

## LIVESTOCK

# Scoring helps assess Bovine Respiratory Disease

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**The Bovine** Respiratory Disease (BRD) Symposium was held July 30-31, 2014, in Denver, Colorado. This meeting is held once every five years to discuss strides

that have been made in dealing with BRD. The agenda, among other topics, included discussion on current experiences in the beef and dairy industries, subclinical effects of BRD, and new research on identifying genetic markers that will hopefully aid in identifying cattle susceptible to BRD.

One topic was discussed that cattlemen are always trying to improve upon – how to decide whether or not to pull and treat a calf. The acronym that many use as a guide is “DART,” which stands for depression, appetite, respiration and temperature. If cattle are exhibiting symptoms related to these attributes, they may require treatment, but what magnitude and combination of these symptoms warrants treatment? To start, all producers should form a relationship with a veterinarian to help answer these questions. Below is some information gathered from veterinarians, other professionals and personal experience.

One system presented at the BRD Symposium was designed for diag-



nosing and treating dairy calves. This system uses six clinical signs, which are classified as either normal or abnormal. The symptoms of cough, eye discharge, respiration and fever (above 102.5° Fahrenheit) are each assigned a score of 2 if present. Nasal discharge is assigned 4 points. Calves exhibiting ear droop or head tilt are assigned 5 points. If a calf has a cumulative score of 5 or higher, he is classified as having BRD and is treated. For example, a calf exhibits eye discharge (2 points) and nasal discharge (4 points). This calf has a cumulative score of 6 and therefore is treated. If the calf exhibits nasal discharge only

(4 points), then he would be pulled and his temperature would be measured. If the temperature is greater than 102.5° F, he would be treated. If the temperature is less than 102.5° F, he would not be treated.

When receiving cattle at the Noble Foundation, a similar system is used. Symptoms of BRD include depression/lethargy, unwillingness to consume feed, gaunt appearance, isolation, labored breathing, coughing, nasal discharge, eye discharge, droopy head or ears, and weakness or “knuckling” of hind fetlocks. Cattle are scored as follows: 0 = no symptoms; 1 = mild exhibition of one or two symptoms; ▶

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2 = mild exhibition of more than two symptoms or severe exhibition of one or two symptoms; 3 = severe exhibition of more than two symptoms; 4 = very severe exhibition of several symptoms. If cattle score a 1 or 2, they are moved to the chute. If they exhibit a temperature of 104° F or greater, they are treated. If the temperature is less than 104° F, they are not treated. If cattle score a 3 or 4, they are treated

regardless of their temperature.

Using a system such as one of these introduces more objectivity into decision-making. Used in conjunction with adequate recordkeeping, it allows a producer to identify progress. For example, a producer follows the above protocol and does not treat calves that exhibit a score of 2 with no fever. However, that producer's records indicate that 90 percent

of those cattle are being pulled again within the next three days and requiring treatment. This information may justify an adjustment to the protocol or scoring system.

At the heart of this discussion is the need to use data to assist in decision-making. Records help make objective decisions and monitor the success or failure of decisions that have been previously made. ■