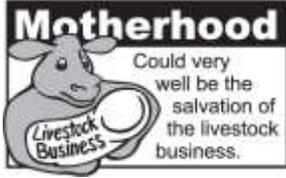


BeefTalk: Mothers Always Mean Business



Motherhood - Could very well be the salvation of the livestock business.

Getting between a new mother and her newborn calf is serious business that should not be taken lightly.

Motherhood never can be taken away. The other day, the ranch crew was reminiscing about the recent calving season. Certain cows come to mind quickly as a certain degree of quickness was needed to survive the initial tagging and appraisal of the calf.

Certain cows are somewhat tolerant of their two-legged caretakers, while others are downright nasty. In fact, without due care, producers can find themselves in very difficult situations. Our heart goes out to those who have lost loved ones in just that very scenario.

However, motherhood is not something to take lightly or be erased. In fact, if there is one point that is the salvation of the livestock business, it is motherhood. Becoming a mother, those final days of preparation, expectations and finally entrusted with another living being, is precious. Pardon if I stray a little bit, but it is worth it. Mothers take the word "entrusted" seriously.

In my own upbringing, I can distinctly remember the day dad decided to go get the lost baby pig. Dad allowed the sows to nest in the pasture. For some reason, one piglet was misplaced, so Dad decided he should go get it. Those who know sows realize they take motherhood very seriously, so once Dad grabbed that lone pig and one squeal later the race was on, and a dozen or so sows had Dad on their menu. He made it to the fence, but those sows were serious because they were mothers. Mothers always mean business.

One of the crew was pondering why we did not sell a particularly aggressive cow last year before she did serious bodily harm to someone. That answer was not immediate. The hesitation simply was a brief moment of respect to a challenged mother because mothers always mean business. Perhaps there is an obvious time that rogue mothers need to go, but not without some pondering.

Getting between a new mother and her newborn calf is serious business that should not be taken lightly. As a producer, you just might lose. Actually, there was a brief moment that I was not sure if I should bet on the sows or Dad. Fortunately, Dad seemed to pick up some needed speed.

However, there is a bigger thought to this concept of motherhood, as noted earlier. Motherhood could be the salvation of the livestock business. That same mindset, the mind of a new mother, needs to be understood by those who are involved in the beef business. Trying to raise living things without an appreciation for the living being won't work.

Any producer who has tried to find ranch hands knows the frustration of trying to find someone who understands a mother cow. If one understands a mother cow, one can raise beef. If one does not, regardless of all the prodding, poking and modern technology gadgets available in the side pocket of the pickup, one is destined for failure.

In the bigger picture, we see a need to refine and streamline production efficiency to the point of perfection. However, what is perfection? Perfection is motherhood. Without it, we have nothing. The need to understand motherhood is critical, but more importantly, the need to have it is essential.

Granted, pecking at the competition, one sees thousands upon thousands of little peeping fluff balls. Even then, if management forgets, or never understood, that if you put a cluck hen in the middle of those peeping fluff balls, she will immediately claim them all. One good look by the cluck will warn everyone not to touch her babies.

Mothers always mean business. As an industry, we must never forget that. Motherhood is not something we select against, but something we should cherish and respect. If one cannot feel what a new mother feels, then one should ask why one is in the cattle business.

Maybe, just maybe, there are times where we need to ponder where we are going. I often hear the "we need to feed the world" phrase. But how? If we miss the very point and erase motherhood, we have nothing. Perhaps "the world needs more mothers" is a better phrase.

Mothers always mean business.

May you find all your ear tags.