

Calf sickness can cost

Health problems at weaning become more costly when all economic losses are considered. They can add up to \$201 per head.

Speaking at the 2005 Midwest Animal Science meeting, Dr. John Stika, vice president, Certified Angus Beef LLC, shared data summarized from the 2004 Iowa Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity, which involved 13,321 calves from 12 states.

Using Cattle-Fax grid price averages for 2004, Stika said nearly \$150 of the total cost was related to treatment (\$48.43) and death loss (\$100.04). Mortality for non-treated calves in this study was only .05 percent, but reached 9.95 percent on calves treated two or more times.

"In the treated calves that survive, we can't overlook the lost performance in the feedlot and reduced carcass

quality," Stika said. "These losses add up to another \$50."

When cattle were treated more than once, the feedlot average daily gain is reduced by nearly a quarter pound per day. However, the bigger, hidden costs are in lost carcass quality, Stika said. Treated cattle had a 33.5 percent reduction in the share that graded Premium Choice (Certified Angus Beef brand) and Prime and a 322.7 percent increase in the Standard-grading cattle.

Darrell Busby, the Iowa State University coordinator of the project, said these costs are magnified with today's calf and fed steer prices. When totaled, they result in a cost of \$201 for multiple-treated animals. For more information on these data, visit www.cabpartners.com.

TREATMENT COSTS - PERFORMANCE AND QUALITY

Evan Vermeer - Senior Cattle Consultant, Land O Lakes Feed

Treating Sick Cattle - What does it really cost? Let's look at the Ranch to Rail data on the subject:

TABLE I: Effects of number of treatments for BRD on feedlot performance and carcass quality, 97-99 Ranch to Rail

# of Treatments	0	1	2	3	4
% of total cattle	81	14.2	3.3	1.0	0.4
% of dead cattle	0.9	2.9	7.2	10.0	16.0
% Rail	0.2	1.0	6.0	8.0	16.0
Med \$	0	16.96	33.63	53.39	69.79
ADG	2.92	2.77	2.57	2.45	1.99
% Ch	41	25	22	17	18
% Sel	53	61	57	72	45
% Stnd	6	14	24	11	37

After studying the above tables, it is appropriate to ask some questions. First, are we buying questionable cattle cheap enough. These figures give us some indication of where that pricing should be based on the risk of sickness in the cattle.

Second, what can we do once cattle are in our lot to eliminate as much sickness as possible?

The solution to this problem has several parts. The more we know about the origin and handling of the cattle prior to arrival at the lot, the better off we are. We need to have a program of processing laid out before arrival. This program should be tailored to what we know about this particular pen of cattle. This procedure should include time needed for resting cattle, vaccinations to be given, implants to be used, and parasite treatment needed. Specific products should be defined in this plan.

Arrival pens should be prepared. This means a dry, clean pen with plenty of access to clean water and bunks. We need to be prepared to offer the selected feed soon after arrival.

Starter rations that include digestible energy, protein, micronutrients and are very palatable can help to eliminate sickness and repulls. Look back at the cost of treatment and you will see that a starter ration should never be cheap or shortchanged. Nutrient intake quickly and at good levels will prevent treatments and save money.

Table II: Using current feed prices and carcass discount prices, the following figures are the added costs for sick cattle:

# of Treatments	0	1	2	3	4
Death Loss	—	11.05	34.81	50.28	83.43
Performance Losses	—	14.57	33.39	46.09	108.90
Carcass Discounts	—	25.20	34.05	32.55	50.85
From Table I Med. Costs	—	16.96	33.63	53.39	69.79
Total Costs	—	67.78	135.88	182.31	312.96
Assuming \$85/cwt for a 650 lb. steer the following are the breakeven purchase prices.					
	85.00	74.58	64.10	56.95	36.85

Have you reviewed your system completely? Land O Lakes can help. Our trained Beef Specialists can assist you with a complete review of ways to improve your returns and decrease your feeding problems. For more information contact us at webmaster@beeflinks.com