

The Short List

Task Force provides 2010 recommendations for timing of AI and synchronization protocols for heifers and cows.

by Kindra Gordon

Sandy Johnson, Kansas State University livestock production specialist, shared an update on the efforts of the North Central Region Bovine Reproductive Task Force as she addressed participants at the Applied Reproductive Strategies in Beef Cattle (ARSBC) workshop hosted in conjunction with the 2010 Cattle Industry Annual Convention in San Antonio, Texas. The Task Force has spearheaded the ARSBC workshops conducted across the country over the past several years.

Johnson reported that the Task Force has developed a “short list” of basic recommendations for timing of artificial insemination (AI) and protocols that work specifically for heifers and a separate list for cows (see Johnson’s proceedings paper in the newsroom at www.appliedreprostrategies.com for the two lists).

“These are the protocols that the Task Force believes will work in a majority of situations and are reasonable to apply,” Johnson said, adding that the list is updated on an annual basis.

Johnson further explained that the Task Force has divided most protocols into one of three categories:

- ▶ strictly heat detection and AI;
- ▶ combination of heat detection and timed AI; and

- ▶ strictly fixed-timed AI.

“The first decision producers need to make in selecting a protocol for their operation is ‘How much heat detection do you want to do?’,” she said.

“There are a lot of protocols out there,” Johnson said. “This is a short list. If you choose to use a different protocol, make sure you have data to support it; otherwise, the cost and extra steps may add up.”

“Within product category, all products are equally effective, so choose the system that works for you,” she said, citing labor, facilities and timeline as important factors to consider, as well as the support provided by the supplier of the product.

Additionally, Johnson offered these tips to ensure a successful synchronization and AI protocol:


- ▶ Make sure to give the correct injection on the day specified in the protocol.
- ▶ Use at label dose.
- ▶ Follow BQA guidelines for all injections.

Planning assistance available

To help producers in implementing synchronization protocols, Johnson provided a working demonstration of the “Estrous Synchronization Planner” software developed by Iowa State University. Features of the software include:

- 24 estrus synchronization systems, in three categories, including fixed-timed AI, estrus detection with clean-up AI and estrus detection with AI;
- 13 recommended systems for heifers and cows, including the use of CIDR®;
- 11 less preferred systems for heifers and cows;
- a daily calendar of activity once the system and date of breeding have been established by the producer; and
- a budget cost analysis of the various synchronization systems.

“I think most valuable is the calendar, particularly with longer systems,” Johnson said. She explained how the software allows for a date to be plugged in and automatically schedules all injection and breeding dates for the system. “The planner allows you to figure out the times that will work and then generate a list of daily activities to communicate with your labor team, as well as calculate cost per AI pregnancy comparing three systems,” she added.

The “Estrous Synchronization Planner” software is available to producers for a nominal fee by contacting the Iowa Beef Center (beefcenter@iastate.edu or 515-294-2333), or by downloading an order form from the center’s web site, www.iowabeefcenter.org. 

Editor’s Note: *The ARSBC program was developed by the Beef Cattle Reproduction Task Force to improve understanding and application of reproductive technologies, including AI, estrus synchronization and factors affecting male fertility. For additional coverage — including summaries, proceedings and audio for each presentation — visit the newsroom at www.appliedreprostrategies.com. For API coverage of the Cattle Industry Convention, visit the newsroom at www.4cattlemen.com.*

Focus on Females