



# GRASSROOTS NEWS & VIEWS

Photo Credit—Sonja Bloom



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# DECEMBER 2018

## Director's Note - Steve Yule

*Happy Holidays from Y2 Cattle Company!*

It has been a very trying year for industry in Alberta. Oil and Agriculture very much drive our economy and when one starts to falter, the trickledown effect comes very fast to other sectors. Whether obstacles are politically driven, weather patterns or market fluctuations, it is time to have a plan.

Since controlling markets and weather is out of our hands, we strive to make a plan as best we can to accommodate the "what if's". This plan is tweaked and revived throughout the year as the end goal seems to be a moving target we are shooting for.

We started in the spring with a drought through calving in May, moving cattle rapidly throughout fields as grazing would allow. The plan was to start packaging some cows to market early to accommodate the decline in grazing capacity. Early July, the spotty rains brought relief. At the home place we were able to maneuver cows between dryland and irrigated pasture while keeping a much closer eye on our management program to ensure we had enough carryover to go into winter and into next spring.

The next part of the plan started in June for winter feeding programs. The decision for us is always complex. First, we ask a few questions such as; how many head are we going to feed throughout the winter months and for how long? Are we going to keep our calves into the spring? What quality of feed are we going to grow that produces while remaining

cost effective? Thankfully, being an active member of the Foothills Forage and Grazing Association, my eyes have been opened to how the positive effects of good grazing management can impact all these decisions.

Between grazing corn, greenfeed, hay and straw we have a plan that seems to work and give some flexibility to the marketing decisions. We have made a couple changes to the locations for corn grazing which made cattle movement logistics a lot smoother and less labor intensive. Less equipment use and labor are always part of the goal at our place. With the high cost and shortage of feed, testing feed quality and coming up with the right balances of nutrition is going to become real important again this year.

Our goal is to have time to enjoy our family, friends and this rural lifestyle we have grown up with. We chase our kids from rink to rink all hockey season, and cattle shows all summer. Having a plan in the business allows us to be able to enjoy all of what we consider the best things in life....family and friends. We hope to share some Christmas cheer on December 14 in High River with members and friends!

Steve Yule

*Here we see 370 cow/calf pairs grazing on a 25 acre corn field*



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# Some Dos and Don'ts When Treating Cattle in Cold Weather



Photo from original article

Inclement weather creates challenges when processing cattle, whether preg-checking, vaccinating or weaning in the fall, or giving cows pre-calving vaccinations, or delousing treatments in midwinter.

Dr. Eric Laporte of Nagel and Company Veterinary Services, Cow-Calf Health Management Solutions in Crossfield, Alta., says one of the main challenges in cold weather is keeping your vaccines from freezing.

Freezing inactivates modified-live vaccines so they lose their potency, and freezing the adjuvants in killed vaccines may create certain compounds that could actually make the animals sick. So there is a need to keep vaccines at a safe temperature when working cattle.

Many people put a jar of warm water in the box or cooler with the vaccines and syringes to keep the temperature above freezing. "A friend told me about using containers that windshield-washer antifreeze fluid comes in. They come in a box

of four, so you can have four of those bottles that you partially fill with hot water. The All-flex multi-dose syringe guns fit in there perfectly; this can keep the vaccine in the syringes from getting too cold," says Laporte.

Others use heat lamps or electric blankets, but this may create spots that are too warm. Jugs of hot water keep the interior of the cooler warm for quite a while and when they eventually cool down you just freshen the hot water.

"You could put a heating blanket underneath the cooler to keep the water warmer and the heat won't be directly on the gun," he says. If it gets too warm, the heat can start to kill the modified live virus.

You also need a container for your extra vaccine, a place where it can remain cool but not in danger of freezing.

In cold weather, needles freeze up too, so syringes need to be protected when not in use. The body heat of the animal usually thaws a frozen needle but it may take a second or two, and the plug of frozen vaccine won't be viable if it was frozen for very long.

In some instances, it may be best to thaw the needle first and push out a bit to ensure you have fresh vaccine in the needle, or just change needles.

"When vaccinating, we also don't want to forget to change to a new, clean needle every time we refill the

syringes," says Laporte.

It's also important not to mix up more modified live vaccine than you will use within the next hour.

When mixing vaccines, you don't have to shake them aggressively. "You can just roll them between your hands to mix them," he adds.

Cold temperatures create a whole other set of challenges for pour-on dewormers or delousing products.

