

Earn More, Perform Better

Research reveals preconditioned calves receive higher prices, perform better.

A recent Colorado State University study, conducted on behalf of Pfizer Animal Health, reveals that higher prices consistently go to calves enrolled in value-added health programs.

“A decade of research shows that calves preconditioned for the marketplace receive a premium,” notes Jon Seeger, managing veterinarian, Pfizer Animal Health Beef Veterinary Operations Team. “Based on the trend data from this study and others, buyers have become increasingly aware of the value in participating in programs like SelectVAC®.”

From 1995 to 2004, sale data was collected from more than 2.7 million calves sold through Superior Livestock Auction video auctions. The sale data was analyzed to compare the price paid for calves in valued-added health programs vs. the price paid for similar calves that were neither weaned nor vaccinated.

The analysis of 10 years of sale data demonstrated that calves in VAC 45 programs (the equivalent of Pfizer’s WeanVAC®) received premiums that averaged \$4.37 per hundredweight (cwt.) during the 10-year period. The

premiums ranged from \$2.47 per cwt. in 1995 to a high of \$7.91 per cwt. in 2004. The price advantage for calves in VAC 45 programs has more than doubled in the last five years. Calves in VAC 34 programs (the equivalent of Pfizer’s PreVAC) received premiums averaging \$1.91 per cwt. during the 10-year period, up to \$3.47 per cwt.

With the steady rise in premiums paid for calves participating in preconditioning programs, Superior Livestock Auction experienced more than a sixfold increase in the percentage of lots enrolled in VAC 45 programs, and almost a threefold increase in the percentage of lots participating in VAC 34 programs from 1995 to 2004.

“Producers who participate in SelectVAC programs have an opportunity to market their calves for more money,” Seeger says. “By taking steps to improve the health and performance of their calves, they’re adding value for buyers — and getting rewarded for it.”

Premiums warranted

In a commercial feedlot study sponsored by Pfizer Animal Health,

calves receiving the WeanVAC program experienced less sickness, fewer pulls, lower treatment cost and decreased rates of mortality than steers with an unknown health history.

A total of 1,169 steer calves averaging 600 pounds (lb.) were enrolled in the feedlot study. All of the calves were purchased at a livestock auction market in Missouri. After purchase, the calves were shipped to a Midwestern feedlot. The steers were either unweaned and of unknown vaccination history — part of the “control” group — or had been enrolled in Pfizer’s WeanVAC value-added calf program. Following arrival at the feedyard, all animals received the same processing and observation.

WeanVAC calves were 6.5 times less likely to become sick with respiratory disease during the first 28 days after arrival, and 4.42 times less likely to exhibit such signs within 85 days after arrival. In addition, WeanVAC calves were less likely to receive multiple treatments for respiratory disease. As a result of fewer WeanVAC calves becoming sick and requiring fewer treatments, the overall treatment cost for WeanVAC calves was \$6.44 less for every calf in the study.

“We know there is a premium being paid for calves in value-added programs. The results of this study show participation is valuable to both parties,” Seeger notes. “There are advantages to both the seller and buyer of value-added calves in less sickness and reduced treatment costs.”

The WeanVAC value-added calf program is intended for use with home-raised calves that will be weaned and backgrounded for at least 45 days prior to marketing. To learn more about WeanVAC or SelectVAC, producers are encouraged to talk to their veterinarian or animal health supplier or visit www.selectvac.com. For additional information about Pfizer cattle vaccines and other cattle health products, visit www.pfizerab.com.



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