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BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

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Welcome to Pasture to Profit. My name is Scott Stinnett, extension specialist here in Kit Carson County for the Golden Plains area. And today with me is our guest and our favorite veterinarian on extension, Doctor Kathy Whitman. And Doctor Kathy. We want to talk about doing some weaning in these extremely dry conditions and drought and what maybe we as producers need to think about.

00;00;42;21 - 00;01;06;15

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And you as a veterinarian would recommend that we keep an eye out for with these dry conditions, because we've got some producers that are thinking about maybe doing some early weaning, but just in general, we're dry for sure. Thanks, Scott, for having me on today. Yeah, we're all experiencing this, this severe drought over the summer. Thankfully, some folks are getting some rain, but that still doesn't mean we have a lot of feed left in the pastures.

00;01;06;15 - 00;01;26;26

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And so there's some opportunities for producers that they they need to make some, some serious decisions about how they're going to handle their herd and with what the best management strategies are. So if we think about, you know, when we're handling calves at this time or we have a drought like conditions, the environment certainly can be a big issue, right?

00;01;26;26 - 00;01;55;29

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So when we have less moisture, we have a lot more dust. It's a lot drier. So the risks for things like dust pneumonia can be a can be a big issue. And if there's any sort of immunosuppression. So we say that drought as you as you would expect is a stressful situation for both cows and calves alike. If we add stress into the mix and then we have all this dust circulating around that they're breathing in and poor air quality, then that can exacerbate the issue.

00;01;55;29 - 00;02;17;27

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And we certainly can see a lot more dust pneumonia, you know, secondary to these stressful events and just straight inhalation of dust. So certainly those are going to be things to watch out for in general of this summer as you're moving cows, particularly if you're going to do early weaning and processing and you bring them in, you're gathering them in corrals that are really dusty.

00;02;17;29 - 00;02;43;03

Unknown

I would expect to have some of those calves end up being sick. And so really trying to mitigate those dusty situations, those stressful situations is going to be really helpful in mitigating some of those issues. So what when we're looking for Desdemona, you know, I'm I'm thinking some pretty basic things, but sometimes you'll see some short term, you know, we got some dust, we got some runny nose, some watery eyes.

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But what's the definite kind of like, okay, that's not just they got a little dusty today. They're actually fighting dust pneumonia. Yes, certainly. We'll we'll see things like cough, runny eyes, things like that that you or I would expect that you or I are both are going to have after we work those cattle. Right. We're going to go home.

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We're going to have to be blown oes. We're getting clots out of our ears. We got a call for a couple days trying to get that stuff out of our system, and that's all well and good, but when we start to see calves that are falling behind the herd, their ears are down there breathing hard continuously. So, so not that they're coughing, coughing.

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I don't get too excited about, but it's the respiration rate. Are they panting? Are they behind? Are they not eating. Are they shrunk up. So things like that to indicate that they're truly sick. And then of course if we get on them and we're able to get a temperature on them, you know, do they have a fever? And certainly, you know, if they've got a fever, then I'm definitely going to be going to be treating them.

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You also have to be careful because you know, at the same time that they're having these, these, this dust exposure, you know, how much more stress do we want to put on them by treating every one of them? So I think being very aware of, of what the, the health status of your herd is and, and really observing and focusing on those animals that truly are falling behind, as is kind of key, so that you don't overdo it as well.

00;04;06;11 - 00;04;24;24

Unknown

Good to know that. That's that little extra. Yeah. Like you said, you and I are going to be inside and hacking and gagging and right off it up for moving the cows. Yeah. What's going to look like a day or two after that? What about things like flies that we're going to have, you know, when it seems like when we're dry and we're getting towards the end of the growing season, the flies come around.

00;04;24;24 - 00;04;46;19

Unknown

So what's the issues we can have with flies? So certainly when we have flies we have diseases that can be spread around stuff like pinkeye. You know, we have the combination of dust and flies that makes that even worse. So from a disease perspective, you know, those are those are really that's the disease that I, that I get the most concerned with when we see these flies.

