

Who likes losing money on their calves?

If the room is somewhat quiet, you as a producer might want to think about weaning and preconditioning those calves to add some value. Due to Covid-19, the cattle market is very unstable and purchasers of bawling calves (unweaned) are becoming selective as sale days begin to get longer.

Just like your children, vaccines and preventative measures have helped lower the spread of disease and virus. The same holds true for cattle. Weaned calves that have been vaccinated are then more valuable and more ready to go on feed to get closer to their terminal end point. Many stockyards in the area have started offering preconditioned options for their customers if they would like to take the time to wean and vaccinate. This in turn allows the producer to get more for their calves and help out with the operations bottom line.

There are certain needs associated with weaning your calves, facilities have to be in working shape to allow the calves to be weaned from their mothers, usually for a minimum of 45 days. An animal restraint device (head catch) is required so that the calves can be vaccinated along with bull calves castrated. Also, most sales companies have a series of protocols in which they require the calves to have certain vaccines in order along with deworming, fly control, dehorning, pregnancy checks on heifers and in some cases only certain breeds can be merchandised.

If you have any questions about developing a preconditioning program, you are welcome to contact the extension office at 770-749-2142 or email uge2233@uga.edu.