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The Value of Prebreeding Evaluation in Heifers

Here's a topic many of us are very familiar with and probably already practice when developing replacement heifers. But we should hone in on two important aspects of Prebreeding Evaluation and assess their value: pelvic measurements and reproductive tract scoring.

Pelvic measurements are arguably the most accurate predictor of calving difficulty or dystocia. This is a tool that most benefits those that will be calving out the heifer(s) in question. It is estimated that dystocia costs us, nationwide, \$750 million a year. It affects more than just calf loss, but delay in return to estrus (heat), reduced conception rates, and a lowering of weaning weights (this is due to selecting for calving-ease bulls).

Yet, we can select for a young female with an acceptable pelvic area, as pelvic area is highly heritable. However, this is not to be confused with frame or weight of the animal since selecting on size alone is ineffective.

The best time to obtain pelvic measurements are about a month before breeding and when she is a yearling (due to calve as a two year old). During this time, we like to aim for a pelvic area (height x width of the interior of the pelvis) of about 150 cm² (this is the requirement in the Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Program).

Another important data point to collect at this time is the heifer's reproductive tract score. This is done by palpating the reproductive tract to determine how close to puberty the heifer is; this measurement is beneficial to the producer who will be breeding the heifers. This score is from 1-5 with 1 being infantile (these heifers and freemartins should be culled) and 4 and 5 being cycling (5 indicates the heifer has gone through at least one heat cycle). You have probably heard that the heifer's first heat cycle is the least fertile, and it is best to bred on the second or subsequent cycle.

So, heifers must reach puberty by 15 months of age if they are to conceive and calve as 2 year olds.

However, as many as 35 % of all beef heifers do not reach puberty by this time.

Your vet can perform both of these measurements and both can help you to weed out the weak and not waste your inputs on them!

But what if you're not interested in raising your own replacements? It is sometimes argued that if you have a small beef herd, then you should purchase your replacements. Personally, this is when I like to use my favorite response, "It depends!" An old estimation of cost to develop heifers is about \$600-900 with an average of \$728 (Troxel and Gadberry, 2013). So, if you don't have the resources or time and it is better for you to purchase heifers, be sure you know what you're buying; information is very valuable here! Get as much of a guarantee or proof as possible.

Salivary Syndrome in Horses

Have you ever noticed a horse slobbering a lot? I mean enough to make a puddle! Excessive slobbering or salivary syndrome is usually a symptom of a mycotoxicosis or slaframine intoxication. But don't worry; it's not as bad as it sounds!

Slaframine (from the Norse term slaflra or to slaver or slobber) is caused by a fungus that infects red and white clover. This is typically in excessive concentration in the plant after high humidity or wet conditions (which we experienced earlier this year). Additionally, some horses may respond differently than others. This fungus remains in the plant when it is hayed up to 10 months and is most likely to occur with 2nd cuttings.

Typically, this is not harmful to the animal, so long as plenty of water is provided so that the animal does not dehydrate. Removing the horse from the pasture (or infected hay) is the best way to remedy

the unsightly symptom, although this may take up to 48 hours to clear up.

However, you should remain cautious. Excessive salivation can also be a symptom of vesicular stomatitis or mechanical/chemical irritation from plants that have awns, spines, or burs.

Additional symptoms from excessive slaframine concentration would be lacrimation, colic, and diarrhea. In which case, call your vet immediately.

Events:

Pesticide Collection Event

Bring your pesticide/herbicide waste to the Missouri Soybean Association's Bay Farm Research Facility (5601 S. Rangeline Rd, Columbia, MO 65201) on Saturday, September 7th from 8 am – noon. Any questions, please call 573-751-0616 or visit

www.dnr.mo.gov/env/hwp/pesticide.

BQA Certification

Instructed by Dr. Craig Payne on Monday, September 16, 2019 at 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm at the Mineral Area College, North College Center (5270 Flat River Road, Park Hills).

RSVP to the St. Francois County Extension at 573-756-4539 or email grahamkk@missouri.edu.

Hay School

The Hay School will be a full day workshop on Friday, October 11th, at 54 Country, 400 Gaylord Dr, Fulton. Not only will we cover a wide range of topics from best management practices, nutrition, and economics, but also participants will get to visit with sponsors to learn about the latest machinery and technology available. Registration is \$40 per person, which includes lunch, refreshments, and a manual. Call 573-642-0755 or email snella@missouri.edu with any questions you may have or mail in registration to the Callaway County Extension Office, 5803 County Road 302, Fulton, MO 65201. Online registration is available at <https://extension2.missouri.edu/>.

Beef Cattle Artificial Insemination School

Are you interested in gaining hands-on experience in beef cattle artificial insemination? Join us October 25-26th for our annual A.I. School at the Lincoln University Busby Farm (5124 Goller Road, Jefferson City, MO 65109; Friday from 5 – 9 pm and Saturday from 8 am – 4 pm). Registration is \$315 (\$100 of the fee is nonrefundable after October 1st) and includes dinner on Friday, lunch on Saturday, and a manual and other materials.

Mail in registration to the Callaway County Extension Office (5803 County Road 302, Fulton, MO 65201) or online registration is available at <http://www.event.com/d/myqtb3/4W> Get your registration in soon; class size is limited! Any questions, please contact us at 573-642-0755 or email snella@missouri.edu.

Pearls of Production

Join us November 1st and 2nd for the annual Pearls of Production-Women in Agriculture. This year we will start at 1 pm in Columbia, MO (Drury Plaza Hotel East) with our special guest, Vicky Hartzler, U.S. Representative, 4th District! We will then tour the HARC (Horticulture & Agroforestry Research Center) followed by dinner and our evening wrap up. The following day will be our hands-on breakout sessions:

Beef Cattle

- DNA Sampling
- Blood Pregnancy Testing
- Livestock Handling/Safety

Small Ruminants

- Bud Box
- Rope Halters
- Branded Castration and Injection Techniques

Equine

- Essential Care & Management
- Trailer Loading
- Safety

Registration is due by October 21st

<https://web.event.com/event/db41af25-8af0-4ddc-bbfa-dd7894cb6a6f>