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NEWS

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Dr. Paul Christiansen

MARKETING

Marketing your cattle post-BSE



Les & Linda Johnston

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That's the message that Les Johnston of Fillmore, Saskatchewan tells beef producers when he travels the province delivering his "Beneath the Hide" presentation.

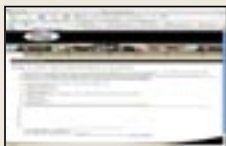
Johnston, who manages Nisku Farms with his wife Linda, says that to create a demand for Canadian beef and receive more revenue from consumers, beef producers need to be able to offer the marketplace – particularly the Asian market – transparency.

"Food safety has become a concern for consumers," says Johnston. "We have to be able to show them exactly how their beef was produced, in order to gain their confidence." [Read more...](#)

ASK YOUR VETERINARIAN

In this issue, Dr. Jeff Serfas from the Forestburg Veterinary Clinic in Forestburg, Alberta gives his advice on some common problems his clients face in the spring. Dr. Serfas answers questions on the incidence of pneumonia on summer pasture, whether or not milk replacer or electrolytes is best for a weak newborn calf, and how to reduce calf scours. [Read more...](#)

SURVEY



We hope that you enjoyed the premiere issue of The Gold Standard. As this is a new feature we are offering to our Pfizer Gold customers, we would like to know what you liked and did not like about The Gold Standard. [Read more...](#)

Upcoming Pfizer Gold Cattle Listings

Buyers recognize the value of a herd health program – Pfizer Gold calves are in demand!

Coming soon to the Pfizer Gold website

We are making it easier for you to let buyers know when and where you are selling your Pfizer Gold calves with our new on-line cattle listings form, available soon on the Pfizer Gold website.

Filling out the cattle listings form is easy. Go to the Pfizer Gold website www.pfizergold.com and click on the 'Cattle Listings' tab at the top of the home page. You will then be sent to the Cattle Listings page that will contain several options: 'add your own cattle listing', 'search listings', or 'view current listings'.

Click on 'add your own cattle listing', and a form will appear that will allow you to fill out key details such as sale location, sales agent name and more. You can even add comments to provide potential buyers with any additional information you feel will help with the sale of your animals, and you can also include up to 2 digital photos.

Providing the type and breed of cattle for sale and the region in which the sale will take place is quick and easy using the drop-down menus - just pick your region and type and we'll do the rest.

After you've filled out the form, we'll promote your calves on the Pfizer Gold website to buyers until the day after the sale. Your sale information will appear up to 30 days before the sale, so get your information to us as soon as possible.

Take advantage of promoting your Pfizer Gold calves - let us help you attract potential buyers! Look for the cattle listings section on the Pfizer Gold website in coming weeks.



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NEWS

Vaccination programs for the whole herd help protect against disease in the feedlot

With cattle health as an important issue in the industry, it's not surprising that animals vaccinated prior to sale are being sought after by buyers. They know that vaccination offers insurance against disease, and realize there is more value in these pre-vaccinated calves – something that can maximize returns for producers during a time when profit margins are tight.

The protection from disease that vaccination programs like Pfizer Gold provide directly translates into greater efficiencies for both the producer and the feedlot. Performance is improved, and the need for treatment may be reduced.

Dr. Paul Christiansen, veterinarian and Market Support Specialist with Pfizer Animal Health, says the buyers he speaks with believe that vaccination programs help reduce losses from BVD.

“BVD is a very important health issue we deal with in the cattle industry,” he says. “Calf vaccination programs help prevent the spread of this disease. The immune system is primed at an early age, and when boosted these calves have more protection against BVD, other respiratory viruses, and bacteria when they leave the farm and enter the feedlot.”

BVD is a bit like the AIDS virus (HIV), in that it is immunosuppressive, says Christiansen. Thus, without adequate protective immunity, calves that are exposed to BVD are more susceptible to other bacteria and viruses that are present within their environment.

In addition to ensuring that calves are vaccinated, Christiansen says buyers are also realizing the importance of acquiring calves from producers that vaccinate their cow herds as well.

If unvaccinated pregnant cows are exposed to certain types of the BVD virus within their second to fifth month of gestation, the virus can be passed to the fetus, resulting in the birth of what's called a persistently infected (PI) calf, he says.

PI calves may appear to be normal. However, they carry and shed the virus their entire life, exposing any animals that they come into contact with to the virus.

Before they enter the feedlot, these calves had a relatively secure environment, with little stress and limited exposure to different types of bacteria and viruses, says Christiansen. However, the move from the home ranch to the feedlot is stressful, and suddenly calves are exposed to a variety of new pathogens.

“Up to 0.5 percent of calves currently entering feedlots are PI calves,” says Christiansen. “If calves haven't received adequate protection through vaccination and are placed in a feedlot pen with one of these PI calves, the treatment rate can double, and more than twice as many calves may die by the end of the feeding period.”

The importance of utilizing a vaccination program for the entire herd is the message that Dr. Christiansen conveys in his presentations and consultations with cattle producers and ranchers.

“In the past 10 years veterinarians and producers have become more aware of the BVD persistent infection problem,” says Christiansen. “We explain to them that it's important to keep your cow herd immunized, so you're not passing on PI calves to the feedlot industry.”



Dr. Paul Christiansen

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Johnston, who manages Nisku Farms with his wife Linda, says that to create a demand for Canadian beef and receive more revenue from consumers, beef producers need to be able to offer the marketplace – particularly the Asian market – transparency.

