

A strong herd health program is important, as it maximizes efficiency and can save money for the producer if done correctly. Having a good herd health program is an efficient way to decrease cow cost and increase pounds of calf weaned, helping the producer be more profitable in his/her operation.

When developing a herd health program, deciding *when* to give prevention for the herd is just as important as determining *what* should be given. The best method of prevention may be given, but if it is given at the wrong time, it will not be as effective at preventing illness as it was created to be. Likewise, a method of prevention may be given at the right time, but if it is the wrong prevention method, it will not be of much benefit.

Another way to increase effectiveness of your herd health program is to decrease labor costs by minimizing the number of days set aside for working the herd. If possible, cows and calves should be worked together on one day in the spring and worked again on one day in the fall of each year. This minimizes the amount of time the cows are worked, causing a reduction in labor expenses, which in turn results in a lower cow cost per year.

For optimal efficiency, we recommend working the herd in late April or May, then again in October. The spring working should consist of internal and external parasite control for the adult herd. A modified live respiratory vaccine, blackleg vaccine, and an internal and external parasite control should be given to all calves. Implants may also be given to the calves at this time, if desired. Fall working in late September or early October should include a killed respiratory vaccine and parasite control for adult cattle. This is also a great time to cull unproductive cows and pregnancy check all females that were exposed to a bull. Fall working of the calves should include the second round of a modified live respiratory vaccine, a blackleg vaccine, and parasite control. Calves should also be weaned at this time.

Implementing these preventative herd-health practices will reduce “emergency” costs and losses, which will help reduce the yearly cow cost. Additionally, healthy cattle will perform better, and have a higher rate of gain compared to sick cattle. A strong herd-health program is one of the best ways to increase performance while keeping expenses low. It is much cheaper to vaccinate for prevention than to treat an animal for illness.

If you have any questions regarding the use of specific vaccines or products, or to purchase vaccines to use for your herd, please contact us.