Marketing

Today, more and more cattle buyers want to know the background of the cattle they are buying for grazing and finishing. These buyers are more interested in genetics, health, nutrition, feeding and management.

During several previous news-letters we have commented on the value added to feeder calves through a pre-conditioning program. However, many farmers will agree it’s a good management practice for their calves, but give 101 reasons why its just not possible for them or it doesn’t pay for their calves before selling them or getting rid of ‘em. They seem to be satisfied with the dollars their calves are bringing.

Just what is Pre-Conditioning, is preparing our Tennessee feeder calves for the next phase of beef production, backgrounding, grazing or finishing. Steps Include: weaning separating calves from cows with minimum stress; health administering heath management practices that can help prepare the calves to withstand potential health problems created by weaning, marketing, co-mingling, transportation, grazing and finishing programs; feeding adding weight while overcoming the stress of weaning and health programs, plus teaching the calves to eat and drink from troughs. Feeding a high energy feed at 1-2% of
the calf’s body weight for 45-60 days.

Generally a pre-conditioning program consist of weaning calves 45-60 days prior to marketing. The program consist of beginning 2-4 weeks before weaning administer a killed 5-way viral vaccine (IBR, P13, BRSV, BVD type I and II) and a initial dose of 7-way clostridal/blackleg vaccine. Also, this is a
good time to de worm, castrate and de horn if these practices have not been completed.

 At weaning administer a modified-live(MLV) 5-way viral vaccine (IBR, P13, BRSV, BVD I & II) plus pasturella plus a booster for 7-way clostridal/blackleg. Always read and follow product label directions for all vaccines and health products administered to your calves.

The following information are the results of 6 on-farm-trails for pre-conditioning. I wil agree it requires labor and facilities for weaning and handling during the pre-conditioning period. There can be times the value
added income can vary and each farmer must decide what the final value is worth for their beef cattle project.

During our recent TN Cattlemen’s Convention Information was presented again indicating more cattle buyers would like to know more about their purchased cattle. What “if” the market for preconditioned calves becomes the base price paid for feeder cattle? Therefore can farmers afford the
discount for non pre-conditioned calves? As Don Dare from Knoxville TV says “Just food for Thought”. Take Care of your beef cattle business!