



Preparing your cattle for the stress of shipment, show, and sale

Thank you to all who offered advice as to this quarter's topic, it is very timely and important. As the AGM and summer shows approach there are many things to consider concerning the health of your Dexters and/or the Dexters you are interested in buying. I will attempt to cover everything from at-home preparation, concerns at the show/sale, and taking home a newly purchased animal.

Health Paper Considerations

If you are planning on showing and/or selling at this year's AGM, I would suggest preparing now if you haven't already. Call your vet to determine what is required of cattle from your state. Most health papers are only good for 30 days, so plan accordingly, but don't wait for the last week in case tests are required. This year's AGM is in Athens, TN and the Tennessee Dept of Ag requires a health paper, permanent identification (tattoo, metal ear tag, hot or freeze brand), and a brucellosis test and permit # (unless you're from a brucellosis-free state). If you would prefer not to have a metal ear tag put in your show animal, make sure there is a legible registration tattoo for your vet to read. If you are planning on selling any cattle you may want to consider a few additional tests and/or vaccinations. Buyers from other states may need additional tests done prior to bringing the cattle home, and they may be more apt to bid on your animal if it doesn't require additional tests or a mandated quarantine when they get home. I would suggest having a TB test done on any cattle over 6 months, which requires two visits from a vet (an injection and an exam 72 hours later). More and more states are requiring TB tests, especially in the Mid-West. If you are selling a non-virgin bull, you may want to have him tested for Trichomonos and/or Brucellosis. I would also recommend vaccinating your young heifers (4-12 months) for Brucellosis, as some states still require this prior to arrival. Additional tests to consider would be genotyping (now required to register bulls), PHA, Chondrodysplasia, color profile, or Johnes disease. Although, none of these are required, they may make your animal more "salable". Whatever tests you have done, be sure to advertise it at the time of the sale- you deserve to get a premium for the additional effort it took.

Vaccinations

Proper vaccination prior to shipping and commingling cattle is vitally important to the health of your cattle and the cattle they come in contact with. Although there may be some "natural" cattlemen/women who group vaccines with antibiotics and other chemicals, I would strongly caution not bringing naïve (non-vaccinated) cattle to a show or sale for two reasons. Not only is there a risk of exposing your animal to susceptible pathogens, but your critter may be a liability to other cattle at the show. In last fall's Vets Corner I covered vaccinations for pneumonia pathogens in more detail, but the same considerations apply. I would suggest that all show animals be vaccinated according to your herd's established vaccination protocol (formulated between you and your veterinarian) with a few additional considerations.

Preparing for Shipment, Show and Sale

The following pathogens are a must for minimal protection on any age animal:

Viruses

BVD (type 1 & 2)

BRSV

IBR

PI3

Bacteria

Clostridium Bacteria

including: chauveoei, septicum, novyi, sordellii, &

perfringens (type B,C,D)

Mannheimia haemolytica

Thankfully, protection against these pathogens can be accomplished with only 2-3 vaccines. Additional pathogens to be considered, especially for show cattle include:

Breeding Age

Leptospira (5 strains including Hardjo bovis)

Vibrio

Footrot

Wart vaccine

Anthrax

Neospora

Younger calves

Brucella (as mentioned earlier to heifers)

Moraxella bovis (pinkeye)

Tetanus

Salmonella

Histophilus somni

Pasteurella multocida

This is not a complete list, nor are the pathogens limited to a specified age, but it includes some of the more common pathogens that cattle encounter. The best person to consult regarding what would be best for you would be your veterinarian. They will be able to give you the best advice for your region and how to time the doses for optimal protection and safety. Again, if you decide to do additional vaccinations before the sale, be sure to advertise that information to potential buyers either via a veterinary certificate or health paper at the sale time.

