

Nurturing Is Key Part of Rural Circle of Life

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Producers know the nurturing required to meet the demands of the business. These complexities are not well-understood by those outside the cattle business.

June 6 and 7 were busy days at the Dickinson Research Extension Center because the mature cows were prepared for artificial insemination on June 16 and 17. The center utilizes a fixed, timed artificial insemination synchronization schedule, spending more to produce the synchronization, but utilizing less labor.

The system works well for two reasons. First, the center has access to proven bulls through artificial insemination. Second, the program provides us a window for a defined calving season in the spring.

Cows in the AI program receive an injection of GnRH (available under several trade names). They also receive an exogenous administration of progesterone utilizing a cattle vaginal insert.

The cows will be gathered again for removal of the vaginal insert on June 13 and 14 and given an injection of a commercial prostaglandin product. The cows will be time inseminated on June 16 and 17, which is 60 to 66 hours after the removal of the vaginal inserts. They also will receive another injection of GnRH.

This activity seems to be a distraction from the day-to-day nurturing in a livestock operation. However, if there is one thing about running a ranch or farm operation, the unexpected becomes the expected.

The phone rings. The neighbor needs a home for an orphaned foal. With no mother to claim the foal, it simply would go the way of nature if people didn't help.

The few short steps, enough steps to soil the undersoles of the foal's feet, would have been the only steps the foal was destined to take. Nurturing, caring hands soon took over to replace what Mother Nature had mistakenly left out.

Some protection from the wet elements, a soothing heat lamp and gentle nudging of an artificial nipple brought warmth and nourishment. Would it be enough? We waited as life hung by a thread, but suddenly the eyes brightened and the tail wiggled. This colt might

not be an Arabian stud prancing through the sand dunes, but the foal did possess a spark of life worth nurturing.

The progressive review soon started by concerned family members. Even if the energy was short, the colt's will power was strong. Once up, the colt gave a couple of leaps and even bounced the hind end just to make sure no one took anything for granted.

To raise members of the commonly called farmyard gang is a privilege, but it is leaving the family scene. The more traditional caring at the production level is being replaced by security at the consumption level.

A more typical scene today is latex gloves and disposable anti-bacterial towels as the foal approaches a sanitized table rather than a smiling producer with bib overalls and a gunnysack in hand who gently is arranging straw for the new arrival.

For centuries, food production systems had their roots embedded deep in the caring nature of humans. These humans were concerned about everything around them, realizing not only the need to have a circle of life, but also the need to care for that circle of life. That need still is present today, but as more and more people have left the agrarian way of life, the process has changed.

The demand to produce food in a biosecure environment, independent of the human nurturing at the production level, is on the increase. Regulation, not animal husbandry, seems to be the method of choice. It is a method all too often pushed from the top.

Oh well, the cows still need to be bred. If I keep count, I will know how many tags to order.

May you find all your NAIS-approved 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 BT0251.



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