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## Fall health program

When implementing fall health programs for the cow herd, it is important to remember the goal of the program, the cow's reproductive status and the difference between short term needs and long term goals. Implementing a health program that can achieve its goals is more important than just using a product because it is convenient.

There are lots of vaccines available that can be given to pregnant cows under certain conditions, but there is always some risk to the fetus. Therefore, a good health program begins pre-breeding, when there is not a fetal risk. In the short term, fall vaccines can be utilized to protect the cow herd until a pre-breeding program is fully established. These can then be followed with a reasonable fall booster program targeted to meet the health needs of the cow herd.

There is always debate about using modified live vaccines (MLV) versus killed vaccines during pregnancy. MLV vaccines tend to give more complete immune response but can cause abortions. There are some MLV vaccines approved for pregnant cows as long as the cows have been vaccinated within the previous 12 months with the same vaccine. Killed vaccines are safer but may not provide the same degree of protection. Discuss the benefits and risks with your veterinarian to determine the best vaccine usage for your herd.

Fall is an ideal time to give leptospires vaccines to cows. Most pre-breeding vaccines include a 5 way leptospires but duration of immunity is limited. Leptospires can cause mid to late term abortions in cows so fall is the perfect time to provide additional immunity. Operations that incorporate some degree of confinement in winter should seriously consider a leptospires booster. Cows wintering on pasture or stalk fields are less at risk but may benefit from additional protection.

Scours vaccines can be given in the fall but

may need to be boosted in the spring. Sixteen weeks is the longest time that you can expect a scours vaccine to still have an impact on colostrum quality. The best window for colostrum protection is 2-12 weeks. Herds with major scours problems may benefit from delaying vaccination a couple of months and herds that are still calving in April would benefit from a late winter vaccination.

Cows should be treated for parasites in the fall. Cows do not need to be impacted by intestinal worms in the winter when feed resources are reduced. Additionally, incorporating a product that provides protection against lice is important. Remember to treat

all cows for lice, otherwise once the immediate effect wears off, the untreated cow will spread lice to the rest of the herd. Generally, using fecal exams in the fall to determine need for deworming may not reveal true level of parasite burdens. Many adult worms in cows either enter an inhibited stage or stop producing a high quantity of eggs during the colder months.

As always, consult with your veterinarian to develop a herd health program that meets your needs.

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