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NDSU Extension Service

BeefTalk: 2002 Spring Work Schedule Takes Shape for Producers

By Kris Ringwall, Extension Beef Specialist,

In most cattle operations it takes time to make a decision, implement the decision, evaluate the decision, and try again. Time doesn't stand still -- and finding time to make the decision is as elusive as the options one considers when making a decision.

The decisions we make now influence our time available and how we spend it far into the future. Conversely, planning how we spend our time next spring requires decision making now.

At the North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center, the months following calving have been busy. Calf 10328 was the last calf born in our spring calving program. His name has nothing to do

with his mother or father, but simply means that he was the 328th calf born this year. It is a simple number system that gives us a reference for our chute-side data worksheet.

Have you given much thought to your tag identification process for calves? What do the letters/numbers represent? Is the information complicated?

Imagine a number system described as follows: "The first letter represents the sire, the second letter is the sire breed, the third letter is the cow breed and the next three numbers are the mother's number and the last letter indicates who owns the calf." The calf's identification could be SX F342D. Additional marks above and below the number may be present.

In general, I have encouraged producers to use a simpler calf identification system that has the same number of numeric characters each year. Although calf IDs are left to producers' discretion, a sequential numbering system that includes a year designation, such as starting 2001's first calf with either L001 (calf 1 in year L - the letter code for 2001) or 01001 (calf 1 in 2001) or 1001 (calf 1 in 2001) seems to be used by many producers. The bottom line is consistency in an identification program.

The advantage to this system is that a good processing program, such as CHAPS or another computer based program, should be able to print the needed worksheets to allow less printed information on the tag and more on the chute-side worksheet. The simplicity of the system makes for less confusion, fewer errors and improved record keeping -- all important factors in managing time wisely.

On May 10, calf 1331 was the start of the center's late-spring calving group, which calves from mid-May to late-June. The 2002 calf crop is

already growing. The spring breeding season went along without a hitch: heifers were bred through artificial insemination during the week of May 14; cows were artificially inseminated on May 21; bulls were turned out on May 16 and May 18 to the rest of the cowherd. On May 23, cleanup bulls were turned out to the artificially inseminated bred cows. Next year's calf crop is due to start (according to the IRM Pocket Reference by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association) Feb. 22, give or take a couple of weeks.

April 8 should be the date of the last calf born for next year's spring calving group. Cows were turned out onto cool-season crested wheat grass pasture on May 2 and pulled on May 30. June 1 marked the turn out to warm season grass, with cattle rotated through the pastures on June 13 and June 28 to encourage stimulation of the native grass plants.

And, boy, does time fly, I was reminded that the bulls need to be pulled this week also. All the cows and heifers were exposed to a minimum of 40 days to assure each cow had two opportunities to conceive a calf for next year (the first synchronized cycle plus 21 days). The bulls will be returned on August 6 to initiate breeding of the late-spring calvers, which should start calving May 17 next year.

Sanity can be hard to find late in the calving season; however, at the Center, the 30-day break allows the timely processing of the early calves, allotment of cows to pasture, with the subsequent calving on pasture of the May/June calvers. It is a cycle that is repeated annually -- and really sets the schedules for beef operations and the families that run them.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com For more

information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.COM on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0045.

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Breeding Dates for 2001 and Associated 2002 Calving Dates	
Spring Calving Season	
First bull turn out day	May 14, 2001
Associated calving date	February 22, 2002
Last bull pull date	June 28, 2001
Associated calving date	April 8, 2002
May-June Calving Season	
Return bulls to cows	August 6, 2001
Associated calving date	May 17, 2002
Final bull pull date	September 11, 2001
Associated calving date	June 22, 2002

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