

Early Cow Pregnancy Check Can Create Marketing Options

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And the heat hangs on.

Each summer leaves its mark. This year it is the mark of heat. The grass is drying, the crops are dying and the cattle are starting to roam. If it wasn't for flies, the herds would be more dispersed, but the constant irritation tends to force the herds to congregate for some relief.

The point still remains – the pastures are dry. So what should a producer do?

Obviously some fly tags wouldn't hurt, but the point at hand is the drought, and the first inclination is to reduce numbers and look for feed. The search for feed will happen regardless, but the real difficult point is when does one start thinking of gathering cows and sorting some for market.

A management change is not something that producers think about or easily accept. Yet, years like this are a good time to think of altering some old standby management procedures.

One of the first changes might be to change the timing of the fall pregnancy check. Now might be the time to pregnancy check cows. Should it be done now in 100-degree heat while the cows are out on pasture?

Yes, now is the time. The possible outcome might be that producers may be able to group cows into those that conceived the first 21 days of the breeding season, those that conceived the second 21 days of the breeding season and those that will be later-calving or open. Call your local veterinarian and arrange an ultrasound date.

At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, the main group of cows was artificially inseminated on June 16. The main bull battery was turned out at the same time to cows that were not artificially inseminated. The center's data in pregnancy checking suggests that bringing the cows in for an ultrasound when the oldest fetuses are at 70 to 75 days works great.

Calves (fetuses) can be sorted easily into the desired conception periods of 21 days, so the management ex-

pectation can be met. One group of cows can be designated as having conceived during the first 21 days of the breeding cycle. The second group of cows, conceived during the second 21 days of the breeding cycle, also can be determined.

The reason this strategy works is that those cows carrying a pregnancy from 29 to 50 days are still detectable by ultrasound, along with the pregnancies that are 51 to 72 days. These groups are identified for the producer. By default, those cows bred during the third 21-day period or later also are now known.

The breeding season is not done. Cows that will be open in the fall are not known, but options have been created and decisions can be made. In some cases, knowing those cows predicted to calve later may be more desirable from the standpoint of needing less harvested feed than those cows that conceived in the first 21-day breeding cycle.

Regardless of the choices a producer makes, pregnant cows are needed somewhere. The goal is to market or reduce the herd numbers to match feed resources and to do that in a planned way and not a reactionary way.

Your local veterinarian can help. At the time the cows are scheduled for their ultrasound, vaccinate the calves and prepare for the potential of early weaning if things get worse.

Don't forget to make sure the calves are electronically tagged as well because market preparations seem to be early this year. Make the call; it will be worth it. For every day a cow is open, 2.3 pounds of calf income is lost and the feed just keeps disappearing.

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 BT0308.

Mark Your Calendar
Schedule Your Cow Pregnancy Check

Cow Bred June 16

Ultrasound August 25