00;04;46;22 - 00;05;12;22

Unknown

Second to that would be just the discomfort of the animal and animal welfare. So we know that cows don't perform as well. Don't don't do as well. You know, when they're covered in flies. Plenty of research done on that to show that being pestered by flies and face flies and horned flies, really diminishes performance. And when we're on drought pastures, we need those cows to be performing to their best ability.

00;05;12;23 - 00;05;34;29

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Right? They have little resources to utilize. And so we don't want to be wasting those resources on trying to fend off flies and be comfortable. So, you know, good fly control programs in the pastures. You know, we utilize a lot of back rubs, fly tags, things like that. Sometimes people put in fly tags, you know, at branding time to their cows because it's a it's a convenience.

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Right. But about this time of year, those the medications on those fly tanks start to wear out. So if you're really seeing a problem, you know with those with those face flies now you know considering putting in tags again or you know, next year if you if you continually see more flies in the late summer, early fall, maybe, maybe putting in those tags a little later, time point, would increase their effectiveness.

00;06;01;01 - 00;06;19;07

Unknown

So those are all strategies that, that I try to use to, to help mitigate those issues and reduce our chance of disease and discomfort. Okay. So thinking about what we're wanting to do, we're going to bring these calves in. We're going to separate them from moms. So they're stress number one. And we're going to put them in a dry lot or paddock.

00;06;19;07 - 00;06;43;15

Unknown

That's probably going to be a little dusty. And for those that maybe are thinking about or having their plan doing their boosters, they, you know, we we did some maybe a branding time, we did our first round of shots and now we're going to do a set of boosters here. We talked earlier in another podcast about it's easier for all the stress to happen at once than to have multiple small stress events.

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Seems to be harder on them. But thinking about timing, a lot of us are, you know, and I was taught, you know, an hour in the mornings or two hours in the afternoon. So we want to, you know, get up and try to do these things early in the morning, but which is better to do things early in the morning and stress those calves out first thing in the morning and then the heat of the day kind of comes along.

00;07;03;18 - 00;07;20;26

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Or do you think it's better for them to we're going to put this off to the evening and we're going to do these things, and then the night's just going to kind of keep getting cooler and cooler. So we're not having the stress of the day. Do you have an opinion on maybe which way works better? Well, I know you know, from my own comfort, I like to do stuff early in the morning so I can get it over with.

00;07;20;27 - 00;07;36;23

Unknown

Right. And so I think, I think I think what you're what you're saying though, is, is a is a good consideration. When when should we do it? If you can bring those cattle in the night before and let them rest and, you know, in kind of relax in their, in their spot depending on how dusted the environment is.

00;07;36;23 - 00;08;02;18

Unknown

Right. We don't want to exacerbate that exposure. Certainly working them in a cooler environment and giving them, in my opinion, giving them some time to relax afterwards, even if it is in the heat of the day. I think that, you know, cattle are built to handle that. And if we can utilize some strategies, you know, wetting, you know, wetting them down if we need to, you know, providing them some shade, getting them turned out to where they have access to, to a tree line or something like that.

00;08;02;19 - 00;08;23;03

Unknown

I tend to find that that's better, but it's going to depend on what, on what risks you have on the facility if you can go ahead and work them during the day, depending on how much you have to do to right, if you have to do a bunch of activities with them, hopefully you've got a lot of that stuff taken care of early on than earlier on in the in the summer.

00;08;23;05 - 00;08;42;12

Unknown

You know, we can minimize those, those stressful inputs. And so I think, you know, if we have minimal stress inputs, getting it done sooner and letting them kind of recover during the day, even when it's hot, might be a little easier than working them during the the afternoon. Now, if you have the opportunity to do it in the evening, I think that's that's probably the most ideal.

00;08;42;13 - 00;09;01;08

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Right. Because then it's cooler when they're resting. They can lay down and relax when it's a lot cooler. I don't know how cool it's been getting at night where you're at, but I don't know I don't know that's a that it's a big difference. But but certainly certainly that would be the most ideal. If we can do that logistically.

