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*“Summertime Pneumonia Monitoring in Spring Calves”*

As we approach weaning season for spring born calves it is important to monitor their health and work to have a smooth transition in to and through the weaning process. K-State beef cattle veterinarians recently discussed the instances of summertime pneumonia seen more in calves around 70-150 days of age. We think about respiratory illness in the winter months, but can be caught off guard for cattle to have such cases in the summer. According to Veterinarian Bob Larson, “Signs of pneumonia in calves include rapid breathing, laying down and being reluctant to rise, and having a high temperature.”

Calves are more susceptible to sickness during this time because of their waning immunity. The immunity they get from their mothers through proteins in colostrum degrade over time. The host immunity of these calves has not caught up to the passive immunity received from the colostrum quite yet. Most calves are not in an environment of high exposure, but if newly weaned stockers are introduced, and have close contact to these weakened immunity calves, then this is where we can run in to problems with respiratory illness. We can also see this in our spring calving herds that have been turned out to summer pasture after 2-3 weeks. (Cino, et al. 2017)

When looking at summertime pneumonia cases, they are commonly viral cases. According to Dr. Lubbers, “About 1 in 5 herds will experience pre-weaning pneumonia, and within those herds up to 15% of the calves will be infected.” It is no guarantee they will not get sick, but vaccinating calves around three months of age can prevent respiratory disease. Prevention is key. Even in herds with active and diligent vaccination protocols, there can still be instances of illness depending on weather patterns and other environmental stressors. As such, it is important to continuously monitor cattle closely during times when they are at the most risk for illness and throughout their lifecycles. We want to ensure that we are maximizing the potential of our cattle and operations. To develop the most appropriate vaccination and disease treatment protocols specific to your operation be sure to consult your veterinarian.

Informational sources: Dr. Bob Larson, Dr. Brian Lubbers, and Dr. Brad White (K-State Beef Cattle Institute)

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.