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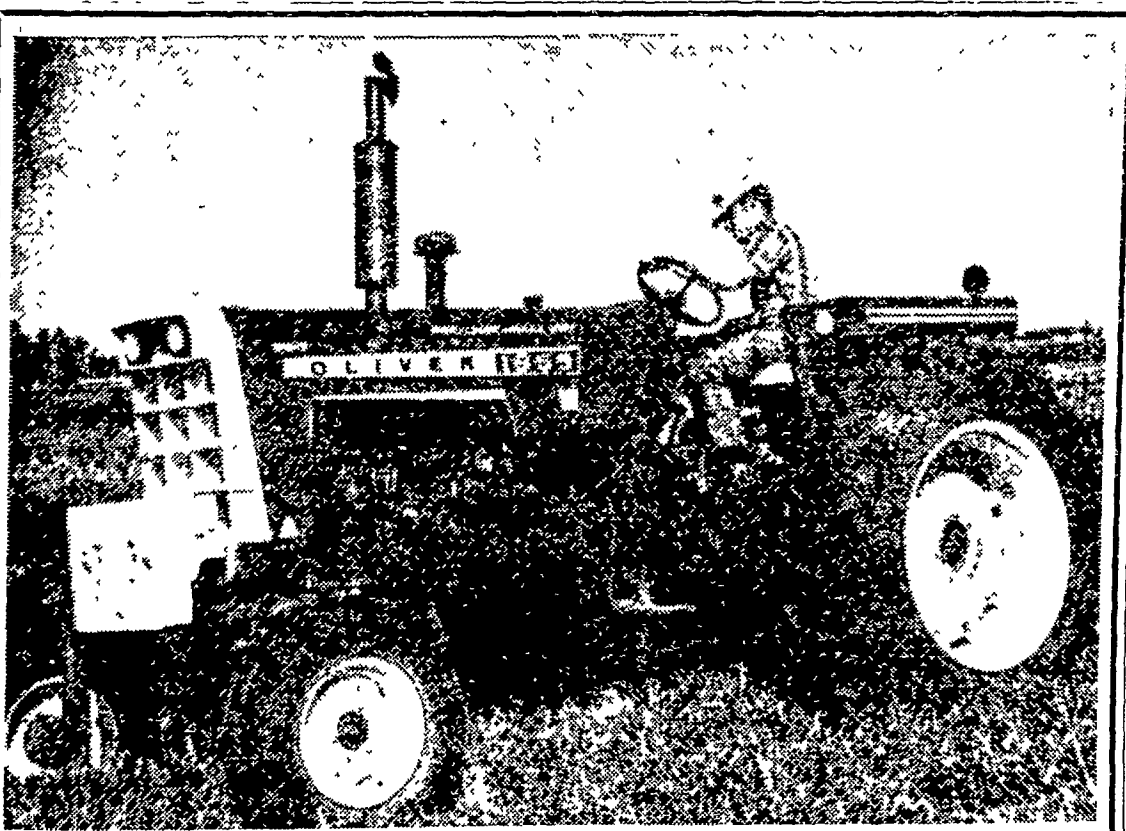
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Buyers apparently paid \$1.00 to \$1.50 a hundredweight premium for pre-conditioning treatments given 1653 calves auctioned Oct. 14 at the Fredericksburg Feeder Calf Sale Inc.

All calves offered by the Fredericksburg Feeder Calf Association were vaccinated two weeks to a month before the sale to protect against bovine rhinotracheitis (rednose), bovine virus diarrhea and parainfluenza 3 (IBR-BVD-PI-3). All also were treated with Ruelene to control cattle grubs.

Those treatments were in addition to vaccination against blackleg and malignant edema, a treatment that has been required for all calves sold in Association sales in Virginia for several years.

The offering was billed as a "trial to see whether buyers would pay enough at auction to cover producer costs in providing such treatment and whether the treatments actually would help buyers start the cattle on feed with less sickness, death loss, and difficulty.

