

Spring Ahead

What are your current health plans for April to August? I hope your plan includes managing doe health, increasing fawn health and survival, and managing post rut bucks. We will provide some simple easy ideas to ensure the highest quality of health and production for our deer during this period.

The goal of every producer should involve producing healthy deer, decreasing treatments, and decreasing labor. Before you can have healthy fawns, you must start with a healthy doe. Vaccinating doe in late March is ideal. The doe should have been vaccinated prior to the breeding season, normally in October at "CIDR in" (see Fall vaccinations). The "Spring" vaccines (March to April) will boost circulating antibodies in the blood stream, especially 45-60 days prior to fawning (Colostrum). Antibodies are the natural proteins, produced by an animal in response to a bacterial, viral, fungal insult. These antibodies serve as "reserve soldiers" that actually fight the foreign invaders. Typically, it would be ideal to vaccinate doe 30 to 45 days prior to fawning, but in our area, it may be too hot to run them through the facility at this time. Strategically, vaccinating your doe against diseases that are prevalent in your area is extremely beneficial (see Spring Vaccinations). It is very important to remember to use killed vaccines on pregnant doe. There have been reports of Modified Live vaccines causing abortions.

I am not a big proponent of vaccinating fawns within the first 6 weeks of age. A fawn vaccinated at a day of age is unable to utilize the vaccine until at least 3 weeks after injection due to length of time it takes the immune system to produce antibodies (immunoglobulins). Fawns are born without an immune system and require their momma's colostrum to produce a functioning immune system. An unhealthy doe produces poor quality colostrum, if any at all, thus, increasing the importance for a strong healthy doe. The doe's colostrum (maternal antibodies) typically last up to 8 weeks. A few cases involving fawns with wrecked immune systems have occurred from vaccinating too early. Early vaccinations can interfere with the doe's natural maternal antibodies (Maternal Antibody Interference). If you must vaccinate fawns, use as few as possible and choose vaccines specifically for the problems you have encountered in the past.

What if you did not vaccinate your pregnant doe? Producers can utilize fawn pastes and immunoglobulin supplements. First day Fawn pastes are typically used during the first 24 hours of life and may include immunoglobulins and pre/probiotic ingredients. Immunoglobulin supplements can ensure fawns get a maximum immune system allowing your fawning protocol to be successful. Questionable fawns can be supplemented with colostrum/ immunoglobulin products daily until weaning. Colostrum/ Immunoglobulins can be absorbed through the

porous intestinal lining of the fawn within the first 24 hours of life. After 24 hours, the intestines become less porous and unable to absorb immunoglobulins directly into the bloodstream. This always creates an excellent question. Why do we continue to provide colostrum or immunoglobulin supplements to fawns after day 1, even when the immunoglobulins cannot be directly absorbed into the bloodstream? When immunoglobulins are ingested (after day 1), they coat the intestinal lining with a protective “slime layer” for 4-6 hours. Therefore, providing immunoglobulin (colostrum) supplements, with the correct type and concentration, can provide a persistent “shield” when fed multiple times a day until weaning. I recommend providing this supplemental shield the entire time a fawn is nursing (approximately 12 weeks). There are powders available that contain immunoglobulins and pre/probiotics that can be top dressed on fawn feed as soon as they begin to eat. This will help protect the intestines as the fawns begin to adventure and chew on everything and help build a strong protective gastrointestinal microbial flora. Natural Immunoglobulins and pre/probiotic usage is critical to young growing fawns to help ensure healthy fawns.

Dog, cat, pig, and human immune systems differ in that colostrum is not as important for providing for an immediate immune system. The difference comes from the different type of placental attachment to the uterus among the species. The previous mentioned animals have a placental attachment that allows the fetus to be bathed in their mother’s blood in utero allowing them to have a developed immune system when born, unlike deer and other ruminants. Keep in mind to use strong tinctured iodine on the umbilical cords and in the holes in the ears produced by tagging when handling your fawns at day 1. The iodine turns the soft moist tissue into “leather” and prevents bad bacteria from entering the body.

Body fat reserves and metabolism can be lacking during this time period. Providing deer with optimal nutrition is important and knowing that they are getting maximum absorption is critical. Deer can digest feed but may not be able to absorb the nutrients. Post rut stress and parasites can damage the intestinal lining, causing intestinal ulceration, which causes weight loss due to decreased absorption of nutrients from an inflamed intestinal wall. Digestion does not equal absorption. Decreased absorption leads to poor performance. It is very common for bucks to be thin post rut. They have been chasing doe and not worried about eating. This stress, along with a suppressed immune system, causes poor health in bucks and doe. If you have thin deer, you can run blood work and look at their total protein and albumin levels. Your Veterinarian can interpret these blood chemistry values to rule-in or rule-out intestinal ulceration. If ulcers are detected, it is critical to heal the ulcers quickly. Ask your Veterinarian about Sucralfate. Sucralfate works great against intestinal ulcers and can heal them within 3 weeks. The affected deer should also be removed from grain carbohydrates and returned to a more natural fiber diet for 4 weeks (Fresh browse, baby spinach, watermelon, strawberries, blueberries, beet pulp shreds, alfalfa hay, etc.) to help repair the intestinal lining. It is

important to provide supplemental vitamins and minerals in order to correct metabolism to effective performance parameters as soon as possible. Especially with bucks, we demand 100% of their genetic potential to be displayed in a short period of time.

It is imperative to turn our thinking caps on early to prevent what could possibly be disastrous to our herds. A careful thought out plan helps concrete a preventative style of management versus a treatment style. Start your plan with your local Veterinarian. A comprehensive plan involving, doe, fawns, and bucks is critical. If we can produce 100% healthy deer, we can observe 100% of their genetic potential. As a Veterinarian, my first goal is preventing disease rather than treating disease. As any producer knows, the latter style is more costly and results are not as positive. Good luck and God bless!

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Spring & Fall Vaccines

Covexin 8 (2.5cc)
Virashield 6 + HS (2.5cc)
Presponse HM (1cc)
Fusogard (1cc)
Clostridium A (1cc)