

Blackleg in Beef Cattle

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Each year beef cattle producers lose cattle from blackleg. These losses can be cut to almost zero with the proper vaccination program.

Blackleg is a bacterial disease that affects cattle less than two years of age. Most cases are seen in calves before weaning.

Outbreaks of the disease are sporadic since the bacteria can persist in the soil for extended periods of time. The organism, *Clostridium Chauvoei*, will persist in the soil until certain conditions are present and animals pick up the disease. The exact conditions needed for the organism to infect animals are not known.

Prevention is the only way to deal with Blackleg since treatment is not effective. Usually the first sign of the disease being present is finding a dead calf. Producers should follow the label on available vaccines to the exact vaccination procedure. Some vaccines require a booster within a few weeks after the initial vaccination while others require the booster at weaning. Generally the first dose of the vaccine is given at three to four months of age.

Losses from blackleg can be prevented through vaccination. Contact your local Extension agent for more information about blackleg or other topics related to beef production.