

Replacement Heifer Roundup

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The annual fall replacement heifer roundup is always notable. It is much like a college student's first trip back home.

There is a feeling of closure once all the kids are safe and settled in for the night. A parent then can drift off into a restful sleep, at least as restful as one can have when children are under your care.

This fall, many children have made their first formal trip to seek residence somewhere else. As they left, the sadness was heartfelt, but one soon realizes that the nights actually can be a little longer and more restful as the need to wait up slowly diminishes. Although always present, the worrying subsides about their coming home at night.

However, the first trip home is unique and usually brings a flood of memories, especially for parents. This young adult, who used to bounce freely from one event to the next and pass through the kitchen in a blaze as a kid, now comes, pauses briefly, passes out a few hugs and feelings of joy and even reminisces about the past.

It is easy to notice that things have changed. That kid, formerly a child, is now a freshly honed adult ready to take on the world. It does make one feel good.

Likewise, one can notice similar changes and emotions when viewing replacement heifers as they come home this fall. The heifers probably were last noticed in spring when they either were bred artificially and turned out to pasture or turned out to pasture and exposed to calving-ease bulls.

There is something universal about replacement heifers for all cattle producers. These are the future mother cows that breeders have worked hard to design and produce, they hope, for the next decade. They are the foundation of the herd and are given that respect.

The replacement heifers' arrival at home is not unlike when one's children first return home. Similar feelings are present, just as when one's children moved out and returned home that first visit.

With children returning home, the chit-chat and all the updates on life at college are common. The conversations then turn more serious. "How's school going? How are your classes?"

The same happens as the replacement heifers walk through the gate and onto the premises. Have they passed their tests to gain entry into the herd?

Recently, the Dickinson Research Extension Center worked this year's replacements. Most of the heifers had done well, but, as always, there are some that seem to stand still and don't pass the test.

In the beef business, "Is the heifer pregnant?" is the priority question. Seven of the 46 heifers came up open and are now destined to be sorted for the rail.

One additional heifer was added to the sort pen because of attitude. Not only did she kick her way into the palpation chute, she continued her obnoxious behavior in the chute.

The cry soon was heard; "Let her join her comrades in the sort pen because she is not worth a \$50,000 knee repair." Good working temperament in a heifer is critical and no excuses are allowed.

By the end of the session, 38 heifers were ready to move into that cherished replacement pen. The heifers are estimated to start calving March 30, with 16 heifers to calve within 21 days, 17 to calve within the second set of 21 days and five to finish up the calving season.

Only the Best Fertile Heifers Need to Stay

Number of Replacement Heifers Expected to Calve

First 21 days of the calving season	16
Second 21 days of the calving season	17
Third 21 days or later	5
Open heifers	7
Ornery heifers	1

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