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A Health Record System for Michigan Beef Herds

Michigan State University

Cooperative Extension Service

Farm Science Series

Clifford C. Beck, Extension Specialist in Veterinary Medicine, and Harlan Ritchie,

Department of Animal Husbandry

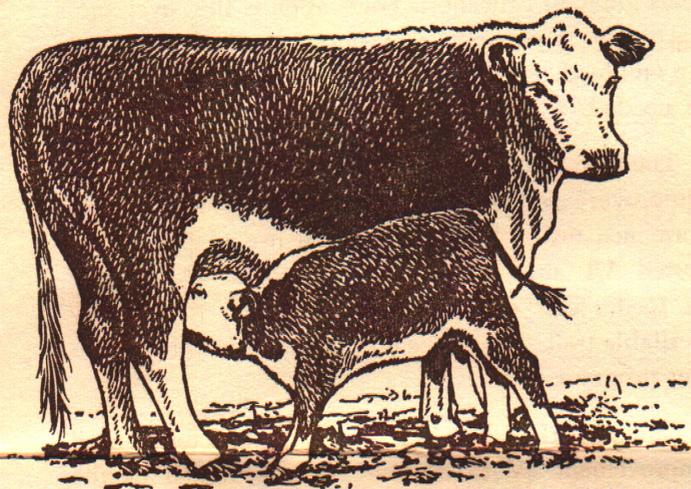
July 1967

4 pages

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# A HEALTH RECORD SYSTEM



## For Michigan Beef Herds

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE • MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Beef cow numbers are increasing in the state of Michigan. As new herds are established, one of the first matters that should receive attention is the development of a worthwhile record-keeping system. However, this is one management practice that is often taken too lightly in old, as well as in new, herds. Records should be maintained for the following reasons:

1. To maintain an accurate, up-to-date working knowledge of the health and production of your herd.
2. To serve as a source of background information for herd improvement practices.
3. To serve as a record and/or reminder of good, routine herd management practices.
4. To provide information on progeny and the performance of those progeny.
5. To serve as an accurate guide to culling low producing animals and selecting herd replacements.
6. To provide vital information in the event of the sale of an animal.

### What Type of Records Should You Keep

The amount and type of information recorded varies greatly from herd to herd. Certain data that are essential to one herd may be of little or no value to another. In general, purebred cattlemen must keep a more detailed set of records than commercial men, although they may have several requirements in common. Data to be recorded should definitely include those items that exert an important influence on profit or loss.

Two kinds of beef record forms are involved in the system described here—one form for cows and another for herd bulls. Both are printed on manila file folders and both include space for individual identification and performance, health record, progeny record, and miscellaneous management factors. It was believed that a folder is advantageous because it may be used to hold important papers such as registry certificates, vaccination slips, health papers, pictures, etc. If this is done, the folders should be maintained in a file cabinet drawer or a portable file box. For those who prefer to keep records in a book, the folders should be punched for a 3-ring loose-leaf notebook cover (a 1½-inch ring cover will hold up to 50 folders).

These beef record forms are, admittedly, more detailed than is necessary for most cow herds. Furthermore, many cattlemen would not have the time or patience required to record every item listed on these forms. Nevertheless, as this system was being devised, the authors felt a greater service would be rendered by being too complete rather than too brief. For those cowmen who record data which differ from that given in the folders, it is suggested that you simply cross out some of the printed headings and write in the headings you need. Supplemental information on specific forms can be inserted or stapled onto this record folder.

### How To Obtain Record Folders

These folders may be obtained from your County extension agent, veterinarian, or others designated in the county that have them available. If they do not have a supply, ask them to write to the Bulletin Office, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, P. O. Box 231, East Lansing, Michigan. The

folders cost approximately \$7.00 per carton of 95 cows folders and 5 bull folders. Notebooks or metal file boxes can be purchased at a local book store or related suppliers.

### How To Use Beef Record Folders

Records must be accurate, complete, and up-to-date to be of maximum value.

The herd owner or the person directly in charge of herd management should assume responsibility for maintaining the record system. However, there may be others who should have access to the folders. These are:

1. **Your veterinarian**, who would be the logical person to fill in those spaces dealing with diseases, parasites, tests, vaccinations, pregnancy examinations, etc.
2. **Your inseminator**, if your cows are bred by artificial insemination.
3. **Your semen collector**, if you make a practice of collecting and evaluating your herd bull's semen prior to breeding season. In many instances, this person may be your veterinarian, your inseminator, or an agent from an organized bull stud that renders this service.

