

Back to Basics: Cattle viruses vs. computer viruses

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I compare trying to keep computers virus-free to trying to keep cattle healthy. The standard advice is to reduce the challenge and increase immunity. This same advice can apply to a computer. Animals that contract and recover from a

disease form a natural immunity to that disease. The next time their immune system sees that particular bug, it can resist the challenge. This is also true with you and your computer. Once hit by a computer virus, your resistance is raised.

The next time you see that particular virus, you know what to do to rid your computer of it.

Updated virus protection

You can reduce your chance of getting computer viruses by not joining e-mail discussions or by not subscribing to mass e-mail lists. However, this does not guarantee that you will not get a virus from another source. There is no argument that subscribing to a discussion group will increase the challenge. You increase your risk and exposure by simply being on those types of lists. But, by removing your computer address from these informational and discussion groups, you lose a valuable information source.

Most, if not all of us, have updated virus scanners on our computers. If you do not have one, you'd better get one. Without updated virus protection software, it is simply a matter of time before a virus will shut you down.

This is comparable to our efforts to vaccinate cattle. Vaccinated cattle can and do get sick, the same way a computer can get a virus when you have virus software. We have to boost the immune system or update virus software on a regular basis. If we do not boost animals' immunity on a regular basis, they are open to the latest virus or new strain of an old virus.

Show Me the Future

Angus enthusiasts from across the country met in Kansas City, Mo., to kick off the 2005 National Angus Conference & Tour Sept. 27-29. Nearly 200 people sat in on the "Back to Basics" presentations overviewing Association programs and services Tuesday afternoon, Sept. 27. Keynote speaker Tom Field, Colorado State University professor of animal science, set the tone for the meeting with his keynote address Tuesday evening. And, it was standing room only for an all-star lineup of speakers Wednesday morning.

Tour participants visited the headquarters of the American Angus Association in Saint Joseph, Mo., Wednesday afternoon, taking advantage of the opportunity to visit with staff of the Association and Angus Productions Inc. (API). The Missouri Angus Association coordinated a display of cattle Wednesday evening at Ol' MacDonald's Farm, Savannah, Mo. The tour continued Thursday with stops at Circle A North, Huntsville; Fox Run Farms LLC, Mexico; and Sydenstricker Genetics, Mexico.

By making every effort to reduce the challenge and increase the resistance, you simply reduce the probability of animals and computers getting a virus.

Reduce stress levels, disease

One of the best ways to reduce the disease challenge on cattle is to reduce the stress level and to educate oneself. This is also true with computers.

Unfortunately, many of us are not very well-educated about computers and computer software. Unlike most of you, I have the luxury of computer-support personnel. Most ranchers hunt and peck when it comes to typing. This all adds to increased stress levels and our inability to recognize sick computers and hoax virus scams or to take action to rectify these situations. Take the time to better educate yourself about computers and software.

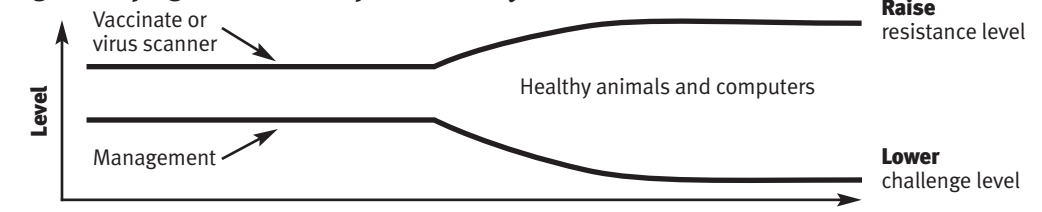
Just like computers, cattle can stay healthy through good vaccination (virus software) and management strategies used to raise resistance levels and lower disease threats (see Fig. 1).

There is one surefire way of keeping your cattle and your computer from getting viruses and/or dying: *Do not own them.*

As always, if you would like to discuss this article or simply would like to talk cows, do not hesitate to contact me at (775) 738-1721 or torellr@unce.unr.edu.



Fig. 1: Keeping cattle and computers healthy



We'll bring you coverage in the January *Angus Beef Bulletin*. In the meantime, we encourage you to visit the National Angus Conference & Tour Web site at www.nationalangusconference.com. API is pleased to bring you online coverage of this event, which is sponsored by Purina Mills, LLC.

Visit the news/audio page to access written summaries, as well as downloadable audio recordings and PowerPoint® presentations provided by the speakers. The site also features a schedule with links to the presentations, overviews of the tour stops and information about the speakers.

You can review coverage of previous conferences by visiting the archives page.

If you have limited access to the Internet, CDs of the presentations will be available for a reasonable fee. E-mail Editor Shauna Rose Hermel at shermel@angusjournal.com for more information.

