

News Column

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VACCINE STORAGE AND HANDLING

I've been thinking about getting in the cattle business. I believe I'll spend a little extra money to buy the best females I can find. Then, using my best farmer logic..... I'll turn them out in an over-grazed pasture with an ugly sale barn bull that may or may not be fertile.

I don't know if I'll actually get any calves, but I'm sure it is a good plan because that bull was probably good at one time, and it MIGHT work!

It is the same logic that some folks apply when they buy two thousand dollars worth of vaccines and then put them in the already-rejected refrigerator in the garage. That refrigerator wasn't good enough to stay in the kitchen, but it might be OK to store vaccines. It MIGHT work.

Maybe that garage refrigerator just wasn't the right color for your new kitchen. And maybe it is able to maintain a constant temperature amid the wild temperature swings in your garage.

Or,... maybe your vaccines deserve a new refrigerator that is housed where the temperature is more stable – possibly in the mud room or the basement.

In a study done in Nevada, 25% of the refrigerators tested failed to maintain a safe vaccine storage temperature (35-45 degrees Fahrenheit). In another study done in Arkansas, 76% of refrigerators were unacceptable for storing animal health products.

A two dollar refrigerator thermometer is a good investment. It will either give you piece of mind from knowing your refrigerator is functioning properly, or it will let you know you need

to buy a new refrigerator.

Most animal vaccines are intended to be stored at 35-45 degrees Fahrenheit, normal refrigerator temperature. Vaccines need to be transported from the refrigerator to the working chute in an insulated cooler – with ice packs – because vaccines begin to lose their efficacy as they warm up.

Modified live virus vaccines should be used within an hour after being mixed because they are only effective for one to two hours after mixing. To be safe, only mix the amount of vaccine that will be used in one hour.

When transporting vaccines in a cooler, bubble wrap or paper should be used to keep vaccines from direct contact with ice packs. Vaccines also need to be protected from freezing to maintain maximum efficacy.

Other key points to remember include:

- Never re-enter a bottle with a used needle
- Change needles immediately if a needle bends or gets contaminated with dirt or feces
- Change needles before they become dull – every 10-15 head
- Change needles between every animal to prevent blood-borne infections (bovine leukosis or anaplasmosis)
- Clean syringes with hot water, NOT with soap or disinfectants.

Syringe clean-up is probably a weak point for many operations. Re-usable syringes should only be cleaned with a brush and very hot water. Heat water in a microwave to a near-boiling temperature, then draw water into the syringe several times to clean it.

If you are really diligent, you will disassemble your syringe while cleaning it, then let it

air dry before re-assembling. Store the syringe in a plastic Ziploc bag to keep it clean and dust-free during storage.

While I was working on this piece I took a few minutes to estimate the value of the vaccines and medications in my refrigerator. I have about \$1,000 worth of products in my small vaccine refrigerator.

I also have \$2 thermometer in refrigerator. Sometimes I actually do practice what I preach.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to gmcclure@ksu.edu.

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