

Mastering Calf Management: Guiding the Journey from Birth to Profit

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Introduction:

In the realm of beef cattle, the art of calf management is a symphony that spans from birth to profit. With meticulous care and strategic practices, each calf is nurtured to thrive, contributing to the success of the industry.

1. From Birth to the Bank: Ensuring Success

➔ In the expansive world of beef cattle management, the journey of calf management orchestrates a symphony that commences from birth and crescendos into profitable outcomes. This artistry involves meticulous care and strategic practices that collectively nurture each calf, contributing to the industry's triumph.

➔ Foundational Management: At the heart of beef cattle management lies the crucial objective of ensuring successful calf weaning and efficient rebreeding among cows. This cornerstone is pivotal for sustaining the industry's growth.

➔ Birth with Vigor: Commencing the

process with a live birth ensures that the calf enters the realm of existence with robust vitality, forming the basis for a healthy lifecycle.

➔ Healthful Vigilance: A nurturing approach continues by maintaining calf health throughout their growth until the weaning phase. Creating an environment conducive to their well-being helps mitigate stress and foster optimal development.

➔ Strategic Marketing: As the journey unfolds, the importance of maximizing calf value becomes evident. Employing well-planned marketing strategies ensures that each calf's potential is harnessed to achieve profitable outcomes.

2. Keys to Profitable Production of Calves

Within this symphony of calf management, several key notes contribute to the harmonious production of profitable calves.

➔ Forage Fortitude: Providing an adequate forage foundation forms a bulwark against inadequate nutrition

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stemming from overgrazing and subpar stocking rates.

- ➔ **Calving Prudence:** Ensuring careful calving practices includes addressing dystocia, a condition that can impede the calving process, and providing specialized spaces to accommodate the unique needs of birthing cows.
- ➔ **Maternity Pasture and Clean Spaces:** The deployment of a dedicated maternity pasture, coupled with the use of clean calving sheds, sets the stage for optimal calving conditions, minimizing stress for both cows and calves.
- ➔ **Selective Assistance:** Striking a balance between providing assistance to calving cows and allowing natural processes to unfold minimizes stress levels and enhances the overall birthing experience.

3. Mastering Calf Management

This phase of the journey delves into the nuances of managing calves effectively, forming an integral part of the symphonic composition.

- ➔ **Calving Challenges:** Half of calf losses occur during the calving stage, particularly among heifers. Understanding and addressing these challenges is pivotal for successful management.

- ➔ **Size and Weight Significance:** The focus shifts from mere age to encompass size and weight as vital factors in calf management, recognizing their impact on health and development.

- ➔ **Easy-Calving Bulls:** The art of successful breeding involves selecting easy-calving bulls, contributing to smoother calving experiences for cows and reducing potential complications.

- ➔ **Immunization and Growth Enhancement:** Employing immunization programs like Vac 45 and utilizing growth promotants such as ralgro, synovex, and compudose play essential roles in fostering optimal calf growth.

4. Nurturing Calves through Feeding and Management

This phase of the symphony centers on nurturing and supporting calf growth through strategic feeding and management.

- ➔ **Orphan Care:** The art of managing orphans involves providing sustenance through whole milk, replacers, or combinations that include starters, ensuring their growth trajectory remains positive.
- ➔ **Weaning and Creep Feeding Strategies:** Embracing early weaning and implementing creep feeding strategies

allow for the controlled and optimal development of calves.

- ➔ **Special Attention for Heifers:** Recognizing the importance of replacement heifers, special care is extended to groom these future leaders of the herd, ensuring their robust growth and potential.

5. The Art of Calf Management Practices

In the grand symphony of calf management, a harmonious arrangement of comprehensive practices comes to the forefront. These practices, meticulously conducted, ensure the well-being and prosperous development of each calf, contributing to the overall harmony of the beef cattle industry.

- ➔ **Comprehensive Management:** This movement encapsulates a series of essential practices that collectively guide the course of calf development. The list includes identification, weaning, castration, vaccinations, immunization, dehorning, and implanting. Each practice plays a distinctive note in the melody of calf management, ensuring their health, safety, and potential are optimally nurtured.

6. Crafting Resilience: Pre-Conditioning as an Art Form

The artistry of calf management continues to unfold with a focus on crafting resilience in the face of upcoming challenges. This phase employs thoughtful strategies to prepare calves for transitions and stressors, ensuring they thrive amidst changing circumstances.

- ➔ **Minimized Excitement:** A prelude to the main act, pre-conditioning emphasizes a gentle and calm approach to minimize excitement among calves, priming them for the stages ahead.

- ➔ **Strategic Preparation:** The conductor of this movement includes preparatory steps such as dehorning and implementing early weaning. These measures anticipate challenges and provide a buffer against potential stressors.

- ➔ **Strategies in Harmony:** Employing strategies like creep feeding, vaccination, parasite control, and health certification establishes a rhythm that resonates with optimal results, enhancing the resilience of calves and fostering their robust development.

7. Dehorning, Castration, and Identification: Mastering Safety and Identity

In this intricate movement, the focal point shifts to the careful orchestration of

practices that ensure both the safety and distinct identity of each calf.

- ➔ **Delicate Dehorning:** The art of dehorning assumes center stage, vital for the well-being and safety of both animals and handlers. This practice involves the removal or prevention of horn growth, safeguarding against potential harm and ensuring a harmonious coexistence within the herd.
- ➔ **Cautious Castration:** A blend of gentleness and timing characterizes this note. The methods of non-invasive and invasive castration are practiced with care, promoting animal welfare while ensuring responsible herd management.
- ➔ **Paramount Restraint and Safety:** Throughout these practices, restraint and safety measures are meticulously followed. This ensures that the well-being of both animals and caregivers remains at the forefront, elevating the overall performance of this symphonic movement.

8. Animal Identification Systems: Marking Identity and Ownership

This movement introduces the concept of identity and ownership as pivotal components in the orchestration of calf management.

- ➔ **Diverse Identity Methods:** A rich array of practices for animal identification emerges, encompassing branding, ear tagging, ear notching, and tattooing. Each method contributes to a symphony of traceability and accountability, creating a coherent narrative of each calf's journey.
- ➔ **Branding's Dual Role:** Branding, whether through the application of hot iron or freeze branding, carries a dual role. It not only marks ownership but also enhances the meticulous management of cattle herds.
- ➔ **Practicality and Permanence:** The resonance of ear tagging lies in its practicality and traceability, while tattooing etches a permanent mark of identity onto the canvas of each calf.

9. Exploring Other Identity Methods

The symphony reaches its crescendo with an exploration of additional methods that contribute to the intricate web of identity in calf management.

- ➔ **Intriguing Identity Practices:** As the movement unfolds, diverse practices like horn branding, earmarking, wattles, and dewlaps emerge as distinctive melodies within the symphony of identification. Each practice weaves a unique thread into

the narrative of calf management, enriching the tapestry of their stories.

The symphony of calf management intricately interlaces science, care, and strategic orchestration. From the moment of birth to the pursuit of profit, each calf emerges as a canvas skillfully painted with the brushstrokes of expert knowledge and unwavering dedication. This harmonious blend of practices results in the creation of healthy, vibrant calves that harmonize with the overarching melody of a thriving and prosperous beef cattle industry.

