Cattle Chat: Vaccine handling tips

K-State beef cattle veterinarian shares best practices for vaccine management

MANHATTAN, Kan. — One of the many lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic is the importance of handling vaccines properly. That is true not only for this vaccine, but for all biologic products in both human and animal medicine, said the experts at Kansas State University’s Beef Cattle Institute on a recent Cattle Chat podcast.

Many factors can interfere with a vaccine’s efficacy, according to veterinarian Brian Lubbers. One of those, he said, is temperature.

“Read the label to know how the vaccine should be properly handled,” Lubbers said. “The easiest way to maintain vaccines at the proper temperature is to keep them in a cooler when processing cattle.”

Ice packs can be added to a cooler on hot days, he said, and heat packs might be an option on cold days.

“The cooler acts as an insulator, keeping the medicine protected from the environment,” Lubbers said.

He also suggests using one clean needle per bottle to minimize the risk of contaminating the vaccine.

“If the needle gets dirty, bacteria can be dragged into the bottle, which can result in having vaccine-site reactions in the processed cattle,” Lubbers said.

By puncturing the lid once with a clean needle, drawing up the vaccine and then switching out the needle, the risk of contamination will be minimized, he said.

He also advised that producers make a plan for how much vaccine they will need, to avoid wasting products.
“There is a limited shelf-life of a product once the bottle’s lid has been punctured, so with some pre-planning producers can reduce the amount of product that will be discarded,” he said.

To hear more of this discussion, listen to the Cattle Chat podcast online.

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Story by:
Lisa Moser
785-532-2010
moser@ksu.edu

More information:
Brian Lubbers
785-532-4012
blubbers@vet.k-state.edu

Brad White
785-532-4243
bwhite@vet.k-state.edu