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Heifer health is key when planning for herd expansion

2014 was a tremendous year for producers across Iowa as a bumper corn crop and high cattle prices helped improve profitability. Now is good time to start planning for increased herd expansion as cattle farmers can look forward to continued high prices for the next several years.

Selecting quality heifers starts with proper nutrition prior to calving. There is increasing evidence that nutrition in-utero affects fertility of females in the future.

The impact of this fetal programming is just beginning to be understood and may impact other important features besides reproduction, such as the immune system. Making sure your pregnant cows are receiv-

ing proper nutrition now will be crucial to setting your future replacement heifers up for a productive life time.

The next step to ensuring quality heifers happens during calving season.

An uneventful calving is key to having a healthy heifer. Careful observation of calving females will identify any calving difficulties and early intervention will increase the chance of having a healthy calf born.

Additionally, make sure that your future replacement heifers get adequate colostrum within the first 12 hours of life. Heifers that get sick early in life will have a hard time keeping up with their herd mates and will probably not make the cut when you select

your heifers to retain.

During the grazing season, make sure calves stay healthy and watch for pinkeye, pneumonia or foot rot that could derail a promising heifer's future.

Finally, vaccinate calves at 3 months of age and again prior to weaning to set your heifers up for a disease-free weaning period and the potential to become a productive female in your herd.

Proper planning now can help ensure promising returns not only this year but beyond.

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Friends of the Industry Boosters' sponsorship allows county cattlemen's associations, companies and individuals to support the Iowa cattle industry - beyond the basic membership level.

Booster funds will be used to support these initiatives:

- Support the lobbying efforts of the Iowa Cattlemen's Association at the state legislature
- We will support legal and legislative fees for environmental needs or issues with the DNR and EPA.
- Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers - helps Iowa's rural communities grow, one farmer at a time.

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