

KCA Hosts Regional Meeting

Kansas Cattlemen's Association (KCA) hosted a regional cattlemen's meeting in Junction City to discuss industry topics and animal health management. Dr. Dave Rethorst, DVM, of Beef Health Solutions gave a presentation on "Flipping the Iceberg," a discussion on animal husbandry methodologies designed to offset vaccination and antibiotic over usage. James Pinegar discussed his role as a Kansas Brand Investigator, statistics on cattle theft, ways to prevent cattle theft, and finally actions to take if you suspect illegal activities.

Pinegar discussed felony livestock theft, felony livestock pharmaceutical theft, and brand violations as well as assisting the KS Dept. of Ag with animal health emergencies in Kansas. Cattle theft is a personal property crime in Kansas, so the punishments hardly fits the crime. Pinegar explained that cattle thieves can often receive market value for the cattle stolen, so it's a much more profitable enterprise than stealing electronics and other personal assets.

He explained that we must remain alert within our communities. If you see someone hauling cattle at 2:00am, consider the activity to be suspicious. Ask yourself, how often are you working and hauling cattle during the overnight hours? He encourages citizens to report suspicious and illegal activity to local law enforcement. He recommended keeping your distance, and not to engage individuals you suspect of actively committing a crime.

Pinegar continued that there are a high prevalence of incidents resulting from the demand for illegal narcotics. He noted time is of the essence when reporting missing cattle due to low odds of recovery after 24 hours.

The use of branding, ear tags, tattooing, DNA sample ID and unique markings were all noted as means of identifying cattle when there is a theft. Branding is still considered to be the most effective means of identifying livestock. In closing, producers were encouraged to brand livestock, lock gates to deter access to property, check livestock often, surveil for baiting activities, count livestock weekly, keep accurate records, pay attention to your livestock's mannerisms and personalities, and to use game/trail cameras as they are a good way to monitor rural property and deter trespassing.

If you suspect unlawful activity on your property, immediately assume the area is a crime scene. You do not want to disturb possible evidence, such as cigarette butts, empty feed sacks, discarded beverages, etc. These items could provide useful fingerprint and DNA evidence and should not be handled unless necessary to preserve potential evidence. An example, if a feed sack is present, only handle the bag from the inside.

Dr. Rethorst presented, focusing on careful vaccination program designs and

management as well as the essential role trace minerals play in immunology and herd health. Rethorst underscored the importance of adequate mineral supplementation and nutrition which sets the foundation for a good immune system within your herd. "Most mineral supplements offered on the market do not have adequate zinc to copper ratios. It should be a solid 3:1 ratio. Anything less is inadequate," Rethorst explained.

He further emphasized the importance of good cow nutrition in producing a calf that will remain healthy throughout its lifetime. "Weaning health starts at conception and carries through to the feed yard," Rethorst said. He went on to add that fetal programming provides additional protein and trace minerals, which are crucial during the last three months of a cow's pregnancy. It can prevent many immune and health problems later. Dr. Dave stressed the importance of not over-medicating with antibiotics and anti-viral medications and vaccinations that could jeopardize herd immunity by loading them with too many medications all at once. He concluded by noting that providing for the health and well-being of their animals, producers are providing wholesome food for consumers.

A free USA-Beef supper was provided to all attendees. The meal was made possible by these fine sponsors: Edward Jones Investments, Farm Bureau Financial Services, Tasker Trucking, Herd Solutions Feed, LLC., State Auto Farm & Ranch Insurance, Geary Grain, Inc., Key Feeds, J.C. Livestock Sales, Inc., Wildcat Feeds, LLC., and Rawhide Portable Corral, Inc.