

Health Management Of Purchased Replacement Heifers

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INTRODUCTION

By way of introduction, let me tell you something about our ranch. We are in the Braford seed stock business. Our income is derived from the sale of breeding bulls, replacement heifers, feeder steers, and hay.

To supplement the number of heifers we raise at the ranch, we also buy Braford heifer calves and grow them until they are safe in calf, then sell them as replacement heifers. We try to take delivery in October. They are already weaned and have been calfhood vaccinated for Brucellosis prior to delivery.

Our program really consists of two parts: (1) Health and (2) Nutrition. Let's talk about health first.

HEALTH

Our goal is to minimize or eliminate all of the various sicknesses associated with shipping young cattle and to integrate them into our ranch's health program.

Until 1993, we gave all of our health treatment as soon after the heifers arrived as possible. In 1993, we arranged to work the heifers just before they were shipped. This worked extremely well, and because we didn't hassle them when they arrived, they settled down and started eating and drinking much quicker. We vaccinate them for PI3 and IBR using an intranasal vaccine to get some immediate results. Then for longer term immunity, we used a combination IBR, PI3, BVD, and BRSV (MLV), Pasteurella and *Haemophilus somnus*. They were also given a Vibro/Lepto-5 and 8-Way Blackleg vaccination in addition to being wormed and de-fluked.

About three weeks after arrival, the horned heifers were all de-horned.

We also give a booster Vibro/Lepto-5 shot about the time we turn the bulls out with these heifers.

NUTRITION

Immediately upon arrival, the heifers are unloaded into a small trap, given fresh water and good quality hay. Shortly, we also offer them a commercial weaning feed. They learn to eat it very quickly and will soon be consuming 2 1/2 to 3% of their body weight. About two weeks after arrival, we switch them to a commercial feed that we have custom mixed. It is a fairly high roughage feed of about 12% protein, 71% TDN and 21% fiber. We also feed good quality home grown hay free choice. Most everything I read and hear recommends against the free choice hay, but this has been working well for us and I think we will continue it.

As soon as we have green grazing, which for us this time of year means oats, rye and rye grass planted on prepared land, we move the heifers out of the trap and on to the green grazing and discontinue the feeding of the custom mixed feed. The heifers are then grazed on forages, which would be small grain in the winter and early spring, millet, hybrid bermuda grass and crab grass pastures in late spring and summer. We turn the bulls out with them around February 1 and by early May, 60% are bred. It takes another 60 days to get the rest bred. We usually have sold all of our heifers by the end of the summer.

As I said, we buy these heifers to supplement the number of heifers we raise. Our raised heifer calves are treated in essentially the

same way, although they have had all of their shots prior to weaning. We do keep them separate until sometime in early spring depending on pasture conditions and other factors.

This program may not work for everybody, but it certainly has worked well for us. I will be glad to try to answer any questions that any of you may have.