** This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online at https://ksre-learn.com/stress-parasite-connection

Note to editors: A photo to accompany this story is at https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54007237604

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Cattle Chat: Stress and parasite connection

K-State beef cattle experts share what to do when calves experience coccidiosis

By Lisa Moser, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — As many people know, stress can impact the body in many ways, from headaches to upset stomachs to making them more susceptible to picking up sickness.

Similarly, newly weaned calves that have been moved to a different location from their mothers and now have a grain-based diet offered to them can experience stress as a result of these changes. In some cases, that will make them more prone to disease, said Kansas State University veterinarians speaking on the Beef Cattle Institute's recent Cattle Chat podcast.

One disease found in calves post-weaning is coccidiosis, K-State veterinarian Bob Larson said.

"Coccidiosis is caused by an internal parasite that is a single-cell organism that burrows into the intestinal wall and causes damage," he said. "The coccidia organisms are commonly found in the environment, but they can cause a problem with calves that are experiencing stress."

Larson said the telltale sign of this parasite is when calves are producing bloody diarrhea.

K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster said that is quite different from the stool changes that happen when the calves are exposed to a different feed formulation.

"When calves are put on a new diet, their stool may be looser than normal, but it will have a consistency to it," Lancaster said. "Calves with coccidiosis will have watery and dark stools, which come from the blood in the intestine. You won't see that with healthy calves transitioning to a grain-type diet."

For beef producers who think this is happening in their herd, K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers said "the first step is to get the disease diagnosed, and that can be made from a fecal sample."

He added: “There are several treatment options available, so just work with your local veterinarian to find the best one for your herd and then look at ways you can adjust your management to reduce the risk of a future outbreak.”

To hear the full discussion, listen to Cattle Chat on your preferred streaming platform.

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FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story Beef Cattle Institute Cattle Chat podcast, https://ksre-learn.com/cattle-chat-stress-parasite-connection

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