

Positive Momentum

Angus University webinar discusses ways to improve reproduction.

by Whitney Whitaker, American Angus Association

Everyone wants cattle that breed easily, calve early and display good reproductive performance.

Though this may sound simple enough, how do cattlemen achieve those things simultaneously?

“I’m a big fan of a concept called ‘positive momentum,’ because I believe really good reproductive success this year ensures really good reproductive success next year,” said Bob Larson, a veterinarian with the Beef Cattle Institute at Kansas State University.

During the Angus University webinar, Keys to Reproductive Success: Female Edition, hosted Dec. 13, Larson shared tools and practices to help cattlemen achieve optimal success in their cow herds.

One way to make progress is to benchmark a producer’s current situation and compare it to a desired plan. For example, a breeder with an 8% open rate might set a goal of Larson’s ideal open rate of 5%. This allows for a significant increase in earned income as earlier calving cows leads to heavier weaning calves and a faster rebreed window.

Larson also described the difference in reproductive success for first-calf heifers. To meet the constraints of having an 83-day period for cows to rebreed and calve

at the same time next year, Larson recommended heifers calve ahead of cows for their first calf. To help

ensure heifers reach puberty at the right time, he advised assistance from your veterinarian.


“It is important for veterinarians to really evaluate

the heifers to make sure each individual heifer and the group as a whole can reach puberty in time to get bred a little ahead of the cows,” Larson said.

The onset of puberty is primarily influenced by age and weight within breeds, he explains. This leads to a common question, what is the appropriate target weight?

“The real question is, what ration should I feed heifers to result in the desired number reaching puberty by the desired date,” Larson said.

He reemphasized working alongside a veterinarian and nutritionist helps producers answer those questions. For producers to achieve this success in their operations, they must avoid primary threats to positive momentum. These hurdles include having heifers who don’t calve ahead of cows, calving in thin body condition, bulls that fail to successfully breed cows and diseases that end pregnancy. Avoiding these issues promises potential for success year after year.

To view the full presentation, visit bit.ly/DecemberAUrecording. To learn more about upcoming Angus University webinars or to view past recordings, visit www.angus.org/university. 

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