00;09;01;08 - 00;09;27;28

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It doesn't oftentimes work out that way. Right. And I think probably a big part of it is no matter what you're having to do with these calves, the efficiency of your crew is as important as anything. If it's an experienced crew and you've done this a lot of times, everybody knows their job and we can run through, you know, calving tables or if we're, you know, using squeeze chutes and we can get this stuff done because we're not now we're talking three, four, 500 pound calves that are coming through.

00;09;28;00 - 00;09;46;13

Unknown

It makes a lot of difference when you can process 100 head in an hour and a half, versus 100 head takes you three hours. 100%. Yeah, yeah. Which I think I think you're planning then is really important. Right. What are we going to do and how are we going to do it? And do we have all of our ducks in a row before we get started?

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Unknown

We don't need to be running back and forth to the to the barn to get our equipment. We need to be really ready to go and ready to be the most efficient that we can be. Well, it's just a little bit to we talked about a few hazards, you know, going on, you know, flies being an environmental hazard that are going to be there and dust being an environmental hazard.

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A lot of times this time of year we haven't thought about our pins, but we go in there and we start to use them in. If your pins look like my yard does, the thing you got to abundance of is Goshen pigweed. Things that can carry some nitrates. Yeah, maybe a few other plants that we don't want around our calves depending on where you are.

00;10;22;12 - 00;10;41;15

Unknown

So let's talk a little bit about poisonous plants and what we need to maybe watch for in our pins and maybe need to take care of before we

start using those pins. Yeah, absolutely. So anytime we have cattle pins or pins where we've had cattle concentrated before and we have high loads of, of fecal material that's been in there.

00;10;41;19 - 00;11;08;14

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The first thing that's going to grow in those environments when they haven't been walked on is going to be things like kosher weed and pigweed, those nitrate accumulators that can really cause problems. And so one of my biggest recommendations is if we're ever going to put cattle in a pen, you know, and I had mentioned earlier, you know, can we get them in the night before if they're hungry or they have access to, to forages like that, then you run the risk of, of having toxic issues.

00;11;08;17 - 00;11;28;06

Unknown

And so if we if we can't avoid exposing them to those sorts of plants, making sure they're not hungry when they're exposed to them is a good idea. And better yet, can we go ahead and run the tractor over that and just scrape scrape our working pens beforehand and then and then run a hose over and to kind of mitigate some of that dust.

00;11;28;08 - 00;11;47;22

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But I do think it's really important to identify those risk areas and where we're going to be housing animals and how long we're going to be keeping them there while we're working them. You know, if they have those exposures, they're cows and they're going to they're going to get after things that they shouldn't. And and kosher for some of them is really delicious.

00;11;47;22 - 00;12;11;02

Unknown

And so we can we can end up in a bad situation, particularly if they're hungry when they go in. Right. Sometimes when nothing's been green for the past three months, all of a sudden a little bit of green kosher, a little bit of green pigweed tops. Yeah. Pretty good. Yeah. Yeah. Well, you talking about the cows? You know, we've kind of focused on the Cavs here because you know our calves are what we're going to sell.

00;12;11;03 - 00;12;40;05

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But we're weaning these things from mom which creates a little bit of stress on mom but also kind of helps relieve her release her nutritional needs a little bit. But what do we need to be thinking about on her mama cows here? We're weaning during a drought, so certainly I think it's a good idea when we've had when we've had really stressed pastures and not a lot of good forage resources, we need to evaluate their body condition when they come in, when we're when we're doing our weaning, how do the cows look?

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And do we need to do something to get their condition up before we go into winter time? If it was last winter, it's not that big a deal. But they they keep predicting that this winter is going to be pretty miserable. So now is the time and the opportunity to help those cows improve in their in their condition if we can.

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And so they have the lowest energy demand right now. So anything excess they're going to go ahead and and and put that on in terms of body condition. Once we once they quit lactating their demands go down tremendously. So we want to be sure that that we evaluate that and that we don't have skinny cows going into their into their third trimester this winter.

