

VETERINARY CALL



by Bob Larson, Kansas State University

Introducing new cattle

When purchasing cattle to introduce into an existing herd, some potential health risks include injury during transport, the stress of transport and a new environment causing a purchased animal to break out with disease or to transfer germs or parasites to the home herd.

Exposure to new germs for the purchased cattle could also lead to their illness.

Additionally, if a purchased animal is a persistent carrier for an infectious disease, then the home herd could be exposed to an unfamiliar germ.

Cattle that are stressed are more likely to become ill and to shed germs and parasites that can be spread to other cattle.

Even when healthy cattle are transported to a clean environment in safe transport trailers, some level of stress can be expected.

This potential period of greater susceptibility to disease and greater risk of exposing other cattle to disease-causing germs is the reason veterinarians recommend a quarantine period of 30 days for new cattle being added to the herd. If any of the purchased cattle show signs of illness during that 30-day period — keep them quarantined longer

so that a full 30 days passes after the last episode of illness before the new cattle are allowed to have contact with the home herd.

Even though you may be concerned about any germs or parasites that new cattle may be bringing into your current herd, an

equally important risk is that newly purchased cattle may be exposed to unfamiliar germs present in the home herd. This risk can be addressed by using a period of time after the original 30 days of complete separation from the current herd to allow limited contact of the new

additions with a few cattle from the original herd. Older cows or animals that are being culled are often used for this purpose.

Finally, the risk that many veterinarians and producers consider first when protecting a herd from the risk of introducing new cattle is purchasing an apparently healthy animal that is a persistently infected carrier of a disease not currently a problem in the herd.

Diseases of concern

There are a number of important diseases that



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can enter a herd by the purchase of a carrier animal. The diseases that fall in this category that deserve the greatest attention in many parts of the United States are trichomoniasis (trich) and bovine viral diarrhea (BVD). Other diseases that have persistent carriers and that may be of particular concern for some herds include anaplasmosis, Johne's Disease, and bovine leukosis virus (BLV).

Because both trich and BVD can cause severe losses, no herd should tolerate the import of cattle infected with these germs. However, for some of the other diseases that have persistently infected carriers, it is not always wise to insist on imports being free of the disease-causing germs.

For example, in some parts of the country where anaplasmosis is extremely common, it may be better

to purchase cattle that have been exposed to the organism previously and are themselves carriers. In contrast, if you live in an area with very low anaplasmosis risk, you need to protect the home herd by purchasing cattle that are not carriers.

For diseases such as Johne's and BLV, many herds already have carrier animals and insisting that purchased replacements be negative won't make much impact on the current herd's health status.

In summary

Work closely with your veterinarian to develop the best plan to manage the risks of bringing in new cattle to your herd. In many situations, it is helpful for your veterinarian to talk to the supplier's veterinarian so that the health status of your herd and the source herd can be compared and a testing

plan for trichomoniasis, BVD and other diseases spread by persistently infected cattle can be customized for your situation.

In addition, you should have a quarantine time when you can watch herd additions closely for at least 30 days. At the end of the quarantine period, consider exposing the herd additions to older cattle (possibly culls) so that purchased cattle are exposed to the home herd's germs and parasites while you can still watch them closely.



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