



Worth doing it right

By Miranda Reiman

Buy one, get one free! The pitches and semi-annual sale ads pop up in the media continuously. Everybody has a deal for you, the latest stuff at the “hottest” prices of the season.

You can see through the hype. First, it’s not a deal if you don’t really need it. Second, if it’s half off, maybe it’s half value.

The cattle business is in an age of thin margins and rising costs. You don’t want to pass up a chance to save some dough, but it’s no time to get swindled, either. Sometimes it really is this simple: “You get what you pay for.”

Cattlemen certainly don’t lack options for spending. In the categories of supplements, wormers and vaccinations, you can compare costs for hours on hundreds of products. You could take the easy way out and just use the cheapest one, but what if the price point says something about quality or effectiveness? Maybe you need to do a little research of your own.

If it doesn’t exponentially reduce the targeted external and internal parasites, then the discount wormer isn’t doing its job. You haven’t helped your bottom line at all if you still have a health wreck because your budget vaccine didn’t perform.

Pre-breeding vaccinations look like a lot of money on paper. You may be tempted to cut costs by skipping them altogether, but one bout with BVD or Lepto can significantly cut reproductive rates. In that case, prevention would be more economical. There are also many cases of low-level disease problems that can rob you blind while you save money.

Labor could follow the same track. Say there are a handful of junior high students who will help you bale hay for a rock-bottom price. That’s an arrangement to keep going.

On the other hand, if you hire calving or processing help for minimum wages, you may be disappointed at the lack of ownership your temporary employee takes in the task. Paying a little more up front might save you from hearing, “I didn’t know she was having difficulties,” or “I must’ve overslept again.”

Nobody likes equipment that breaks on the first go-round. You've had your share of troubles, like rubber boots that rip out too soon, a tagger that sticks half of the time, or needles that break off way too easily.

You've probably even muttered the words, "never again," in reference to a certain type, brand or model. You also note when a change is certainly for the better. Your new fly control tackles the problem well, or that AI technician was worth the extra \$100 he charged.

Consumers have similar experiences when they're choosing meat to serve at their dinner parties or family meals. If they had a dry roast, tough steak or flavorless brisket, they'll pick a different protein source the next time.

The good news is that they'll seek out an excellent eating experience again and again. Plus, they'll pay more for it, which ultimately means you could get paid more for producing it. It's up to everyone in the beef industry to make sure that demand is met, that there's quality to buy.

After all, everybody in the chain—from ranchers to restaurateurs, retailers and consumers—understands it the same way: You get exactly what you pay for.

Next time in *Black Ink*, Steve Suther will consider April Fools and other hazards. Questions? Call toll-free at 877-241-0717 or e-mail mreiman@certifiedangusbeef.com.

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