00;13;20;00 - 00;13;45;14

Unknown

And so yeah, making sure that we're looking at those cows and then deciding do we want. And this even starts before we decide to wean, you know, when do we want to wean. It's much more affordable to feed the calf and feed the cow separately than it is to try to feed the cow to supplement the cap. So maybe we do need to make that decision to wean earlier than we expected so that we can we can focus on that cow getting her nutritional needs up.

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Because remember she's got a fetus growing as well. And so we want to identify that. We want to make sure that the the fetus that she's growing is getting supplemented, that that fetal programing that folks talk about is really critical during this time point. And so if a cow is stressed during drought and she's not getting all the nutrition that she needs, that's going to negatively impact that fetus that's growing.

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And we won't see it this year, but we'll certainly see it next year. When those cows don't perform, those calves don't perform as well. So I think it's really critical to make sure that those cows are in good shape, particularly when we're in a in a drought situation. And and do we need to go ahead and supplement those cows a little more and make sure that they're in good shape going into wintertime?

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We just visited on our last podcast with, with Doctor Martin about how nutrition in that first second trimester and into the the pre and post natal, you know, really affects what kind of calves you're going to have in the end. So yeah, great reminder of that tip. And also you know on our end you know we talk about preconditioning calves.

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So we're bringing these calves in. So we'll jump back to the calves here 30 days is an absolute minimum on preconditioning. Getting these cows ready for for marketing 45 days is better. 60 seems to be even more ideal. And we seem to have guys virus that are in our marketing system that either want them 60 days preconditioned, weaned and ready to go, or none at all.

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Unknown

You know, they'll take the whole, they'll take the risk of all the stress, or they want 60 good days behind them. So here we are talking the first week of September. And so for our producers who are thinking about, you know, maybe November timeframe, if 60 days that you want to market these calves, now's the time to start doing this and to start looking at these things and market wise, you know, we saw some really unique things last year that for weights were bringing more dollars per head than our big six weights, which were bringing maybe a little bit more in weight, but we were actually getting more per head off those younger cast.

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So early weaning might be financially advantageous, but is there any difference on a younger calf that say, is that for weight versus a six weight calf when we're trying to get things weaned? So if there are well set up, if they are set up well at branding time, if the herd health is in good shape, there's probably not that significant of a difference in terms of in terms of calf health.

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Unknown

I don't, you know, calorie. And we we do this all the time. And dairy production, you know we weaned calves you know, at at two months of age all the time. And if you do it well you can certainly be successful. And you can certainly take advantage of marketing opportunities, like you said, by doing it earlier, getting those calves a little higher price earlier on, and then you have the opportunity to go ahead and feed that cow a little more efficiently.

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So if we don't do things well, if we don't have a good vaccine program, certainly those those babies can be more stressed and they're not as as developed physically. They're not as strong. And so they certainly can can run into more hurdles than they're bigger counterparts. But certainly I think if we if we do things correctly and we set them up well, you should feel pretty good and pretty, pretty confident that even if you do have to wean them a little bit early, they'll they'll perform just like you would expect them to.

00;17;12;19 - 00;17;37;25

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Well, great conversation and discussion today, Doctor Kathy, we appreciate you coming on and discussing these things. And so kind of our bottom line we'll just do a little quick review. You know let's check our

environment that we're going to put these calves in during weaning time. Look for dust and other hazards flies, poisonous plants, things like that, minimizing the stress and trying to take care of these calves in a low stress way as best as possible.

00;17;37;25 - 00;17;59;08

Unknown

But don't forget about the cows. Sounds good. Yeah, I think that, in these trying times, if we do things right, we can we can get through it. It's just it's just another bonus for us, so. Well, again, thanks for everybody for listening to Pasture to Profit Podcast. We'd like to thank Doctor Kathy Whitman, our CSU extension veterinarian, for being on here with us today.

00;17;59;10 - 00;18;25;08

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And if you have any I for topics or questions about today's topic, you can reach out to me Scott Stinnett at the CSU extension office in Burlington, Colorado. Either give me a call at (719)346-5571, or you can send me an email at Scott.Stinnett. That's STINNETT at colostate.edu. Thanks for listening to Pasture to Profit.

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We hope you'll tune in next time.

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