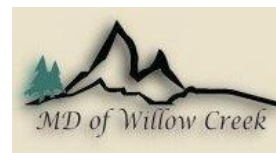
"The product will generally not be harmed by the cold, and some of them contain alcohol which will keep it from freezing. The product in suspension may gel, however, which can make it difficult to run through the tubing for application onto the animal. If it forms a gel, the product is fine, but it may plug the tube when trying to apply it."

When it is very cold the product may gel as it is applied to the hair, and that can affect how well it works. That, says Laporte, may be a sign that you would be better off to wait for a warmer day to treat. "If it stays in gel form for a while on the hair it might not be effective."

"You also don't want to apply these products to a wet animal. If cattle have a lot of snow or ice on their backs, take time to scrape that off, using something like a curry comb, then make sure you pour the product as close to the skin as possible. Then follow the directions and try to apply

(Continued on page 4)

## Thank you for your support!







# CHRISTMAS PARTY

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□ ————— □  
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(Continued from page 2)

a long line from poll to tail head, and not just a puddle in the middle of the back.”

If there is a lot of snow on the top rail of your running chute it would be wise to knock it off before you start to put the cattle through. Also, watch for ice on the walkway and the end of the squeeze chute. Some gravel or sand may be needed to ensure safe footing, particularly with concrete, which gets slippery in cold weather.

Frozen manure left in the chute can have some sharp edges until the cattle break it down, but the first few animals through may suffer a cut to their feet or legs, leaving them open to foot rot.

“We sometimes see injuries and lameness,” says Laporte. “Manure buildup that freezes may also impair movement of gates that are low to the ground.”

“I had an experience with a gate that was supposed to latch over a crossbar at the bottom. There was so much manure accumulation down there that it couldn’t close properly and a wild heifer put her nose down and popped the gate open. I was inside the chute palpating the heifer in front of her and I was stuck between the two animals. She was determined to come on through, to get out of there!”

“I usually bring a few chains and if there is a side panel on the chute that opens I may chain it shut. The last thing I want is for it to open at an inopportune moment. If I am suspicious of the latch I make sure we have safety chains or pins. When cold, metal tends to be more brittle and some things may break,” he says.

He also suggests working a hydraulic chute beforehand to warm it up, same with the headcatch.

“Lighter grade oils can be used during cold weather. Here in Alberta it’s not uncommon to have cold weather when we are running cattle through, and it helps to have lighter

oil and a magnetic heater to go on the side of the hydraulic tank to keep the oil warm. If the oil is cold it slows the chute and it won’t operate efficiently,” he says.

He says it pays to be patient when working cattle in cold weather to avoid stressing them.

“If you start overcrowding them, they might get sweaty from stress and exertion and then chill when they go back to their pens or pastures. This may set them up for respiratory disease. Allow them adequate room and work more slowly. If you are bringing them in from a field that has hills and slopes, footing may be slippery so you don’t want them hurrying and falling down.”

It also pays to do your sorting ahead of time before you run them through the chute. “Some vets will charge extra while they are sitting there waiting for you to sort cows, so it’s a good idea any time of year to have that done already,” he says.

“If cattle balk and don’t want to move, it may be because of ice and snow or reflection off something that has them worried. We talk about minimizing use of electric prods, yet at the same time I don’t think a person should be standing there striking the animal repeatedly with a cane. If you are beating animals with a plastic cane on their cold backs, it would be more humane to just give them a little snap with the prod to encourage them to move forward. If we are just using a cane or a paddle we still need to use it judiciously,” he says.

If cattle refuse to move forward, take a closer look at why they are balking. “In winter the sun angle is different. There may be a reflection off something they haven’t experienced before, or it may be bright everywhere but dark inside the snake leading to the chute, or the crowding tub. Don’t overload the crowding tub.”

#### **Human comfort**

When working for a long time on

a cold day, Laporte says it’s nice to have some heat near the working chute. “I use a 20-pound propane tank with a heater mounted on top. I don’t advise using this for keeping vaccines warm, but it could be a source of heat for the people working at the chute, if they need a short break to warm their hands. If people are comfortable and not miserable they tend to take less shortcuts and do a better job. It also raises their spirits if someone has supplied donuts and hot coffee. Don’t forget to feed the volunteers!” says Laporte.

You may need extra lighting as well. “If it gets to be 5 o’clock and it’s already dark before you finish the last bunch and you can’t see what you are doing, it’s wise to have a generator and some extra fuel and some lights. This is when you are getting tired and just want to get done and if you can’t see very well you are not going to do a very good job.” You might make some mistakes and mix the wrong vaccines or fill the wrong syringes.

