

BVD-PI Testing

By Betty Jo Gigot, Publisher

Part of the Protocol



If you click on the button “cattle feeding” on the Luckey Custom Feedlot Web site you’ll find the following paragraph: “We are a PI-free feedyard. All cattle are tested for bovine viral diarrhea (BVD) upon arrival. All cattle testing positive for BVD persistent infection (PI) are put in a quarantine area and are left there until shipment of their home pen.”

“We find it beneficial from a health- and feed-management standpoint to BVD-PI test,” Colby Rodarte says. “Cattle feeding is especially competitive here in south Texas and BVD-PI testing helps keep us competitive.” Rodarte serves as assistant general manager at the feedyard where Kenny Miller is president and Rodarte’s dad, Roger, is vice president and general manager.

The feedyard custom feeds for customers across the area as well as Oklahoma, south Texas, Kentucky and Mexico. Customers can purchase cattle through the feedyard where, Rodarte says, “we can purchase your profit into the animal because we want you to come back.”

BVD-PI testing pays benefits

Just as the staff at Luckey have found the benefit of identifying persistently infected animals at the feedyard level,

many ranchers have found major health benefits in BVD-PI testing their herds and incoming additions. Stockers also have found a major reduction in sickness with the advent of a simple ear-notch at the chute during processing. The actual cost of testing can be viewed as investing in an insurance policy against this seriously infectious disease.

On another front, for the second consecutive year, research shows cattle buyers are paying a higher premium for calves that test negative for BVD-PI. According to an analysis of Superior Livestock Auction data for more than 400,000 head marketed during 2013, producers who market their animals as BVD-PI-free receive an average premium of \$2.97 per hundredweight. That translates into an additional net profit of \$14 for every 600-pound calf.

Well-performing cattle are always the goal of any cattle organization, and through the years a number of procedures have been identified as necessary for success. Now, along with vaccinations, parasite management wormers and individual identification, BVD-PI testing is becoming part of the protocol for success. ■

TOP: Most of the cattle at the yard come from the southern tier states and Mexico, and are processed at Kane Beef in San Antonio, Texas.

ABOVE: Luckey Custom Feedlot, Inc. is an all custom feedyard near Devine, Texas.



Colby Rodarte is the assistant general manager for the 22,000-head capacity feedyard.

Photos courtesy Rebecca Muller