

Keep On Keeping On for More Profit

During tough times, beef producers should keep on doing the management procedures that contribute to efficient beef production and reduce cost. Several things are included in that category:

Pregnancy check all cows. If your cows have not been palpated for pregnancy by a veterinarian (DVM), they need to be immediately. Since annual costs are more than \$250 per cow, the time and small fee are well spent. Selling a cow now, and replacing her with a genetically superior heifer is a good idea since heifer prices are down.

While the DVM is palpating the cows, do other recommended procedures. Wait until pregnancy status is determined before other health practices are done to the cows. If she is vaccinated and wormed, and turns up open, there will be no return on the cost of practices and you will have to wait 30 more days to market due to the withdrawal times required for various products.

Bull Breeding Soundness Exams (BSE). Every bull needs to have a BSE. This is an estimate of his breeding capabilities. In the West, ranchers will not buy a bull without a BSE. If a low fertility bull misses even a couple of cows because of poor reproductive potential, this loss will be greater than the cost of a BSE. Also, if the bull settles cows even one heat sooner than he would if not real fertile, the BSE is easily more than paid for.

Call your DVM and ask when a BSE can be done on your bulls. From the increased dollars that can result, your pocketbook will look a whole lot better.

Keep cows in good nutrition. It's essential that brood cows have proper nutrition. They can't be expected to carry a full-term calf, maintain body condition, feed the newborn calf and breed back on time, without being in good condition.

See your local Extension agent about testing your forage, and adding whatever might be necessary to achieve optimum performance from your cows and calves.

Check during calving season. Heifers and cows that are approaching calving need to be in a place that is clean and easily observed. Checking these animals four times a day has increased the number of live calves up to 50 percent in

some herds. Heifers should not go in labor longer than about three hours. Most cows can go a little longer. It's fine to let them go ahead and have the calf, instead of jumping in there every time.

At the first sign of an abnormal presentation, or oversized calf, assistance needs to be close behind. Calling the DVM as soon as possible makes it more likely that professional help can get there in time to save the calf. A live calf is more likely with prompt assistance. Caesareans are a good way to increase the likelihood of a heifer having a live calf, and breeding back on time.

Proven veterinary procedures. Before chute working day, it is beneficial to take a fecal sample from several cows to the DVM clinic for a fecal flotation worm egg exam. From these sample results, your DVM can recommend the internal parasite control practice that will be the most cost effective for the herd.

Vaccine choice is critical. Calves of different age and sex require different vaccines. Follow the advice of your DVM on this. It is essential to read the label directions every time cattle are worked. This informs about any updates and also reviews practices of the past. Vaccine must be used properly, as set forth in the directions, with regard to dosage, route of administration and frequency. Also, aseptic technique reduces the likelihood of injection site abscesses, which lower the quality of the meat and reduce the effectiveness of any injected medication.

"Don't waste a dead calf?" Posting dead animals is a valuable source of information. As soon as you dig a hole and push a dead animal into it, you have just destroyed lab samples, leaving no hope of finding out if there was something you could learn that would either cut short or eliminate a disease outbreak.

Call your DVM as early as possible after death for a necropsy on any animal that dies. It's time and money well spent. Any cow that aborts needs to have a blood sample drawn by your DVM.

Keep in touch with your veterinarian and Extension agent. They are good sources of information when things are tough.

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