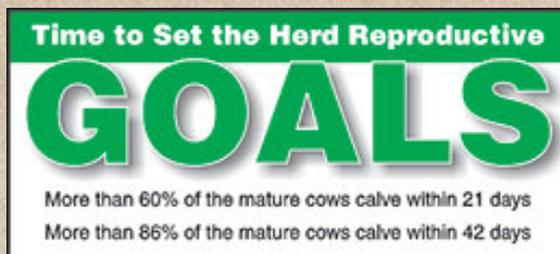




BeefTalk 662: To Pass, 60 Percent Must Calve in 21 Days

SUPPORTING MATERIALS



If less than 60 percent of the mature cows are calving within the first 21 days, a major re-evaluation of one's managerial protocols needs to be considered.

As the calving season winds down, check the calving book. Count the number of cows that calved within 21 days from when the third mature cow calved. After that, check the number that calved the next 21 days and the next 21 days. Keep counting until you get to the end of the calving book.

Why? The No. 1 one indicator - let me repeat - the No. 1 indicator that the cows within a cattle operation fit the managerial program is timely reproduction. In other words, they calve on time.

The type of cattle operation is not important, nor is when the calving season is set. What is important is that at least 60 percent of the mature cows expected to calve do so within 21 days of the start of the calving season.

Why 60 percent? The average percent for cows calving within 21 days for those North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement producers enrolled in the CHAPS program through the NDSU Extension Service is 61 percent. Why not at least be average? Any excuse that allows for poor reproductive performance within the cow herd will mean increased costs and a decreased output of beef.

To go to the next 21 days, a total of 86 percent of the mature cows should have calved within the 42-day calving window. As a cattle producer, if you meet the percentage, continue as is or tweak your managerial thoughts to try to improve.

If one really wants a challenge, try to cut replacement and culling rates for the herd. Although a replacement rate of 15 percent is typical, try to cut it to 10 percent. There always are new concepts for managing cows, but few cattle producers actually achieve a reduction in replacement rate.

Back to evaluating calving dates. If less than 60 percent of the mature cows are calving within the first 21 days, a major re-evaluation of one's managerial protocols needs to be considered.

The first point that is noted will be nutrition because it ultimately determines reproduction. However, increasing nutritional inputs carries a cost, so cow genetics needs to be evaluated at the same time.



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Are the cows the right ones to match the available resources or nutrition? Most cow herds are developed on-site and are a product of generations of cow families that have successfully adapted to the ranch. Buying cow herds and moving them often will end in failure. This not only fails but also generates more expenses that ultimately become difficult to pay back.

The industry often used to move cattle to find nutrition. It was a production system essentially based on Longhorn cattle. History books are the best source for that information.

In addition to the need to evaluate the cow herd's ability to reproduce and produce beef, fall culling already needs to be thought through. How many cows are staying and how many are not? Those cows calving after the first 42 days probably will remain. For cows that calved after 63 days, producers should consider those cows as candidates to move on to someone else's production system.

After reviewing the calving data, draw a big circle around the date that the bulls are to be removed from the cow herd. Breeding for 45 days is quite acceptable, and removing the bulls certainly defines the end to next year's calving season.

Maybe delaying bull turnout is a thought. If the first 21-day mature cow calving rate is less than 60 percent and the desire to increase timely nutritional inputs is considered too costly, then delaying bull turnout may be the answer.

The preferred method of raising cows is to match the cow to the surrounding environment. Cows will perform within their given environment if given the opportunity. Fall culling seems a long way away, but now is the time to start thinking about it and evaluating.

The calving book holds the answers to most questions. Producers just need to look at it. Count the cows and calves and then evaluate and take action. Enter the calving data into a good performance program such as CHAPS and study the calving distribution table thoroughly.

Apply the Lazy L technique, which means getting rid of the proper mix of older and late-calving cows. Positive pressure on management means time spent evaluating what one thinks is working. Reviewing the actual numbers and data points will determine if it really is working.

As those good heifers are bred this spring, ask yourself if those good heifers that were bred the year before and the year before that still are in the herd and performing according to plan. Are those cows destined for artificial insemination truly ready for synchronization?

There are so many good questions to be answered. However, the answers are readily available. It's called a calving book, so once it's filled out, read it. It's good for you.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>. For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