“We always assume the cattle will move forward but if it’s dark you may need a light at the back of the chute pointing forward so they can see where they are going, even in the snake if it’s dark in there and they don’t want to move ahead.”

“I always carry a battery-powered light and a head lamp because you never know what you might experience. Canadian Tire sells a really nice head lamp that’s very bright. It goes through batteries a little faster, but I’d rather carry extra batteries and have bright light than try to do things in the dark,” he says.

*Heather Smith Thomas—Canadian Cattleman*

[https://  
www.canadiancattlemen.ca/2017/11/01/  
some-dos-and-donts-when-treating-  
cattle-in-cold-weather/](https://www.canadiancattlemen.ca/2017/11/01/some-dos-and-donts-when-treating-cattle-in-cold-weather/)

# Don't Neglect the Boys When Their Work is Done



Photo: Sonja Bloom

The bulls have finished their work by this time of year, and once removed from the cow herd they run the risk of being neglected until they are needed again.

That's a mistake because bulls are an investment for the role they play in future production and profitability.

"One of the things that we tend to see, and you see it across Alberta and Saskatchewan, is that ... when the breeding season is over they're kind of placed aside. They're difficult to handle, often they're put together with a group of bulls," said Dr. Colin Palmer, associate professor in large animal clinical sciences at the University of Saskatchewan's Western College of Veterinary Medicine.

"That concerns me a bit because bulls can't be forgotten about in the off season. They still need to have the same mineral program that you would continue through the year with."

Palmer said it's important to ensure that bulls receive the necessary minerals, both micro and macro, to maintain their health over winter. Sufficient calcium, phosphorus and magnesium, as well as good energy and protein levels in feed, are a must. Trace minerals, including zinc and copper, which are deficient in many regions of the Prairies, must also figure into nutrient supplies.

Winter naturally brings temperature challenges for bulls as

well. Palmer said in his experience with research involving community pastures, he sometimes sees a high percentage of bulls fail their breeding soundness evaluations.

"There was a tendency that those bulls were wintered in what we call rough situations, very much like out on the open prairie," he said.

Bulls that must walk long distances to water in winter run a higher risk of freezing their scrotums. Scrotal frostbite lesions can also result if sufficient bedding isn't provided for all bulls in the group.

Bulls establish a pecking order, and dominant animals can prevent others from using bedded areas if bedding is insufficient. Similarly, if supplemental feed is provided, producers need to make sure dominant bulls aren't preventing others from getting enough feed.

"(It's a case of) producers kind of paying attention to what you're feeding," Palmer said.

"Is it really what you're feeding? Is it available to each and every one of those bulls? Can they get it? Do you think that those bulls are consuming enough per head, or is there one bull that's getting twice as much feed and the other ones are taking a lesser amount?"

To avoid too much fighting among bulls, Palmer recommended moving all bulls to a new pen when adding any animals to the mix. That avoids the territoriality that might have developed.

"Whenever I can, if I need to add a bull to a group, I add the bull into a new pen and I bring his cohorts in and that seems to distribute some of the fighting and the scrapping that goes on," Palmer said.

"So that's one trick, and

I've had many producers agree with that as a good idea."

Palmer has come across anecdotal information about the best number of bulls to include in a pasture. If a large number are involved, such as bulls for community pastures, 30 is the maximum.

Pasture managers have suggested that bulls' ability to recognize other animals is limited to about that number. More than that and they feel the need to fight with animals they see as newcomers.

"Seems like the bull's mental capacity was to know 29 other colleagues," Palmer said, noting he thought it was funny when he heard it the first time but the concept has been borne out according to pasture managers.

Bulls should go into the breeding season with a body condition score of three or four on a five-point scale. Sufficient care over winter is needed for them to achieve that, said Palmer.

"One of the lines that I like is, I say, 'the bull should have the physique of a well-conditioned athlete, like a football player or a hockey player that's ready to go, so he's been working out, training.'"

"When I use that term around producers or use it in literature, people seem to really get that, to think about that bull as an athlete. He is expected to perform and do his breeding job over a 60-day period. Sometimes shorter, and many times a little bit longer than that, but still, out of a whole year that's a pretty tight period of time."

Barb Glen—*The Western Producer*  
<https://www.producer.com/2018/11/dont-neglect-the-boys-when-their-work-is-done/>



# Livestock Medication Rules Take Effect Dec 1

A large number of Alberta livestock producers do not have a regular veterinarian, and that could cause them problems later if they need medications or treatments.

