

# BeefTalk: Pregnancy Check Now For Better Management

**Get ready to pregnancy check early for better planning.**

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

Trucks have been bringing in hay at \$5 a loaded mile, so the hay yard is filling up slowly and expensively. The gates and locks have been spruced up.

This year, hay values are pricey. As a result, most ranchers are standing at a fork in the road. Do they buy hay or sell cows?

Producers need to review all of the options. The preferred alternative is trying to meet the nutritional needs of the cowherd with hay.

Hay prices definitely are forcing the review of other feed options. Purchasing feed based on a dollar cost per pound of energy and protein is more desirable than simply purchasing feed on bulk weight.

Yet, a more basic question needs to be asked: Are all the cows worth feeding?

Now is the time to use ultrasound technology to pregnancy check the cows. Most veterinarians can complete the check. The sooner one can determine next year's calving projections, the more solid the plans will be.

At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, fetal age is determined during ultrasound pregnancy checking. To find the age of the fetuses, an excellent time to set up an ultrasound appointment is two to three months after the bulls are turned out.

Ultrasounding three months after bull turnout would make the oldest calf about 90 days old. If the bulls were pulled after 60 days of breeding, then the youngest fetus should be approximately 30 days old.

Even if the bulls still are in with the cows, ultrasounding can work. Cows that carry a fetus less than 30 days old are hard to pick up and would be candidates for the cull pen or, at a minimum, the recheck group for possible sale as bred cows.

Now is a good time to perform a "paper" presorting of the cows one would like to keep and invest with expensive feed. For example, the center gives all cows a pregnancy code.

An A1 cow is pregnant and conceived by artificial insemination. An N1 cow has conceived naturally during the first 21 days of the breeding season.

Cows that were predicted to have conceived during the second 21 days of the breeding season are coded as N2. Cows that were predicted to have conceived during the third 21 days are N3 cows.

## Images

Pregnancy Evaluation	
Dickinson Research Extension Center	
Pregnancy Classification	Number of Cows
A1 (AI bred)	35
N1 (conceived the first 21 days)	0
N2 (conceived the second 21 days)	12
N3 (conceived the third 21 days)	0
Open (projected)	1

## Pregnancy Evaluation

The rest of the cows are open or late and, depending on the need, may be rechecked in the fall. Most likely, these cows will be sold as cull cows.

Last week, 48 cows in section 16 were pregnancy checked by ultrasound. Thirty-five were classified as A1 cows, 12 as N2 and only one open.

In terms of management, we now know that 35 cows will calve early and 12 will more than likely calve during the later part of the calving season. The open cow will be rechecked and sold.

The same procedure was used on heifers. Today, 96 heifers were evaluated for pregnancy. Nine heifers were open. One was pregnant, but wild. All 10 are being pulled off the short pastures and heading to town. There is no excuse for keeping open heifers. There is even less reason to keep a wild heifer.

After a day of working cattle, the sounds of silence are appreciated. During the day, the sound of a heifer's leg kicking the chute or, worse yet, a person's leg or any other anatomical reachable part is unacceptable.

I have watched enough heifers come through the chutes to know there are nice heifers and there are some not-so-nice heifers. Those not-so-nice heifers have inflicted enough damage through the years to earn a place in the harvest line.

That may sound harsh, but the truth is the truth. Temperament and expressed behavior are inherited and like begets like and mean begets mean.

Get ready to pregnancy check early for better planning.

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.

---

NDSU Agriculture Communication

**Source:** Kris Ringwall, (701) 483-2348, ext. 103, [kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu](mailto:kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu)

**Editor:** Rich Mattern, (701) 231-6136, [richard.mattern@ndsu.edu](mailto:richard.mattern@ndsu.edu)

[Attachments](#)



PDF - Pregnancy Evaluation  (bt082108.pdf - 15.33 Kb)



EPS - Pregnancy Evaluation (bt082108.eps - 207.06 Kb)