Fall Calving Approaching

Body condition of cows and heifers at calving impacts incidence of dystocia, colostrum quality, and return to estrus or post-partum interval which affects rebreeding ability. Targets for mature cows at calving time is a body condition score of 5 while 1st calf heifers have a target of 6. Body condition is typically lost following calving due to the high nutrient requirement for the production of milk. Minimizing the loss of body condition following calving and making sure cows/heifers are in good condition prior to calving can help reduce the negatives mentioned earlier.

Body condition scoring is done on a 1-9 scale with 1=emaciated and 9=obese. Cattle typically range in the 4-7 score. With a score of 5 the indicator is that you can see the last 2 or 3 ribs and a score of 6 has a smooth appearance over the ribs. Moving BCS requires from 75-125 pounds of body weight depending on the frame size of the animal.

As calving approaches it is also important to know the signs of calving and animals experiencing calving difficulty. The stages of labor, physical changes, signs of labor, and time frame for each stage is listed in the table below. Recognizing abnormal delivery can help to determine when and if to assist the cow and help to save calves and reduce post calving problems in the cow.

Recognizing abnormal delivery:
- If time from feet being visible to birth is longer than 2 hours
- No progress in a 30 minute period

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<th>Stage</th>
<th>Physiology</th>
<th>Signs</th>
<th>Time Frame</th>
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| 1     | Dilation of cervix, uterine contractions begin, water sac expelled | Cow is nervous, kicking at side, lying down, slight straining | Heifers: 4-6 hrs  
Cows: 2-3 hrs |
| 2     | Calf enter birth canal, feet & head protrude first, calf delivery complete | Strong frequent straining—lying down, water sac and/or calf visible, discharge of fluids | Heifers: 3-6 hrs  
Cows: 2-4 hrs |
| 3     | Uterine contractions expel membranes | Mild straining, membranes hanging out, discharge of fluids | Heifers and cows: 2-8 hrs  
Abnormal if more than 12 hours |
Cattle may be slow to move to market this fall as ample grass has provided plenty of opportunity for grazing cows and calves. Several comments have been made about not having enough cow inventory to keep up with pasture growth. What a problem to have!

Weaning time is one of the most stressful times in a beef animal’s life. Any steps to minimize stress during weaning can reduce the risk and cost of disease. Whether you are thinking about weaning spring calves or just getting around to weaning last year’s fall calf crop there are some things to think about and weaning options available.

Fenceline weaning is a great way to provide low stress weaning as opposed to the more traditional total separation weaning practice. This does require a strong fence (woven wire or multiple strand, high-tensile wire), but allows for nose-to-nose contact. Cows are moved to a new pasture to allow calves to stay in a more familiar environment. Pasture weaning calves has shown to improve post-weaning gain and reduce treatment for respiratory disease as opposed to dry-lot or truck weaned calves.

Fenceline weaning also allows for “second pass” forage. This is a practice often associated with intensive grazing, but becomes useful in traditional grazing operations around weaning time. Calves are allowed to enter a fresh pasture before the cows which gives them access to the higher quality forages. Cows are moved into the pasture later and clean up what is left.

Stress from weaning can suppress the immune system making animals more susceptible to disease and less likely to mount an immune response to vaccines. Administering respiratory vaccines 2-4 weeks prior to weaning while the calf is still on its dam and then again at weaning can provide a better immune response. Vaccination timing depending on weaning options are listed below.

Preconditioning calves means preparing them nutritionally and health wise to enter the next phase of production. Calves need to be acclimated to the intended post-weaning diet so weight loss is minimized during the weaning process. This diet can be fed to both cows and calves for about two weeks, or be provided in a creep feeder. A 45 day post-weaning period has shown health and weight gain benefits in the feedlot over truck weaning. If a preconditioning period cannot be provided make sure calves are rested, fed, and watered before shipping.

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<tr>
<th>Option A</th>
<th>Option B</th>
<th>Option C</th>
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<tr>
<td>Most effective for developing immunity. Calves will remain on farm for a 45 day preconditioning period.</td>
<td>Calves processed 3-4 weeks prior to weaning, then shipped day of weaning.</td>
<td>Calves are processed at weaning. Calves should not be shipped until 3-5 days after weaning unless intranasal vaccine is used at least 6 hours prior to shipping.</td>
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<td><strong>Weaning:</strong> Let calves sit overnight before processing to drop cortisol levels.  ♦ MLV– IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV  ♦ Pasteurella</td>
<td><strong>Pre-Weaning:</strong> 3-4 weeks prior to weaning  ♦ MLV– IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV  ♦ Pasteurella</td>
<td><strong>Weaning:</strong> let calves sit overnight before processing  ♦ MLV– IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV  ♦ Clostridial 7-way with H. somnus  ♦ Pasteurella</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Post-Weaning:</strong> 3-4 weeks  ♦ MLV– IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV  ♦ Clostridial 7-way with H. somnus</td>
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*Calves should be vaccinated between 2–3 months of age with 7-way Clostridial and MLV– IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV for best pro-
Pasture/Hay Management

Whether establishing a new pasture, renovating or maintaining an existing pasture, or stockpiling a fescue pasture, August is the month to begin preparing your fields for this fall.

