

Vaccinating Dairy Cattle

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A few years ago about this time of the year a young hard-working client, Mark, had a dairy herd with a variety of vaccination needs. As with most herds, Mark's cows needed immunity against BVD, IBR, BRSV, P13 and Lepto. In addition Mark's cattle had experienced a Salmonella outbreak and he had mastitis. Blackleg had been a problem historically on this farm. The question arose as how to best vaccinate Mark's herd.

Mark is a real go-getter. Right now it is maple sugar season in Somerset County. Mark's family taps about 3,000 trees. Mark's herd of cows is milked three times a day with Mark occasionally milking both the evening and morning shifts. The ground is drying out now and the manure storage needs emptied, chisel plowing needs done, and it wouldn't be right if anybody else would sow small grains before Mark had cleaned and put the grain drill away.

It was against this setting that I approached Mark about vaccinating calves at two different times, vaccinating cows twice during the dry period, once shortly after calving and again before breeding, and boosting with Lepto after the diagnosis of pregnancy was made.

When I explained these needs to Mark, he got real serious, "Doc, what are you talking about? When am I going to get all this done? All I'm going to get done is vaccinating cows."

I tried to reason with Mark, but I realized his mind was more on the roller harrow. Don the farm employee was taking to the field and not interested in the vaccination program. I explained there was a need to spread out the vaccination program so we could maximize immunity and reduce stress on the cattle.

"Why can't we just give all these at one time?" Mark asked almost ignoring all I had said. Now Mark had a smile on his face, I knew he was listening.

"And I guess you want it just once in her life?" I added in jest.

"Yea, and I want it to be in a pill; I don't like those shots," said Mark.

Mark's dilemma about vaccinating cows is typical of many cattle owners, how to get the best immunity with the fewest times through the chute.

What to vaccinate against varies from farm to farm, as does the way cattle are managed. Vaccination programs should be tailored for each farm depending on the immunological needs, handling facilities and management regimen of the farm. One vaccination program doesn't fit all.

What diseases should you consider vaccinating against?

Any vaccination program should be designed to protect against the most threatening of diseases first with the less important diseases considered last. BVD (Bovine Virus Diarrhea) can put a person out of business. We need to consider it first. Warts probably won't cause a farm auction, so I wouldn't worry too much about wart vaccine.

1. BVD can cause catastrophic loss of life in the milking herd as well as the insidious loss of life through early em-

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Dr. Jaquette is a graduate of North Carolina State University and has been with Consolidated Nutrition since 1987. He was instrumental in the research and development of the Protek, Aminotek, AIM and the new UltraBALANCE 2000 dairy feed product lines. Dr. Jaquette has relocated to the Camp Hill market area and is working closely with Consolidate Nutrition dealers and District Managers to better serve the local dairy industry.

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