




AGRICULTURE YOUTH & FAMILIES HEALTH ECONOMY ENVIRONMENT ENERGY COMMUNITIES

Small Beef Herd: Calf Care

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FACILITIES



WHAT ARE YOUR GOALS?


- Sell purebred breeding stock?
- Sell directly to consumers?
- Sell 4-H/FFA market steers?
- Sell to commercial feeder markets?
- Raise beef for your own use?

Your goals will influence the breed(s), breeding dates, breeding methods and calving dates you select.




OPTIONS

- Spring calving (March-April): Typical; better weather; lowest prices received on commercial market; cows benefit from grass cycles, calves less so.
- Summer calving (May-July): Good weather; cows benefit somewhat from grass cycle, calves much less so; some financial benefit when selling to commercial markets.
- Fall calving (August-Oct.): Weather can be wet; able to market when prices are higher; have to carry calves over winter and through poor weather.
- Winter calving (Dec.-Feb.): Worst weather; best benefit of grass cycle for calves; heaviest weaning weights but higher mortality; common in summer mountain range operations

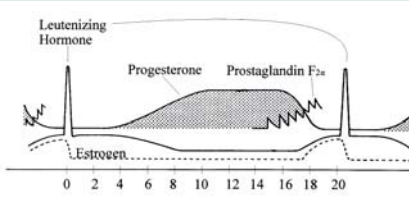


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BREEDING PROGRAM

- Overview of estrous cycle
- AI vs. natural insemination?
- Lease vs. co-own vs. purchase bull?
- Benefits of limiting breeding dates
- Pregnancy testing pays for itself



Hormones and Phases of the Estrous Cycle

PRE-CALVING CARE

- Sufficient protein and energy in dry cow ration
- Vitamin E/Selenium supplementation
- Pregnant cow vaccinations
 - Determine actual protocol with your vet
 - Clostridial diseases; respiratory diseases; diarrheal diseases
- Deworming (?)
- Nutrition/Body Condition Scoring

CALVING

- Know due dates!
- Have a clean place to calve
- Most cows calve without trouble
- Monitor heifers closely
- Examination indicated if cow in active labor for >30 min. without progress (60 min. for heifer)
- Must have handling facilities!
- Disinfect borrowed equipment
- Do not interfere unnecessarily
- Supplies (see handout)

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LABOR

- Phase 1 = preparation
- Phase 2 = labor
- Phase 3 = expulsion of placenta

- Dystocia = difficulty giving birth
 - Causes
 - Signs
 - What to do

NEONATAL CALF CARE

- Be careful!
- Calves need to eat and get dry ASAP
- Clip navel to ~ 2"
- Dip navel with iodine
- Ear tag
- Vitamin E/Selenium injection
- +/- oral medications based on herd health history
- Ensure adequate calf care by dam
- ENSURE ADEQUATE COLOSTRUM INTAKE
- Learn how to tube feed

COLOSTRUM

- Essential for optimal calf health
- High in antibodies, fat and vitamins
- Need first colostrum meal ASAP and at least 10% of body weight in colostrum within 24 hours
- Have frozen colostrum on hand
- Tube feed if necessary
- Dangers of colostrum from unknown source
- Colostrum supplements (vs. replacers)

MISCELLANEOUS

- Records are your friends
- Twins are undesirable (freemartins, stress, performance, labor)
- Do NOT buy replacement calf from sale yard if beef calf dies
- Calve outside in clean pasture if possible
- Collect and dispose of placentas
- Biosecurity efforts are worth the time and cost
- Any beef animal can hurt you any time

MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

- When and how to castrate?
- Use growth implants?
- When and how to wean?
 - Calves must have functional rumen, gaining
 - Naturally at 6-7 months
 - Low-stress fenceline weaning
 - Weaning benefits cow BCS
 - Low-nutrient ration aids weaning
- Retain or sell weanlings?
- Preconditioning: know what buyer wants

