



# GET MORE FROM YOUR VACCINES

Vaccine management cornerstones for farm and feedlot

Hands up if you've ever had an animated conversation about the value of vaccines.

Ever wondered why costs are what they are or what the newest technology will offer? Or, as a seller, how best to explain why these products are worth it?

At some point nearly every producer, vet or animal health professional has had this discussion. While they may disagree on some things, one thing both buyer and seller can agree on is that once you've bought the product, don't waste it with poor handling.

Dr. Roy Lewis has been a practicing vet for many years. Now with Merck's technical services, he's picked key things for producers to focus on to get full value from vaccines.

**Protect the product.** You've spent good money on product so make sure it's protected, says Lewis. Vaccines, especially modified live virus products, can't be frozen and or heated, and they should be protected from ultraviolet light. Lewis recalls producers who came to pick up vaccines prepared with an insulated container. "We hear problems of vaccine efficacy," he says, "but many times it is a matter of how they have been handled between the time they were bought and when they administered to the animal."

**Mix small batches.** Only rehydrate the amount of product you will use within an hour. Don't mix up large batches ahead. Once rehydrated, products only have a shelf life of a few hours.

**Watch disinfectants.** Modified live vaccines are fragile. If you disinfect with alcohol between uses this can render the vaccine useless.

**Don't mix products.** Label syringes and keep vaccines apart. For example, blackleg vaccine contains formalin. If you accidentally fill that same syringe with a modified live virus vaccine, a small amount of formalin will destroy all the vaccine in the syringe.

**Double check volumes.** Overdosing wastes product and under dosing will not produce the desired effect.

**Spread out injections.** Producers have gotten the message of injecting subcutaneous and in the neck, says Lewis. But they need to make sure they spread the vaccine out. In many



Keeping vaccine out of sunlight can help prolong its effectiveness.

cases they find a sweet spot and inject vaccines too close to one another. That's the same as mixing product in the syringe. Keep injections about a hand's breadth apart and have a consistent pattern, like high then low. If you have the manpower, inject in opposite sides of the animal.

## KEEP CURRENT

Some of the most powerful technology in beef production today comes as vaccines. It's a field moving quickly so it pays to ask your veterinarian about the latest products and information, says Lewis.

Don't assume that what you did last year is still the best option today. Ask each year what will work and know clearly why you are using it. Just another way to get full value from your vaccine investment.