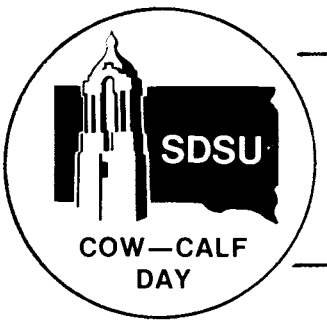

PRECONDITIONING FEEDER CALVES

J. A. Minyard, J. H. Bailey and F. W. Crandall

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Each year more than a million quality feeder calves are sold in South Dakota. These sales contribute significantly to agricultural income in the state, the sale of cattle and calves comprising about 50% of the total.

Under the leadership of the South Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (BCIA) and the South Dakota Extension Service, an organized, certified feeder calf preconditioning program has been initiated and is available as an optional management/marketing tool for South Dakota cow-calf producers. The program is designed to assure the highest standards of quality, health and performance once South Dakota feeder calves reach the feedlot.

In addition to the South Dakota Extension Service, the BCIA certified preconditioning program is also supported by the South Dakota Feed Manufacturers Association, the South Dakota Livestock Association, the South Dakota Livestock Auction Markets Association, the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association and the South Dakota Veterinary Medical Association.

Any cow-calf producer can participate; he does not need to belong to any livestock group. The simplest way for him to start is to call his veterinarian, who will be administering or validating the immunizations anyway. The vet will provide the certificate and the ear tags. Or, the producer may check with his county agent or one of the authors of this article.

Coupled with a total herd health plan, the preconditioning program gives the producer heavier, healthier calves for the market and a dependable reputation as a breeder of quality, high performance calves.

What Is Preconditioning?

Preconditioning is the preparation of a calf which has been nursing its mother to better withstand the stress of movement from its production site to the feedlot. It is a complete health management program. Preconditioned feeder calves means they are prepared to withstand the stress and adjustment they undergo when they leave their point of origin enroute to the feedlot. In simple terms, preconditioning is a management tool which combines familiar practices to produce and market healthy feeder calves. Basically, preconditioning is the application of common sense and sound management/marketing practices.

Requirements for a Successful Preconditioning Program

1. Bull calves castrated and healed.
2. Horned calves dehorned and healed.
3. Weaned for at least 30 days.
4. Water trough and feed bunk adjusted (30 days).
5. The following immunizations after 4 months of age and at least 3 weeks before sale:
    a. IBR
    b. PI_3
    c. BVD
    d. Seven-way clostridial
6. Treated for grubs and lice.
7. Owned by the seller 60 days prior to sale.
8. Calves identified with official "Green Tag" in left ear and accompanied by the BCIA certificate signed by the owner and veterinarian.

Castrating, Dehorning and Weaning Practices. A preconditioned calf should be dehorned and castrated (as young as possible) when still nursing its dam, preferably during the spring of the year. If done at a later date, dehorning and castration wounds must be healed by sale time. A preconditioned calf must be weaned for at least 30 days before being sold.

Water Trough and Feed Bunk Adjustment at the Production Site. A preconditioned calf must have the opportunity to accustom itself to water troughs and feed bunks for at least 30 days prior to sale. This practice will insure adaptation to feedlot rations and environment. This adjustment period of 30 days at the site of origin will result in heavier calves and less shrink. Records indicate that during this period a calf will easily gain from 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 pounds per day. The producer has the option of utilizing home-grown feeds or selecting a commercial preconditioning ration.

Proper Immunizations. To reduce losses associated with shipping fever and other feedlot diseases, the preconditioned calf must be properly vaccinated against several diseases. Vaccination of the calves is a part of the total herd health management program. It is essential that an adequate cow herd vaccination program be implemented before considering the preconditioning of calves. If not, the economic benefits of preconditioning will not materialize.

Preconditioned calves must receive the following immunization at least 3 weeks before shipment and must be at least 4 months old when vaccinated:

IBR (red nose)
PI_3 (Parainfluenza-3)
BVD (Bovine virus diarrhea)
Seven-way clostridial bacterin (to protect calves against blackleg, malignant edema, overeating types B, C and D, Cl. novyi and Cl. sordelli)

The South Dakota Preconditioning Program requires that the MANDATORY vaccinations be administered NO LATER than 21 days BEFORE the sale. However, participants in the program are encouraged to administer the vaccines at least two weeks BEFORE WEANING to reduce stress and to insure maximum immunity at the time they wean their calves.

It must be re-emphasized that, although needed, immunizations are only one aspect of preconditioning and only a part of complete herd health management. Their timely use cannot be divorced from proper nutrition, reduction of stress, managerial soundness and a productive relationship with the local veterinarian.

Control of Parasites. Preconditioned calves must receive grub and lice treatment. Although desirable, worming is not mandatory.