August is the time to make the final herbicide application to control the warm season annual and prepare the seed bed for planting your cool season grass. Consider in these fields establishing “novel” endophyte fescue which provide the positive qualities of fescue without the negative factors.

If your soil has not been tested this season, this would be a good time to soil sample fields. Keep in mind that cool season grass root development occurs in the fall, therefore adequate fertility and pH is necessary for a healthy grass.

If the stand needs more grass, graze field close in mid- to late-August and drill into existing stand by early September. If the stand contains more weeds than grass, August is a good time to apply a burndown herbicide, containing glyphosate, to actively growing weeds two weeks before reestablishment of pasture. Be cautious of growth regulator herbicides such as 2,4-D, dicamba, triclopyr, and picloram which have plant back restrictions. Read and follow all herbicide label directions.

Mid-August is the time to even up fescue pastures selected for stockpiling. Pastures selected for stockpiling should receive nitrogen in order to maximize September and October growth. Research has indicated the 50 units of nitrogen per acre can produce approximately 1200 pounds of forage. November-December grazing stockpile is most efficient when strip grazed with a moveable electric fence.

More information on Tall Fescue can be found at: http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G4646

Cover Crops

As more producers are considering cover crops, there are still some questions that come up about planting dates and those cover crops that may be suitable for grazing. This season has been particularly challenging throughout Missouri with many acres that were prevented from planting or crops lost from flooding. To provide some green cover on these acres over the winter, cover crops may be an option for your operation.

There are many different reasons why a producer may consider cover crops. Some of the traditional reasons are soil and wind erosion, organic matter buildup, nitrogen scavenging or fixing, and weed suppression. This year some livestock producers may be looking for added acres to extend grazing since hay production was an extreme challenge this year.

The general planting window for fall cover crops is mid-August through mid-September. This time frame allows enough time before a freeze for plants to develop healthy above and below ground biomass. Also, some cover crops, such as brassica species and oats, winter kill when temps fall below 20°F. This planting window can be extended through September for most cover crops. The exceptions would be if a producer was looking to utilize tillage radish for loosening soil for example, then the time frame would be restricted to maximize root growth before a freeze. Cereal grains, such as rye, wheat and triticale, can be planted later into October.

Seeding methods for an existing corn or soybean crop include: aerial interseeding before harvest or broadcast/drilling seed after harvest. Interseeding corn timing is when 50% sunlight is hitting the ground and soybean timing is when leaves are turning prior to drop. Some work has also been done with seeding from the combine, which might work for low seeding rate crops but tends to slow harvest.

Two primary options for grazing include cereal grains and forage brassicas. Legumes are high quality but provide limited feed in fall and winter. Annual ryegrass is an available cover and makes excellent forage for grazing and stockpiling; however, to a row crop producer this plant is a difficult to control weed.

Cover crops need adequate time to develop before initiating grazing. For grass crops this would be 8” to 6” of growth grazing down to 4” to 3”, respectively. Forage brassicas are typically ready to graze 60 to 80 days after seeding and grazing down to 10” stubble. Managed strip or rotational grazing is best to reduce potential overgrazing and loss of cover. When grazing consider conditions of the field where cattle will graze. Grazing on wet soil can increase compaction. If participating in USDA programs, consult NRCS about any standards that need to be followed pertaining to cover crops and grazing.
Show-Me-Select heifer enrollment for fall 2016 calving (May 7, 2016 sale date) is due September 1! If you plan to sell Show-Me-Select replacement heifers at the Fruitland sale or any other SMS sale for fall calving you must enroll. Enrollment does NOT mean you must sell them, but you absolutely cannot sell them as SMS heifers if you do not enroll. Heifers enrolled for fall calving 2016 must meet 2015 program requirements. Requirements and enrollment forms can be obtained from the extension office or are available on our website: www.semobeef.com. Remember, heifers must have received official calfhood vaccination against Brucellosis (Bangs) to be eligible. Contact me if you have any questions on the program or requirements.

Semo Cattlemen’s Annual Picnic:
August 27, 2015 6:30 PM

Host: Richardet Floor Covering, West Outer Road—Perryville
Program: Terry Birk, FSA—Conservation Incentives
Butch Meier, MO Cattlemen’s VP—Livestock Liability signs
Dinner: Ribeyes & drinks furnished
Last Name: A-H = Desserts
I-Z = Salads and Vegetables

Call by August 24 to reserve your steak!!! 573-243-3581

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