

Slow Down

When administering vaccines, slow down and do it right.

Story by **T.S. GATZ**

There are never enough hours in the day for cattle producers. From sunup to sundown, cattlemen work to achieve maximum productivity and profit from their herds. Being in a hurry due to a full schedule is often the key reason many producers vaccinate cattle as quickly as possible — and, as a result, might fail to



get the most out of their vaccine investment.

“Everybody is always trying to do more in a set period of time than is possible,” explains Bill Epperson, Extension veterinarian at South Dakota State University (SDSU). “Producers have in their minds how long it should take to work cattle, including administering vaccinations, but they fail to consider cattle may balk or not work right. Then producers try to make up for lost time.”

Epperson encourages producers to administer vaccines according to beef quality assurance (BQA) guidelines during processing, even if pressed for time. He reminds producers never to administer injections into the hindquarters. Intramuscular (IM) and subcutaneous (sub-Q) injections should be administered in front of the shoulder, preferably in the tightened injection site zone — a hand’s width in front of

the industry’s previous zone (see illustration).

Producers are also advised to slow down and use the proper tenting method when administering sub-Q injections. And they should take the time to work cattle calmly.

“We have to remember that we’re dealing with a powerful product in the animal,” Epperson says. “Vaccines are going to work better in a nonstressed animal than in a stressed one. If you don’t take the time to properly administer the vaccine to a nonstressed animal, it doesn’t matter how good the vaccine is.”

Equipment check

Ron Torell, cattle producer and area livestock specialist at the University of Nevada, Reno, is another advocate of administering injections “in the zone,” and he says producers may need to make chute modifications to reach the neck area easily.

“Neck shots are tough to give,” Torell explains. “So you may need to modify the chute so the animal’s neck is exposed behind the chute.”

Torell says taking time to give a vaccination correctly will help both the animal and the vaccine respond as successfully as possible.

“If you’ll slow down, you’ll lower the stress on the cattle,” he says, adding that he processes his own cattle and understands the pressures of working cattle from daylight to dusk. “Anything you can do to lower the stress level of the cattle, you’re going to help the animal’s system respond better to the vaccines.”

Follow the label

Veterinarian Michael Moore, Novartis Animal Vaccines calls vaccines “an investment.” For maximum return, Moore advises producers to follow two important steps:

(1) Take time to follow all label directions; and

(2) Administer the vaccines correctly.

“Vaccines help animals fight off some of the most threatening disease challenges,” Moore says. “And, administering that vaccine correctly gives it the best chance to protect your animals and will give maximum return on your vaccine investment.”

Ron Gill, professor and Extension livestock specialist for the Texas Cooperative Extension Service, reminds producers that achieving maximum efficacy requires attention to details. Gill says that correct handling, storage and administration of vaccines all play important roles in protecting cattle from disease. He adds that, most often, a mindset change is necessary for producers to take extra time to administer vaccines.

“Most everyone’s in a hurry to get it done and get on to something different,” Gill says. “It just takes someone who’s committed to getting it done and done right.”



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