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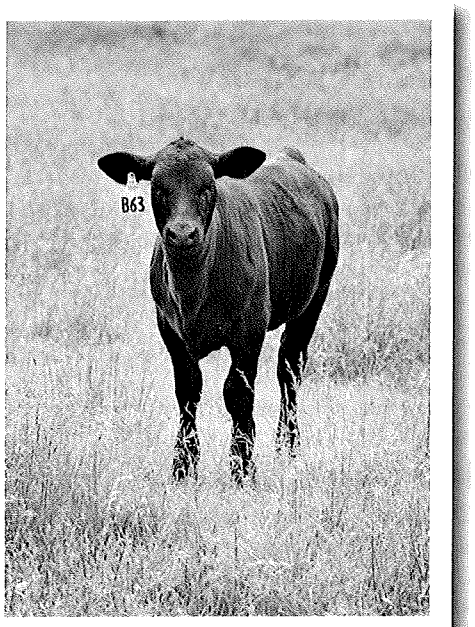
Like your combine, calves need to be prepared for Fall, too

August is here; that means the state fair is upon us, school is starting and combines will be rolling soon. But hold on because it also means that we need to get calves vaccinated and ready for weaning before harvest starts if we want to have healthy calves this fall.

Calf prices will continue to be favorable this fall, so cow-calf producers need to make sure that they are not going to miss out on a profitable year by having calves get sick at weaning time.



Design your calf pre-conditioning program around your harvest calendar.

Pre-conditioning programs typically provide a combination of vaccination, deworming and management factors that are designed to help prepare calves for the stresses of being weaned and transported through marketing channels or directly to a feedyard or stocker operation. For these programs to provide good results, they must be implemented properly or you will be wasting time and money to get unsatisfactory results.

Don't get derailed

Timing is critical for Iowa beef farmers because weaning often takes place during the busy harvest season. Lack of attention to timing of pre-weaning vaccines or health of newly weaned calves because of harvesting demands can derail the best designed pre-conditioning program.

Farmers should estimate when their corn and soybean harvest will occur and then design their calf pre-conditioning, weaning and marketing program around the proposed schedule. In order to obtain the best marketing advantage, calves should be castrated and dehorned, vaccinated for clostridial and important respiratory pathogens, and then weaned for at least 30 days.

Beef cattle farmers should also consider de-worming and implanting calves as part of their pre-conditioning program.

Calf growth is very efficient during this stage of production and can easily return investment from implants and de-wormers.

Additionally, an anti-coccidial should be included in the ration. Dry-lotted weaned calves are very susceptible to coccidian, and infection with this protozoon can result in poor growth and decreased immune function which are both critical to a successful weaning program.

To make the most of your pre-conditioning and weaning program, consult with your local veterinarian, and sale barn or feedlot manager about specific details necessary for a pre-conditioning program that will work and return investment for your work.