

# Forage Facts

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## DID YOU KNOW?

According to Merriam-Webster, the origin of the word 'cattle' comes from 'chatel', which is the Anglo-French work for personal property

## Herd Health on Pasture

By: Johanna Murray

Herd health is a complex thing - everything from nutrition and your vaccination program to insect populations and the weather can play into how susceptible your cattle will be to disease. Disease prevention may seem like a strange topic to discuss with calving season winding down for many producers and the herd almost ready to go out on pasture. But there are a number of things to consider when sending your cattle out to pasture that may improve animal performance and lower risk of disease. Vaccination protocols, pasture biosecurity, and nutrition are all key factors in the health of your herd and determining how effectively your herd will be able to resist disease.

Vaccination is probably the most obvious measure to take for reducing disease risk in your herd. They work by introducing a version of the bacteria or virus that cannot cause harm to the animal's immune system, which learns to recognize the foreign agent and formulates

antibodies to attack and destroy the organism. Vaccinations rarely create perfect immunity in your herd, but rather are key to reducing the severity and infection rate when a particular disease enters your herd. It should also be noted that it takes time for the cow's immune system to figure out how to counter the disease you're vaccinating for, there's

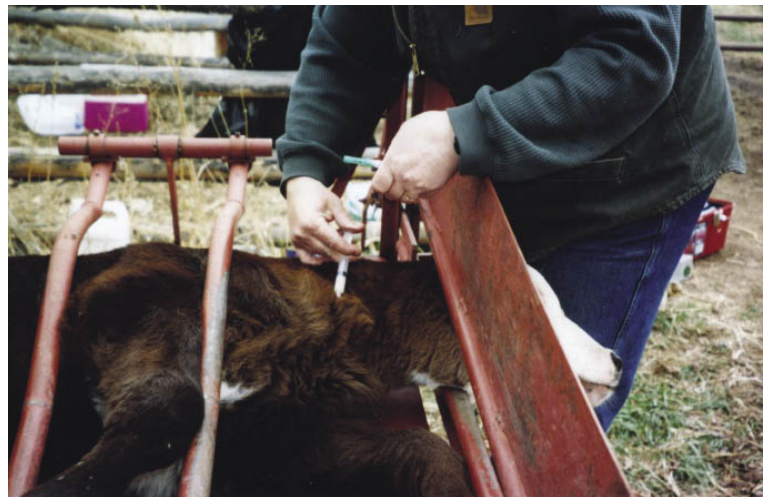


Photo: Canadian Cattlemen

a period of 1-2 weeks after the vaccine is administered where the animal doesn't yet have any immunity. How the vaccine is handled, timing of booster shots, and the health of the herd when the vaccines are administered will also impact how effective the vaccination protocol is. Vaccines should be a part of your herd health plan, rather than the beginning and end of it.

(<http://www.beefresearch.ca/research-topic.cfm/vaccination-of-the-beef-herd-108>)

Another key part of your herd health plan should be cattle nutrition. If your cattle aren't eating right, their immune systems aren't going to be

able to respond as effectively to vaccines - leading to lower immunity and more disease. We often discuss protein, energy, vitamins and minerals in depth through the winter, but those same factors play a role in cattle health through the summer. Making sure your cattle are getting the nutrition they need through the summer months can also decrease the number of thin animals you have to feed up for winter, improve pregnancy rates, and, of course, reduce disease.

Trace minerals especially can have a significant impact on cattle's immune system. Copper, Selenium and Zinc have the most obvious effects, with even subclinical deficiencies (deficiencies without easily observable signs) in-



Photo: Katie McLachlan

crease the likelihood of animals getting sick. It's also important to consider how the minerals interact with each other. The relationship between Calcium and Phosphorus is one example, since an excess of one will inhibit the absorption of the other. Another example of an inhibitive relationship is between iron, molybdenum and copper, as high iron and/or molybdenum can cause or exacerbate copper deficiency. On the other hand, by supplementing copper and zinc, you may actually improve zinc absorption. (<https://www.saskatchewan.ca/business/agriculture-natural-resources-and-industry/agribusiness-farmers-and-ranchers/livestock/cattle-poultry-and-other-livestock/cattle/minerals-for-beef-cattle>)

Mineral deficiencies can cause other problems as well, such as poor fertility and low gains, increased footrot or other diseases, as well as the more obvious symptoms like bleaching of hair coat (possible copper deficiency), stiffness or weakness (multiple deficiencies), and seizures (a common symptom of magnesium deficiency). According to some research different breeds of cat-



Photo: Canadian Cattlemen

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tle may have different mineral requirements as well - copper requirements in particular, can vary significantly. (<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1190&context=rangebeefcowsymp>)

Last, but not least, every herd health plan should be integrated in your management of the herd. Beyond vaccination and weaning schedules or even mineral planning, biosecurity protocols can be implemented in a number of ways through the summer. Double fences or coordinating your grazing strategy with your neighbour so there aren't cattle on both sides of the fence at the same time (might also reduce the number of strays you come home with in the fall!) can reduce disease spread from one herd to another. Grazing your vulnerable or high-risk animals, such as old cows, yearlings or animals that have been very sick in a separate herd on land surrounded by crops, roads, or natural barriers that minimize exposure to other herds or wildlife.

Managing your water sources is also an excellent way to reduce your risk of disease. Many water sources are surface fed, such as dugouts, ponds, streams, and sloughs - by fencing animals out of the water source, you reduce the risk of contaminating the whole water supply when the sick animal goes to drink, as well as giving you a chance to maintain bushes, grasses, and other plants



*Photo: steinbachonline.com*

around the water which can filter runoff as it enters the water source.

Keeping your animals healthy can seem like an uphill battle, but there are always options for improving practices that may decrease your risk or increase your cattle's resistance to disease.

Ultimately, a good relationship with your vet is vital, not only to prevent wrecks but also have access to the antibiotics and other tools to deal with outbreaks if they occur.

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## Peace Country Soil Health Academy Postponed

Due to COVID-19, PCBFA, NPARA, and MARA, along with the Soil Health Academy presenters have made the difficult decision to postpone the much anticipated Peace Country Soil Health Academy to Summer 2022.

Event	Date & Time	Venue / Location
Interpreting Your Soil Health Benchmark Test with Dr. Yamily Zavala	Monday, June 7th 7-8:30 pm	Online via Zoom
Soil Health & Grazing Day with Dr Kris Nichols, Kim Cornish & Brian Luce	Tuesday, June 22nd 9:30am - 4pm	Clay & Ash Armstrong Ranch Goodfare, AB
Soil Health & Grazing Day with Dr Kris Nichols, Kim Cornish & Brian Luce	Wednesday, June 23rd 9:30am - 4pm	Bill & Jeanne Hanson Ranch Valleyview, AB
Peace Country Soil Health Academy	POSTPONED Summer 2022	Manning, AB
Western Canada Conference on Soil Health & Grazing	December 13th - 15th, 2022	Edmonton, AB
<p><i>We are Planning a Robust Extension Schedule for Summer 2021!</i></p> <p><i>All Events will Abide by Current Health Recommendations and are Subject to Change. Check our Website for the Most Up-To-Date Event Information</i></p> <p><b>To Register for any of our Events: peacecountrybeef.ca   780-523-4033   info@pcbfa.ca</b></p>		

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