Calves sold through the ring included 1,007 steers that averaged 491 pounds and brought an average of \$36.47 per hundred and 646 heifers that weighed 444 pounds each on average and brought \$29.84 a hundred. Across the board, the 1,653 calves averaged 474 pounds and brought an average of \$34.02. Total revenue was \$266,571.12 for the 1,653 head.

These figures ranked highest of the 10 Virginia Beef Cattle Association sales held in the same week "without question," according to Martin State, Harrisonburg, executive secretary of the Association. They also placed Fredericksburg prices in the "top five per cent" of the feeder calf sales held in the state this fall, added K. C. Williamson, extension specialist in beef cattle marketing at Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

In a direct comparison, the Fredericksburg prices were \$1 to \$2 higher than those paid at a sale held at Richmond that same evening (Oct. 14) which offered Association cattle that had been similarly graded for uniformity but had not been treated for IBR-BVD-PI-3 or given the Ruelene treatment for grubs. In this sale which attracted many of the same buyers, 670 steers averaging 437 pounds brought an average of \$34.08, actually \$2.39 less per hundredweight than was paid for the steers at Fredericksburg. A total of 460 heifers averaging 382 pounds at the Richmond sale brought \$28.89 on average compared to the average heifer price of \$29.84 at Fredericksburg, a \$95 difference. The average price for all cattle at Richmond was \$32.98 per hundred compared to the \$34.02 figure at Fredericksburg.

Fredericksburg results also bettered those at a sale at Petersburg on the following day, Oct. 15, where a high percentage of calves had received similar treatment but where the treated calves were sold in the same ring with calves for which treatment could not be certified.

This apparently tempered buyer enthusiasm for the mixed pens. However, buyers did bid higher for the steers at Petersburg than they did for the untreated steers at Richmond. The steers, 26 of them averaging 477 pounds, brought an average of \$36 per hundred. And 317 heifers averaging 452 pounds brought \$28.80. Overall average price for all cattle at Petersburg was \$33.02 per hun-

died compared to \$32.98 at Richmond and \$34.08 at Fredericksburg.

It appears that you're going to have to be able to guarantee that all cattle in a pen have been treated uniformly with the same shots if you're going to get the full value of the treatment in the auction ring," said Glen Hess, agricultural representative of The Dow Chemical Company who worked with cattlemen at both Fredericksburg and Petersburg to set up the pre-conditioning trials. "That seems to be the lesson we learned at Petersburg."

Several of the 28 buyers at Fredericksburg said they were willing to pay \$1.00 to \$1.50 a hundredweight extra for calves that had been pre-treated against shipping fever disorders and to control grubs and were bidding accordingly.

One of them was the sale's largest buyer, James E. Quesenberry of Stewartstown, Pa., who said, "I'm bidding a good \$1.00 to \$1.50 a hundred higher because of the treatment these calves have received. I think it's worth a lot for the calves to have the shots before shipping, when they need them. And it saves me having to give them the same shots when I get them home."

By buying treated calves, Quesenberry is striving to avoid the kind of troubles he got into two years ago when he bought 350 calves that had not been treated. "I lost eight head and doctored 50 more for six weeks," he said. "It cost me \$1,000 cash. But worse, the cattle never did do as well as they should have. It cost me much more in pounds of gain lost due to sickness."

Ken Binkley, who feeds about 400 head a year at Lancaster, Pa., was in agreement. "Last year I got cattle that had pre-conditioning treatment," he said, "and they started real well. I'd rather pay \$1.00 to \$1.50 a hundred extra anytime for cattle that have been treated before shipment."

Edward S. Taylor, president of the Fredericksburg Feeder Calf Association, said most of the 62 producers who participated in the pre-conditioning trial and sold calves at the sale were very pleased with results.

For the trial this year, vaccines and grubicide were donated by The Dow Chemical Company. If producers continue the program on their own, Taylor said, the estimated cost will be \$1.00 to \$1.30 a head for the materials. At this rate, growers hope to get back about \$3.00 for each \$1.00 invested.



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