



Vet Call

► by **Bob Larson**, professor of production medicine, Kansas State University

Health considerations for show season

Show season is a fun time of year that provides a great opportunity to compare breeding strategies, to participate in friendly competition with other producers and to participate in a family activity. However, it is important to remember that moving cattle to and from fairs and shows poses risk for introducing disease-causing agents into both the show cattle and the herd at home.

Protect your cattle

While at the fair, help protect your cattle and the cattle of other exhibitors by maintaining a high level of sanitation in bedding and feeding areas and by immediately isolating any cattle that show signs of illness or that abort.

Once you get home, it is recommended cattle be isolated from the home herd for at least 30 days. If the exhibited cattle show signs of illness during the isolation period, the isolation should be extended. The cattle should be healthy for at least 30 days before being allowed to have contact with the home herd.

You should work with your veterinarian to determine what booster vaccines should be given to cattle that will be exhibited. Vaccines that protect against

respiratory disease and abortion should be considered. But remember, we don't have vaccines for everything that can cause disease; and other strategies such as reducing stress, ensuring adequate nutrition and

maintaining sanitation are necessary to reduce the risk of commingling cattle from many herds.

Pregnant cattle that are taken to exhibitions have the additional risk of aborting due to exposure to new disease agents. The risk of exposure to viruses that can cause both respiratory disease and abortion, such as infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) and bovine viral diarrhea (BVD), and bacteria that cause abortion, such as

leptospirosis (lepto), should be considered fairly high whenever cattle from many different farms and ranches are brought

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together. Cattle that are stressed, dehydrated or immunosuppressed in any way are at even greater risk.

One important risk to consider when exhibiting cattle is the possibility of your cattle — particularly any pregnant cattle — coming into contact with an animal that is persistently infected (PI) with BVD virus. Cattle that are persistently infected with BVD secrete extremely high amounts of virus throughout their life. Cattle that do not have good immune protection against a strain of BVD that they contact are at high risk of being infected with the virus.

Cattle without good immune protection will go through a period of immune suppression and anywhere from mild to severe disease following BVD exposure.

Pregnant animals can abort when exposed to BVD virus. If the fetus is not aborted, it can become persistently infected with the virus and serve as a constant source of the virus in the home herd once it is born several months later.

Because of the ability of this virus to cause problems both immediately and many months after cattle return home, many exhibitions are implementing or considering a requirement that all show cattle be tested and found PI BVD-free — particularly if pregnant animals are present at the exhibition.

In addition to infectious diseases, heat stress and injuries are other concerns for exhibited cattle. Planning ahead to assure that cattle have access to plenty of water, shade and airflow is necessary to reduce the risk of heat stress (see page 98 of the June *Angus Journal*). Well-designed and maintained transport trailers and housing at the exhibition are necessary to reduce the risk of injury.

Attending fairs and exhibitions is very enjoyable and has many benefits to the participants. However, do not forget the risks that are taken any time cattle from many different herds are brought together, and plan ahead to minimize those risks for your ranch.

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► Cattle from many different herds are brought together during show season. Minimize disease risks by practicing proper sanitation and at-home management.