At the Show

Bringing your animals to a strange place with lots of people and cattle around can be a bit stressful on cattle. Throw some hot June weather and strange tasting water on top of that, and you can end up with a sick critter. If you don't already have your own personal "First Aid Kit for Dexters", I would suggest a few things that may help you or your neighbor at the show. Bovine BlueLite is an electrolyte powder specifically formulated for cattle and does wonders if your animal is not drinking like it should. You simply mix it in with the drinking water and the aroma itself entices most cattle to drink. I know some folks who have tried regular Kool-aid packs with mixed results; but try either option at home before the show. If you use any range-cubes or cakes at home, bring some with in case their appetite is suppressed. Injectable Vitamin B Complex may also come in useful as an appetite stimulant. Make sure you bring along a rectal thermometer; it's an inexpensive tool that can help you decide how to treat your animal. Normal temperature for cattle is 101.5F, with a one degree variance. Any temperature over 102.5F should raise a flag; either the barn is way too hot (reposition fans) or look for other clinical signs of pneumonia: droopy ears, excessive nasal discharge, increased respiration rate, ribs more apparent when breathing, or coughing. If it is really hot out and you cool your critter with cold water, make sure you scrape down all the water off their coat afterward, as a water barrier acts as an insulating layer trapping the heat that is trying to leave the body. If you have a stethoscope, make sure you bring that along also, it may come in handy. Some other meds that may be useful in your kit include: 1 or 2 antibiotics (something you have used successfully at home against pneumonia, footrot,

Preparing for Shipment, Show and Sale

pinkeye, mastitis, etc.), an anti-inflammatory (aspirin or injectable Banamine (flunixin meglumine)), probiotic boluses (lactobacillus acidophilus for digestive upsets), Intestisorb boluses (Adsorbent anti-diarrheal bolus), some sort of fly control, Vitamin K injectable (for minor bleeding issues), and bandaging supplies (cotton, vetrap, tape). Hopefully, you will have no need for any of these things, but you could be a life saver for someone else's Dexter.

Purchasing and Bringing home a new Dexter

When purchasing a Dexter, think like the judge; have a picture in your mind of what a healthy, well cared-for Dexter looks like, and compare each animal to what you envision. Think head to tail: How do they "carry" themselves (perky ears, no limp, nice stance, etc)? What does the hair-coat look like? Are there any spots on the eyes? Are the eyes watering? Is there any excessive off-color nasal discharge? Do they cough excessively? Do you notice any abnormal lumps/masses? How prominent are the ribs? How well do they fill-out their frame? Is there any swelling around the feet or long hooves? If it's a lactating cow- does she have a uniform udder/no hard masses? If its going to be a milk cow- are the teats big enough and placed well? Do you notice any sign of diarrhea (manure in tail)? If you don't have much experience with cattle, seek someone out who does. Do your homework early- walk through the barns and look for the animals that are on the sale-bill. Seek out the owners and quiz them about their animals. Ask them health related questions like: What vaccines have they given? Have they been dewormed lately? What do they feed their animals? Have they done any genetic testing (PHA)? Are there any specific diseases they deal with at their farm? Has this animal ever had any health issues? Has the cow ever had a C-section? Did the calf have a normal unassisted birth? Has the bull been semen tested or ever had any issues breeding? All these are fair questions and may help you narrow down which animal to bid on.

A purchased animal should be treated much like the show animal. Once it gets to it's new home, it'll be a strange place with strange feed and water. If you have the capability, I would strongly suggest a quarantine pen or pasture for your new Dexter for 2-3 weeks. Not only will it separate the animals for health concerns, but will give you an opportunity to pay closer attention to the new kid on the block. Wait at least a week before you update it's vaccinations with the rest of the herd, as the stress of miles, the show/sale, and a new home can suppress their response to the vaccine. If they have not been dewormed lately, I would suggest doing that on arrival- to avoid contamination of your pasture.

That's a lot of information to chew on, and much of it may not apply or be necessary for you, but the goal was to suggest multiple ways to minimize health risks for your show animals presently, and for your herd as it grows in the future. Best wishes for all who will be showing this year, and may you all come home to healthy and productive Dexters!