A chain is no stronger than its weakest link. Likewise, in records, the information is no more accurate and complete than the entries. The complete cooperation of all individuals involved with the herd is essential to success.

### Some Suggestions On Beef Herd Health

Raise replacement heifers from your best cows.

When purchasing animals, buy from a reputable source; be sure they are properly vaccinated and tested prior to purchase and addition to your herd.

Heifers are less risky from the standpoint of health than are older animals.

Many diseases, such as hoof rot, are bought, paid for, and introduced to a herd through careless purchases.

Replacement heifers should be vaccinated for Brucellosis between 4 and 8 months of age (120 to 240 days).

Michigan law requires that all female cattle born after January 1, 1963, must be officially calfhood vaccinated if they are to be sold for dairy or breeding purposes.

The law specifically applies to females. It is not recommended to vaccinate bulls. The law further specifies age: 4 to 8 months. One of the major problems today in Brucellosis eradication is the "over-age" vaccinate. A percentage of these animals do not clear up on blood test. The full cooperation of all beefmen is needed.

The best bull is not too good. Be sure you use an "improver" rather than just a "cow settler." Performance tested bulls and/or the use of production tested A.I. sires are ways of improving the quality of feeder calf produced. Rate of gain is a highly heritable trait. Capitalize on this factor in your breeding program.

Culling is the second most important factor in herd improvement. With accurate records, much of the culling can be done by evaluation of records. Cows that fail to conceive on time, producers of weak or small calves, poor milk producers, cows lacking in mothering ability or desire, chronic bloaters, cows with cancer eye, and cows of very advanced age may be good candidates for "arm chair" culling.

Pregnancy checking, physical exam for defective udders, cancer eye, dental problems, lumpy jaw, and observation for other physical defects will be further steps in a well planned culling program.

The availability of feed, the health of the herd, and a good reproductive history is essential to success of any cow-calf operation.

Routine testing for Brucellosis, Tuberculosis, and in certain areas—other diseases, must be considered. Leptospirosis, Anaplasmosis, I.B.R. (Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis), B.V.D. (Bovine Virus Diarrhea), Vibriosis, Blackleg, and related diseases must be considered in specific herd vaccination and testing programs.

Do not neglect parasitism—neither internal nor external. Lice, ticks, and internal parasites of all types increase the cow's feed requirements and are an uneconomical waste in any herd. Routine spray programs and internal parasite control where indicated are good practices in the interest of herd health.

Proper nutrition, good feeding practices, and overall good management are essential to success. Creep feeders for calves, supplemental feed during periods of poor pasture, protein supplement when roughage is of poor quality, and related practices may make the difference between success and failure, profit or loss.

## DECEMBER

- Feed hay on clean snow
- Feed 18-22 lbs. hay/cow/day
- Spray for lice

## NOVEMBER

- Conduct herd tests as needed
- Keep replacement heifers growing
- Start dry feeding as needed

## OCTOBER

- Prepare for fall marketing
- Treat for grubs
- Cull old, open, and poor producers

## SEPTEMBER

- Pregnancy check herd (45-60 days)
- Vaccinate replacement heifers (4-8 mo.)
- Be looking for new bull for next season

## AUGUST

- Remove bull from herd
- Sow rye for fall and spring pasture
- Build or repair corral and chute

## JANUARY

- Sort cows that need supplemental feed
- Order ear tags for new calf crop
- Build "Protective-Creeps" for calves

## FEBRUARY

- Be on hand to calve out cow herd
- Use strong (7%) Iodine on navel
- Enter each calf on the record

## MARCH

- Watch closely for signs of scours, pneumonia, and White Muscle Disease
- Keep records current
- Be sure "Protective Creep" is kept sanitary

## APRIL

- Creep-feed calves
- Castrate and dehorn all calves
- Repair fences

## MAY

- Turn herd to pasture
- Control flies
- Provide T.M.S. and Di-Cal

## JUNE

- Turn bull in with herd
- Make early hay
- Select replacement heifers and place on separate pasture

## JULY

- Control flies
- Rotate pastures as needed
- Be sure cattle have adequate water supply

# A

## Successful

## Beef

## Cow-Calf

## Operation

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