

# A STORY OF A STEAK

RESPONSIBLE BEEF

## THREE STEPS TO ADD VALUE TO CALVES

To increase the value of calves entering a feedyard, experts recommend preconditioning — the practice of prepping calves for optimal performance after weaning. Kevin Hill, D.V.M., technical services with Merck Animal Health, says choosing a comprehensive preconditioning program can add up to \$100 per head, depending on investments.

"A preconditioning program should include complete recommendations to maximize the health and performance of cattle," says Dr. Hill. "For example, Merck Animal Health has developed PrimeVAC™, which includes guidelines for vaccination protocols, parasite control and growth implants. This combination of guidelines will leave producers with healthier, higher-value calves."

### Step 1: DEVELOP VACCINATION PROTOCOLS

"Ideally, calves should be vaccinated and dewormed three to four weeks before weaning, then re-vaccinated and weaned three weeks or more before shipping," says Dr. Hill. Unfortunately, this scenario may not be possible or practical for every calf producer. "PrimeVAC provides specific guidelines that producers can use working with their veterinarian to construct a customized vaccination program to meet the unique needs of their operation," says Dr. Hill. "The veterinarian will have the most relevant information about the disease status in the cow herd, the region and the protection needed for the feedyard destination."

Experts recommend choosing a preconditioning program that includes protection against respiratory viruses and bacteria, as well as clostridial bacteria. Because of the complete respiratory protection against the five viruses and two bacteria that are the most important causes of bovine respiratory disease (BRD), all of the PrimeVAC programs include Vista® Once or Vista plus Once PMH®.



### Step 2: CONTROL INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARASITES

Parasite control is essential to prepare calves for an adequate response to vaccination and to enable the immune system to respond quickly and efficiently to disease challenges. Producers should also be aware of internal parasites and the effect they may have on weaning weights.

Safe-Guard® (fenbendazole) Drench is one option in the PrimeVAC program for killing internal parasites. "Because of the documented resistance that is developing to the Avermectin class of dewormers, Safe-Guard is an increasingly important tool for effective internal parasite control," says Dr. Hill.

External parasites, such as lice, mites and flies, also are serious problems for cattle producers. These pests are most prevalent during spring and summer months; however, many pests thrive year-round in warmer climates. For this reason, producers should control external parasites with proven products, such as Ultra Boss® Pour-On Insecticide.

### Step 3: USE IMPLANTS

Beyond vaccinations, another step each producer should evaluate is the revenue generated by implanting calves. Currently only about 33 percent of Superior Livestock sale calves are implanted, so Dr. Hill says a huge opportunity exists for more producers to take advantage of that practice with no price penalty.

"Growth implants for nursing calves significantly increase weaning weights," says Dr. Hill. "Using Ralgro® (zeranol) can increase weights of steer and heifer calves by 20 to 35 pounds when used at 30 to 90 days of age."

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- Kevin Hill, D.V.M., Merck Animal Health

In closing, as with any health and performance decisions, always work with your veterinarian to determine the risk and benefits of value added programs to find the one that works best for you.



A withdrawal period has not been established for Ralgro in pre-ruminating calves. Do not use in calves to be processed for veal. For complete information, refer to product label.

Safe-Guard Drench: Residue Warning: Cattle must not be slaughtered within 8 days following last treatment. For dairy cattle, the milk discard time is zero hours. A withdrawal period has not been established for this product in pre-ruminating calves. Do not use in calves to be processed for veal.

556 Morris Avenue • Summit, NJ 07901 • merck-animal-health-usa.com • 800-521-5767  
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