



## BeefTalk 616: Late Calving Changes Management

### SUPPORTING MATERIALS

**TRY THIS!**  
Want to Change a Beef Operation?  
Previous Bull Turnout Date .....June 1  
New Bull Turnout Date .....August 1

The standard processes that have been developed and followed for years, such as vaccinations and calf-working schedules, need to be modified.

One can see why change is difficult. At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, the cows are finishing the calving season. However, this year, calving was in early June, not late April. Like most producers, keeping track of the cows and calves is important, but the pens are now pastures and the calves are

fast. However, it works and, to date, 200-plus calves are enjoying summer.

As the center is changing, the ripple effect is interesting. A lot of things that we used to do just don't fit anymore. Perhaps better put, some things seem untimely. The standard processes that have been developed and followed for years, such as vaccinations and calf-working schedules, need to be modified.

For example, some obvious changes were the well-rounded, belly-deep cows that were turned out to cool-season pastures with no calves at their side. There were no cow weights to be taken because the center avoids weighing cows during late pregnancy.

The center staff could live with that. However, as the cool-season grazing shifted to warm-season grazing in June, the cows were mixed because some still were pregnant and there was a whole range of calves from a day old up to 5 weeks of age.

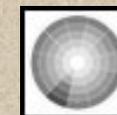
The calves were due on May 19, but babies do not always read the book, so calving actually started the first week of May. The actual calving distribution, starting on May 1, shows four calves the first week, 14 the second, 54 the third, 56 the fourth, 53 the fifth and 15 by June 5.

The cows are now winding down, which means a lot. Why? Well, let's back up. Bull turnout dates set most, if not all, managerial dates for a cattle producer. The center's bull turnout date in 2010 was June 1. For 2011, the center's bull turnout date was Aug. 8. Therefore, the appropriate vaccinations and calf working dates all changed.

Traditionally, with an early May cool-season pasture turnout, early June warm-season pasture turnout and a June 1 bull turnout, calves started arriving in late February. Calving essentially was done by late April, with most, if not all, calves vaccinated and worked by the early May cool-season pasture turnout.



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The calves were good to go for the summer, with preweaning vaccinations the next work day. The late-calving scenario is more complicated and somewhat problematic. Keep in mind, as the center does, bringing cows home is not easy. Rounding up cattle in pastures is not easy. Gathering calves for whatever reason is never easy. That is why historic calf-working days were always placed on the calendar years in advance so that appropriate family and friends could help gather.

Likewise, fall roundups historically are scheduled as well and messing with those schedules has profound impacts. In fact, I once heard of a producer who decided to change the roundup date to a week earlier only to find out that, as the cattle advanced to the traditional load site, the producer's own site already was occupied by the neighbor. That was poor communications, but the point certainly needs to be noted that changing a cow-calf enterprise has huge consequences.

The center struggled because a few pregnant cows needed to be moved from the cool-season calving pastures to native pastures. None of the calves are ready to work, so there are no spring work days. The next time the cows will be available for anything will be mid-July or mid-August, depending on pasture location. At that time, the calves will be branded and vaccinated.

Because the fly season will be upon us, castration and any dehorning will need to be postponed until fall. Those changes seem workable, but the number of pregnant cows that were turned out to native pastures was not.

As with many management plans, tweaking is good. This year, bull turnout will be moved to Aug. 1, so the calves will be due on May 12. That will be a week earlier and should ensure that more cows will be available for sorting to native pasture allotments.

Keep in mind, as well, that moving the cows to cool-season pastures on May 1 can be difficult if too many cows are calving. If the same calving distribution is used based on this year's calving book, the center will have a few calves while the cool-season pasture turnout is taking place. However, the vast majority of the cows should calve in May, which leaves the tail end to calve in early June.

Again, bull turnout sets everything, and the impacted windows tend to be unforgiving. Well, pasture turnout looks resolved. However, what about weaning? That's another huge discussion for later.

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.

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