Under new federal antibiotic-dispensing rules that take effect Dec. 1, producers will need to have a valid veterinary-client relationship. Common over-the-counter antibiotics will now require a veterinary prescription and may be difficult to obtain without a vet-client agreement. These rules also apply to feed mills preparing medicated feeds.

“With these rule changes, no matter where you are in Canada, over-the-counter sales of medically important antibiotics are going to stop at the end of this month. Starting Dec. 1, you will need a veterinary prescription to buy medically important antibiotics for livestock,” said Reynold Bergen of the Beef Cattle Research Council.

Dispensing rules vary among the provinces as to who may provide antibiotics, he said in a webinar Nov. 14.

All medically important antimicrobials currently used in feed, water, boluses or injectables will be moving to Health Canada’s prescription drug list (PDL).

Dewormers and ionophores are not used to treat infections in humans so they will still be available over the retail counter. These changes affect commercial mills preparing feed mixes, said Melissa Dumont, executive director of the Animal Nutrition Association of Canada. The feed industry is regulated under the

federal Feeds Act and Health of Animals Act with oversight from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, which inspects mills at least once a year.

Most in-feed antimicrobials were available over the counter but next month commercial feed mills will require a veterinarian’s prescription before they can manufacture the products.

Provincial rules vary for producers who mix their own feeds. A prescription is still required but Dumont advises producers to check with local veterinarians and feed mills about the new rules.

“Make sure you are aware. Have a conversation with your veterinarian or have a conversation with your feed mill or nutritionist to make sure if you need products you know exactly where to access them,” she said.

In addition, mills will not be allowed to carry medicated feed in inventory. Retail outlets are no longer allowed to floor stock any of these products.

Feeds containing off label medications, such as those approved for another species or at a higher than recommended dosage, require a veterinary prescription before feed can be manufactured and no inventory stocking is allowed.

Health Canada and the CFIA have certain requirements about what must be on feed prescriptions and because many veterinarians have never written these prescriptions in the past, information could be missing. This could hold up filling an order.

Producers are advised to know which antibiotics are being used on their farms. If medicated feed is used, they should know what

*(Continued on page 8)*

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(Continued from page 6)

is in it and whether it came from a retail outlet or a feed mill.

Producers should be aware of where commercial feed mills are located and who can sell products. ANAC plans to have a public list on its website by Dec. 1 at [www.anac.org](http://www.anac.org).

Producers must also have a valid veterinary-client-patient relationship so access to products is possible, said veterinarian Cody Creelman, who practices in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

For producers currently using a veterinarian, the relationship likely exists.

"If you are not working with a vet clinic, that is where things are going to be a bit difficult," he said.

"In Alberta, about 40 percent of producers do not have a working relationship with a veterinarian," he said.

This does not likely represent the majority of the livestock population, however.

There are circumstances where people managed without a vet and were able to buy medications over the counter or shared with others.

Veterinarians must be in compliance with the new rules and could get audited by their professional association.

The practitioner needs supporting evidence and medical records to show a relationship exists to write a prescription and show products have been dispensed appropriately.

Setting up with a veterinarian is similar to visiting a family physician. The vet documents the herd health history and from there the vet has the ability to decide whether a prescription is appropriate. The producer is still allowed to administer treatments.

Creelman said this creates a greater workload for veterinarians and they want to streamline the process for

everyone through this transition period.

Creelman warned there may be price increases.

Farm stores possessed buying power because they were buying in volume and could get the drugs cheaper. A single vet lacks that ability.

Producers may have to pay more for a product, but they may also see an improvement in the bottom line with more vet visits providing treatments and education.

Access to products and vets varies by province.

Producers can fill prescriptions at any clinic or pharmacy they want in Alberta and Saskatchewan but the Ontario Veterinary Association decided the medications must be purchased from the prescribing practitioner except in the case of emergency.

"One of the biggest challenges will be being proactive. It has been relatively easy for people to fall into the 'go out and purchase it when I need it' mentality without any planning or proaction on their part," he said.

Producers need to form the relationship now so everything is prepared before they need a product for a serious situation.

"There is going to need to be some planning to make sure everything goes smoothly," he said.

*Barbara Duckworth—The Western Producer*

<https://www.producer.com/2018/11/livestock-medication-rules-take-effect-dec-1/>

## FFGA MISSION & VISION STATEMENTS

**Mission:** Assisting producers in profitably improving their forages and regenerating their soils through innovation and education.

**Vision:** We envision a global community that respects and values profitable forage production and healthy soils as our legacy for future generations.

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