CASTRATION

- Reasons (behavior, carcass)
- Methods
 - Banding
 - Surgery (flies)
 - Crushing
- Timing
 - Young calf (1.5 to 14 days; less pain)
 - Branding time (3 mo.)
 - Weaning (purebred operations)

CALF NUTRITIONAL CONCERNS

- Creep feed for faster gain; exclude cows
- Rumen not fully functional until 3 months of age
- Coccidiostats (Bovatec®, Deccox®) also boost rate of gain
- Make feed changes gradually
- Probiotics commercially available
- Milk replacers available (\$\$); use one with milk protein vs. soy, $\geq 20\%$ fat

HEALTH CONCERNS

- Chilling
- Starvation
- Pneumonia
- Scours
- White Muscle Disease
- Bovine Viral Diarrhea-Persistently Infected animals
- Bloaters, poor doers
- Isolate herd additions for 30+ days
- Brucellosis vaccinations for replacement heifers at 4-10 months old (vet only)

CLOSTRIDIAL DISEASES

- 5-, 7- or 8-way vaccines for Clostridial diseases (Blackleg, enterotoxemia, etc.)
- Generally give to 2-3 month old calf
- Ask local vet what is needed in your area

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PNEUMONIA

- Weather factors (cold, wet)
- Stress factors
- Nutritional factors
- Disease factors (PI-3, BDV, BRSV, IBR; Pasteurella, Mycoplasma, Hemophilus)
- Management factors (crowding, transport)
- Environmental factors (dust, ammonia)
- Parasite factors (lungworms)
- Vaccination program: work with your vet

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SCOURS

- Causes
 - Bacteria (E. coli, Salmonella, Clostridia...)
 - Viruses (Rotavirus, Coronavirus, BDV...)
 - Parasites (Coccidia, Cryptosporidia...)
 - Nutritional (Lack of colostrum, milk overload...)
 - Stress (weather, poor nutrition, crowding...)
- Treatment
 - Oral or IV electrolytes
 - Withhold milk if possible
- Prevention
 - Cleanliness
 - Vaccination (work with your vet)
 - Management

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SANDHILLS CALVING SYSTEM, UNIV. OF NE LINCOLN

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Sandhills Calf Scours Project

Re-create the conditions existing at the start of the calving season

- Clean calving area
- Absence of older calves as a source of exposure

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Sandhills Calving System

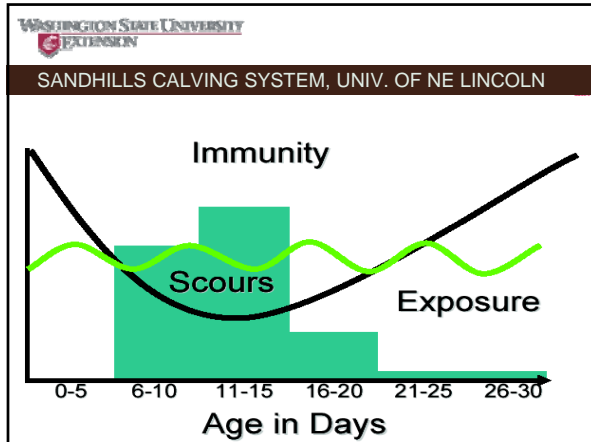
Re-create the conditions at the start of the calving season

- Move pregnant cows to new calving pastures each week
 - Minimize dose-load
 - Improve maternal bonding
- Segregate calves by age to prevent the multiplier effect

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SANDHILLS CALVING SYSTEM, UNIV. OF NE LINCOLN

Sandhills Calving System Week 5



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- VALUE-ADDED OPPORTUNITIES
- Customized products for consumers (local, natural, grass-finished, organic...)
 - Agrotourism (calving, photography, etc.)
 - On-farm educational programs (calving school)
 - Compost (charge for it!)
 - Pelts
 - Skulls

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- RESOURCES
- http://web.aces.uiuc.edu/vista/pdf_pubs/beef.PDF
 - www.utextension.utk.edu/publications/spfiles/SP692.pdf
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