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Finish Strong

Those two words are a common phrase used by athletic coaches and motivational speakers. There is even a "finish strong" website where you can buy wristbands with that saying on them. It probably won't help calves if they wear them, but as cattle producers, we need to make sure that our calves finish strong.

Some have already started the weaning process, but for others weaning and backgrounding is just getting started. There are several things you can do to make sure your calves finish the weaning season strong and are a valuable asset for the future feedlot.

There has been a marked increase in the premium that calf buyers are willing to pay for a preconditioned calf. Last year in Iowa, the premium on preconditioned heifers was \$10/cwt compared to a historical \$6/cwt while steers increased from \$2/cwt to \$6/cwt.

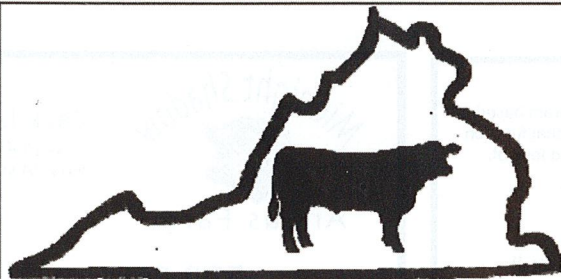
Typically, certified green tagged calves will receive an even larger premium than standard preconditioned calves. This recent increase in premiums is tied to the value of the calf. Buyers are more willing to pay additional premium to help assure the health of the calf when they are spending well over \$1000 per calf to begin with.

A good preconditioning program helps the calf get a good start, but producers need to make sure that they finish strong as well. There are many calves that start on a preconditioning program but don't complete it for one reason or another. Calves may have received the first round of vaccinations but harvest and other activities disrupted administration of the second dose. Other calves may have been vaccinated okay but may only be backgrounded a week or two instead of the full 30-45 days recommended to let the calf

recover from weaning. With the expected price for calves this year you don't want to miss out on the premiums or allow your calves to get sick while you are backgrounding them.

In addition to vaccinations, make sure your calves are dewormed at weaning and start them on an anticoccidial as soon as they start on feed. Nutrition should be adequate but try not to push the calves too hard. It is common during the fall to have wide swings in environmental conditions. These swings can cause intakes to fluctuate, and if the ration is too hot it can lead to respiratory disease, AIPs, acidosis and bloat.

Keep close tabs on your calves this fall and contact your veterinarian, beef extension specialist and/or nutritionist to help them be profitable and finish strong.



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