Identification and Certification. Individual identification of each preconditioned calf and written certification of the practices involved are indispensable components of the program. They facilitate marketing preconditioned calves, assure maximum economic returns, enable "trace backs," give the feedlot owner reliable information to determine if further processing is needed and provide data to evaluate the overall performance of the program.

Preconditioned calves are identified by a green, serially numbered, metal tag placed in the left ear. The certificate is signed by the seller and his veterinarian. Tags and certificates are distributed by practicing veterinarians.

Benefits of Preconditioning

The benefits of preconditioning fall into three categories: benefits for the calf, benefits for the seller and benefits for the buyer.

Benefits for the Calf. A preconditioned calf is an all-round better calf than one which is not preconditioned. Stress is reduced to a minimum. Death and disease losses are cut down dramatically. Preconditioned calves have been adequately immunized against costly diseases and external parasites are controlled. Preconditioned calves are ready to move into the feedlot.

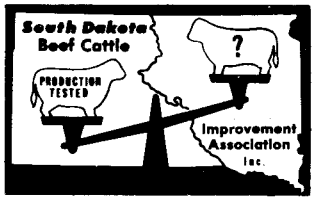
Benefits for the Seller. The seller of preconditioned calves realizes a return on his investment. Preconditioned calves are substantially heavier than their nonpreconditioned counterparts. This extra weight alone should pay for feed, vaccines and parasite control and, under present market conditions, assures an additional net profit.

Once a producer establishes a reputation for high quality, healthy preconditioned calves, the probability for a premium price should increase, further enhancing the profit potential. Ultimately, preconditioning enables the cow-calf producer to maximize his production capabilities.

Benefits for the Buyer. Sickness and death loss in the feedlot will be greatly reduced by preconditioning. Calves go on feed much quicker, they shrink less and have fewer problems with adaptation to feed bunks. Preconditioning results in minimum processing once calves reach the feedlot. Feed efficiency and weight gains are improved.

An Industry Program

For the cow-calf producer and the feedlot operator, preconditioning means just one thing: economic return. Hopefully, the economic benefits of a certified preconditioning program will be shared by all segments of the beef industry.



Certificate Number - 5 -

PRECONDITIONING CERTIFICATE

Valid for sale (date) _____ Location _____

GREEN TAG calves. . . are South Dakota's BEST

DESCRIPTION OF PRECONDITIONED CALVES:

BCIA Tag No._____to No._____ (Green tag in LEFT ear)

Brand _____ Breed_____

Steers_____Heifers_____Total PC calves_____

THE CALVES DESCRIBED ABOVE HAVE BEEN PRECONDITIONED AS FOLLOWS:

MANDATORY PROCEDURES

- Weaned (date)_____ (must be weaned at least 30 days BEFORE sale)
- Dehorned (date)_____ or Polled_____
- Castrated (date)_____ with _____ (specify method)
- Grub/Louse Control_____ (product used) (date)
- Water tank and Feed Bunk Adjusted since (date)_____on the following ration:

_____ (specify ration) Feed Additives used_____

- Shots must be given at least 21 days BEFORE SALE

		Date Given	Product Name	Serial Number	Administered by Seller	Vet
MANDATORY IMMUNIZATIONS						
IBR/PI_3: MLV or	1st					
(Killed*)	2nd					
Clostridia (7 way)						
BVD: MLV or	1st					
(Killed*)	2nd					
OPTIONAL						
Pasteurella*	1st					
	2nd					
Hemophilus somnus*	1st					
	2nd					
Brucellosis (heifers)						
Lepto						
Dewormed						
Implant	1st					
	2nd					

*two shots necessary

- OTHER OPTIONAL PROCEDURES_____

_____

CERTIFICATION

The undersigned hereby declares and certifies that the practices, treatments and vaccinations indicated above have been carried out and administered to all of the cattle described and identified by this certificate under my supervision. The undersigned further declares to have owned these cattle for no less than 60 days immediately prior to this sale.

_____

Seller **Date**

To the best of my knowledge, this is an accurate statement of the procedures performed on these calves. This is not to be construed as a health certificate.

_____

Veterinarian **Date**

The South Dakota Preconditioning Program is supported by the South Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (BCIA) in cooperation with the S.D. Livestock Association, S.D. Stockgrowers, S.D. Cooperative Extension Service, S.D. Feed Manufacturers Associations, S.D. Livestock Auction Market Association, and the S.D. Veterinary Medical Association.

White Copy to accompany calves; Canary Copy to SDBCIA; Pink Copy to seller; Gold Copy to Veterinarian.

Note to the Veterinarian: Please mail SDBCIA copy to: SCBCIA, Box 2170, Room 215, ASC, SDSU, Brookings, S.D. 57007