"Food safety has become a concern for consumers," says Johnston. "We have to be able to show them exactly how their beef was produced, in order to gain their confidence."

To do this, Johnston says important first steps are to have both a National Identification program and a herd health program in place. Johnston chose to use Pfizer Gold for his herd health program because it offers both health management and marketing.

Also important is to document all aspects of your beef operation, says Johnston. He is the Saskatchewan representative on the National Communications Committee for the new Verified Beef Production Program (VBP), a national on-farm food safety program that has Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for beef operations.

These SOPs apply to several areas where food safety risk could occur, including health management, feeding, receiving and shipping, biosecurity, and yard maintenance. Johnston has been such a supporter of the program that Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food sent him for training to become certified as an auditor.

"With the Verified Beef Production Program, anyone can come to my farm and view my records, it's very transparent," he says. "What we're trying to do now is open up some markets, especially in Asia, because they get really excited when there's transparency and food safety."

Johnston also tells producers during his presentation that in order to market their cattle, producers have to identify what they've got.

For the past four years, Johnston and his wife have been using ultrasound to collect carcass data on their steers for their Prime Beef program.

"What we've done is identified some carcass traits in the Simmental and the Angus breed, so we've been able to develop some fat cattle that have been grading triple AAA while yielding at 63% or greater, which is preferred by restaurants," he says.

The goal now that Nisku Farms is certified with the VBP is to work with one of the new packing plants and have his product be part of a branded beef program, says Johnston. Western Prime in Weyburn, SK and Natural Valley Feeders in Wolseley are two new processors that have started the program, to be traceable and give the consumer confidence in the safety of the beef produced at their plants.

"I hope before I give up this business I get into one of these branded beef programs and have our product fetch a premium price from consumers," he says. "I'd like to see our product served in restaurants in Calgary, Toronto, and Hong Kong."

If you would like to speak with Les Johnston, he can be contacted at 306-722-3668 or niskufarms@sasktel.net

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ASK YOUR VETERINARIAN

By Dr. Jeff Serfas, Forestburg Veterinary Clinic

Question: I am having more and more cases of pneumonia in my calves out on summer pasture. Is there anything I can do to prevent or reduce this incidence?

Answer: I have had good success with recommending the vaccination of calves with a 4-way modified-live vaccine at branding/turnout in the spring. I have had a number of producers that have commented positively on the success of using this type of vaccination program. Implementing a Pasteurella/Mannheimia vaccine for shipping fever pneumonia prevention is also very important to include in this protocol.

This regime has proven to reduce the treatment incidence of pneumonia on pasture and also aids in priming these calves for the fall vaccination program.

Question: If I have a weak calf at birth, should I give it electrolytes or milk replacer?

Answer: For the first 18 to 24 hours, newborn calves should not receive anything orally apart from colostrum. During this time, the neonatal abomasum is only able to absorb antibodies from the dam via the colostrum. The administration of electrolytes or milk replacer during this time will interfere with the absorption of colostral antibodies and can severely impair the immune system of the neonate, leaving it susceptible to a number of neonatal diseases (such as scours, navel ill, and pneumonia).

The exception to this rule is the administration of proven products that assist with the prevention of scours, such as CalfGuard® or boluses.

Question: I have had a continually increasing problem with scours in my newborn calves. What can I do to reduce this problem?

Answer: Unfortunately there is no clear-cut answer for scours prevention. It is a complex issue but there are a number of things you should consider in order to assist your herd. The first is to get your cowherd on a scour vaccination program. Initially these animals will need to be vaccinated twice. They can be done at pregnancy testing time and then boosted 2 weeks prior to calving onset. For late calving cows and heifers, it is crucial to boost them 6 weeks following the second vaccination to ensure adequate protection from the vaccine.

Contamination of the calving area is also another consideration. Ensure that the calving area is clean and is separate from the wintering area. If calves need to be housed in a barn, etc. the time confined should be as short as possible to reduce the risk of contaminating a heavily travelled region. Having a clean nursing area to turn out the older calves will also help to reduce contamination problems.

Avoid bringing any outside/purchased calves to your herd. It is often more beneficial to leave a cow dry or cull her than to bring a calf into your herd which may be carrying a bacteria or virus to which your herd may not have been previously or recently exposed.

If you are currently using a scour vaccine in your herd and are still having a scour problem, a vaccine providing protection against the specific strain of bacteria on your farm can be formulated. This is a more complicated option and should be discussed with your veterinarian.

Dr. Serfas operates his one-man practice in Forestburg, Alberta. He was raised on a mixed farm near Duff, Saskatchewan and enjoys horseback riding, travelling and various sporting activities when time permits.

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PFIZER GOLD SURVEY

Help us make The Gold Standard even better!

We hope that you enjoyed the premiere issue of The Gold Standard. As this is a new feature we are offering to our Pfizer Gold customers, we would like to know what you liked and did not like about The Gold Standard.

Please take a few minutes to answer our short survey. We would like your feedback on such topics as content and quality, so that we will be able to provide an e-newsletter that is of most benefit to you and your operation.

I found the articles in this issue of The Gold Standard to be:

- Highly Informative
- Somewhat Informative
- Not Informative

I think the information contained in The Gold Standard is useful to my operation:

- Totally agree
- Agree somewhat
- Do not agree

What type of information you would like to see in future issues of The Gold Standard?

Your email address

Your feedback is important to us. Thank you!

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