

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Catching up with cattle on feed data

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock marketing Specialist

The latest USDA Cattle on Feed report issued on February 22 was delayed a month because of the federal government shutdown. The report showed December placements at 98 percent of one year earlier and marketings at 99 percent of last year leading to a January 1 on-feed total of 11.69 million head, 101.8 percent of the prior year. It should be remembered that the January 1, 2018 feedlot inventory was large, up 8.3 percent year over year as dry conditions pushed more feeder cattle into feedlots at that time. The modest increase in the January 1, 2019 feedlot inventory is therefore still a rather large number and is the highest inventory for the month since 2012.

The December 2018 feedlot placements were lower than pre-report expectations issued by analysts in January. However, the report is not likely to have much bullish impact as the information is well out of date at this point. The February Cattle on Feed report is due to be issued on March 8 and the March report on schedule on March 22.

The latest report does, however, provide some additional information. The report included the quarterly estimates of steer and heifer inventories in feedlots on January 1. Steers on feed were estimated at 7.28 million head, down 0.7 percent from one year ago. This is the first year over year decrease in quarterly steer feedlot inventories since April 2017. Heifer feedlot inventory was 4.41 million head, up 6.2 percent from last year. This is the twelfth consecutive quarter of year over year increases in heifers on feed since January, 2016.

The long-awaited annual Cattle report will be released on February 28. This report will provide an update on total cattle inventories and a breakdown of cattle inventories by class. The report also provides cattle inventory estimates by state. The report will include an estimate of January 1 feedlot inventory for all feedlots. This contrasts with the January 1 cattle on feed inventory in the monthly report which is for feedlots of one thousand head or larger capacity. On average, the total feedlot inventory in the Cattle report is about 123 percent of the monthly cattle on feed

estimate for January 1. Stated another way, the monthly estimate of feedlot inventory for large feedlots (one thousand head and larger) represents about 82 percent of total cattle on feed inventory (including smaller feedlots).

Re-warming methods for severely cold-stressed newborn calves

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

The weatherman is predicting another “Artic Blast” is headed to the Great Plains and Southern Plains. This is not good news as the spring calving season is getting in full swing. Even with nighttime feeding, a few calves still will be born in the coldest nighttime hours. These wet newborns may become hypothermic or cold stressed.

Several years ago, an Oklahoma rancher called to tell of the success he had noticed in using a warm water bath to revive new born calves that had been *severely cold stressed*. A quick check of the scientific data on that subject bears out his observation.

Canadian animal scientists compared methods of reviving hypothermic or cold stressed baby calves. Heat production and rectal temperature were measured in 19 newborn calves during hypothermia (cold stress) and recovery when four different means of assistance were provided. Hypothermia of 86 degrees F. rectal temperature was induced by immersion in cold water. Calves were re-warmed in a 68 to 77 degrees F. air environment where thermal assistance was provided by added thermal insulation or by supplemental heat from infrared lamps. Other calves were re-warmed by immersion in warm water (100 degrees F.), with or without a 40cc drench of 20% ethanol in water. Normal rectal temperatures before cold stress were 103 degrees F.

The time required to regain normal body temperature from a rectal temperature of 86 degrees F. was longer for calves with added insulation and those exposed to heat lamps than for the calves in the warm water and warm water plus ethanol treatments (90 minutes and 92 minutes vs 59 minutes and 63 minutes, respectively). During recovery, the calves re-warmed with the added insulation and heat lamps produced more heat metabolically than the calves re-warmed in warm water. This represents energy that is lost from the calf's body that cannot be utilized for other important biological processes. Total heat production (energy lost) during recovery was nearly twice as great for the calves with added insulation, or exposed to the heat lamps than for calves in warm water and in warm water plus an oral drench of ethanol, respectively. By immersion of hypothermic calves in warm (100 degrees F) water, normal body temperature was regained most rapidly and with minimal metabolic effort. No advantage was evident from oral administration of ethanol. (Source: Robinson and Young. Univ. of Alberta. J. Anim. Sci., 1988.)

When immersing these baby calves, do not forget to support the head above the water to avoid drowning the calf that you are trying to save. Also it is important to dry the hair coat before the calf is returned to cold winter air. If the calf does not nurse the cow within the first few hours of

life (6 or less), then tube feeding of a colostrum replacer will be necessary to allow the calf to achieve passive immunity by consuming the immunoglobulins in the colostrum replacer.

Obviously not every calf born in cold weather needs the warm water bath. However, this is apparently a method that can save a few *severely stressed* calves that would not survive if more conventional re-warming methods are used. With 2019 input costs, saving every calf is important to the bottom line.

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