

## Visual Signs of Ill Health

**M**any experienced cattlemen can recognize sick animals on sight. Visual identification isn't an exact science, but if you pay attention to the mannerisms of your cattle, they will often give you a heads up about ill health, and the sooner a sick animal is treated, the quicker it recovers.

Signs to watch for:

- Starts to eat less or quits eating entirely — one of the first signs of sickness
- Dull eyes, not alert
- Droopy ears
- Diarrhea (scours): loose stools or non-bloody diarrhea are not necessarily signs of a sick animal
- Runny nose: This, along with a dry nose and coughing, is one of the advanced signs of sickness, often a sign of respiratory infection.
- Watery eyes
- Dry nose
- Harsh cough
- Depression and weakness
- Temperature: To take a cow or calf's temperature, many cattlemen use the kind of rectal thermometer

that has a hole on one end, which enables a string to be tied through the hole and allows you to hang on to the thermometer better. The normal rectal temperature of cattle is between 101 and 102 degrees, give or take a degree. Some experts consider 104 degrees to be the dividing line of a serious condition in cattle.

- Labored breathing: The normal rate in cattle is about 30 breaths per minute (one every two seconds), over twice as fast as humans
- Swollen or puffy left side
- Limping or stiff/staggering walking movement
- Unusual skin conditions
- Loss of hair may be caused by such things as ringworm, lice, or mange
- Hanging back from the rest of the herd

If calves are alert, stretch their backs when they get up, and are ruminating, then they're probably not sick.

*Sources: Texas A&M University Extension; North Dakota State University*

## Checkoff Budget Drops with Collections

**I**n line with projected lower checkoff collections, the Beef Promotion Operating Committee has recommended a \$45.8 million Cattlemen's Beef Board budget for fiscal 2009, a 6.6% decrease from this year. The Operating Committee includes 10 members of the Cattlemen's Beef Board and 10 directors from the Federation of State Beef Councils. Beef Board funding for national checkoff programs will be augmented by about \$10.5 million in voluntary contributions from state beef councils to their national Federation of State Beef Councils, an NCBA division.

The 2009 budget still must be approved by the full Beef Board this month, then USDA. It includes the following:

- Promotion, \$19.97 million (-12.4% from 2008)
- Research, \$7 million
- Foreign Marketing, \$5.8 million (+11.2% from 2008)
- Consumer Information, \$5.4 million, (-13.3% from 2008)
- Industry Information, \$2.6 million
- Producer Communications, \$2.16 million
- Administration, \$2 million
- Evaluation, \$335,000
- USDA oversight, \$255,000
- Program Development, \$125,000

"Costs keep increasing so it's getting extremely challenging to find more places to cut without eliminating the checkoff's effectiveness in any particular area," says Cattlemen's Beef Board Chairman Dave Bateman, an Illinois producer.

NCBA members at the 2008 convention voted in favor of seeking improvements to the checkoff program, including an unyet specified increase in the checkoff fee. "Producers ultimately will decide whether to increase the checkoff assessment, but this will put the procedure in place that allows them to do that," says Bill Donald, NCBA Policy Division chairman from Melville, Mont.

The \$1 per head checkoff fee began in 1986. Today it takes \$1.90 to buy what a dollar could then.

NCBA member policy seeks an improved way for beef producers to petition for a referendum on continuing the checkoff, or increasing it. Either action could be triggered by 10% sign-up within a year at USDA designated sites. Any checkoff increase would require congressional action to open and amend the Beef Promotion Act and Order.

NCBA members also want to increase the pool of potential checkoff contractors by eliminating any reference to the charter date for established national non-profit, industry-governed organizations that can contract for checkoff funding.