

4-H Market Steer Handbook:

Health Practices

A health program is important to a successful steer project. The easiest and cheapest way to control most diseases and parasites is by prevention. Clean sheds, lots, feed and water troughs are necessities in preventing disease and parasites.

Most common diseases can now be controlled by vaccination and sanitation. Vaccinations should be given according to label recommendations by an experienced person.

Most steers are purchased at weaning and are about 6 to 9 months old. Check with the producer to see what health practices, if any, have been performed on the steer. The steer should be vaccinated for Blackleg/Malignant Edema (7-way), Lepto (use 5-way vaccine) and IBRPI3 (nasal or injection form). If the steer has not been vaccinated for these diseases, have this done within the first two or three weeks after the steer is purchased.

In addition to the vaccinations, deworm the steer at the start of the feeding period. One deworming treatment will probably be enough, but there may be the need to deworm again two to three months later. Many commercial dewormers are available in paste, bolus, injectable or as a "pour-on."

Treat the steer for grubs during September and October. Grubs are worms found on an untreated animal's top line, under the skin. They damage the hide and harm the cattle, as well as marring their appearance. Grub treatments are available in either a liquid applied to the steer's back or an injectable form.

Implant the steer with a growth stimulant. The implant is a small pellet or pellets placed under the skin on the back of the ear. The implant will increase the average daily gain and is a recommended practice. Again, follow implant directions to administer correct doses.

Fly control is a must. During the fly season, control flies on steers by the use of dust, insecticide treated ear tags or routine spraying. Flies cause great discomfort to steers and will reduce their gain and general well being.

Another common problem with beef steers is scours. This is often caused by soured feed, feed too finely ground, too much protein or over-feeding of legume hays. This problem can often be solved by removing the probable cause and reducing the amount of feed fed per day.

Ask your parents, county agent, veterinarian or local cattle producers to assist you with our health program. Your local steer feeding project group may want to go together and purchase the needed health items to save time and money.

Exercise will help stimulate the steer's appetite, keep him walking more correctly on his feet and legs and prevent him from becoming overly fat. Calves should have an opportunity to exercise each day. One way of doing this is to locate the feed and water at opposite ends of the lot. In the winter, two hours per day of exercise is sufficient. During the summer, allow the calf the choice of being inside or out by leaving the gate open between the housing and exercise area. Provide exercise by walking and leading -don't run cattle.

Feet trouble can be prevented by keeping manure and dirt from packing between the animal's toes. The feet should be trimmed whenever they appear to affect the proper walking of the animal. Most calves need their feet trimmed at least twice a year.