

# COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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**In this issue:**

## **Planning for wheat pasture**

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

## **Prepare a “calving kit” before fall calving season begins**

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## **Planning for wheat pasture**

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At mid-August, some wheat producers are beginning to think about planting wheat for winter grazing. Weather conditions are the biggest factor for early-planted wheat which can begin by late August and into September. An exceptionally hot July followed a wet and cool spring seriously depleting soil moisture by early August. Much of eastern Oklahoma and the north central part of the state have received significant rain in the past two weeks which helps to set up better shallow soil moisture conditions and early fall wheat planting. Soil temperatures are critical for winter wheat germination with current soil temperatures slightly warmer than ideal but not exceptionally warm. However, temperatures over the next two to four weeks will be critical and additional moisture is needed over the next few weeks for good early wheat stands.

Producers will also begin watching cattle markets for winter grazing prospects. It's early to anticipate either fall stocker purchase prices or feeder sales prices next spring. Preliminary budgets suggest modest potential for winter grazing. Fed and feeder cattle markets are subject to much uncertainty about numerous factors, including the corn market situation and feedlot ration costs; continued uncertainty regarding trade and macro-economic condition in the U.S. and world; and beef demand. Current feeder prices suggest a stocker value for added weight gain of \$.95-\$1.00 per pound of gain across most weights. This value of gain relationship typically changes seasonally going in to the fall and may help stocker buyers assess a variety of purchase opportunities in the coming weeks.

Finally, it was reported over the weekend that a large fire will shut down the Tyson Finney County beef plant near Holcomb, Kansas. It is uncertain at this time, how long the plant may be closed or, indeed, if it might remain closed. In the meantime, the loss of 30,000 – 35,000 head of slaughter capacity per week will disrupt both boxed beef and fed cattle markets at least initially

and potentially longer depending on the duration of the plant closure. The disruptions will add costs for both fed cattle and boxed beef as additional logistics are needed to adjust flows of slaughter cattle and boxed beef. There are many unknowns for Tyson and the industry going forward including the possibility that this sets the stage for new investment in beef packing. The U.S. has not seen major new beef packing infrastructure for many years.

Meantime, cattle markets continue to mark time through the dog days of summer, trying to establish lows and look ahead to fall markets. More typical summer weather may help beef demand through the last grilling holiday of Labor Day. Boxed beef prices have seen some consolidation and recovery recently and may carry additional momentum into the fall.

## Prepare a “calving kit” before fall calving season begins

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Before the hustle and bustle of the fall calving season, now is a good time to put together the supplies and equipment that will be needed to assist heifers and cows that need help at calving time.

Before calving season starts, do a “walk-through” of pens, chutes, and calving stalls. Make sure that all are clean dry, strong, safe, and functioning correctly. This is a lot easier to do on a sunny afternoon than a dark night when you need them.

**Protocol:** Before calving season starts develop a plan of what to do, when to do it, who to call for help (along with phone numbers), and how to know when you need help. Make sure all family members or helpers are familiar with the plan. It may help to write it out and post copies in convenient places. Talk to your local veterinarian about your protocol and incorporate his/her suggestions. Below is an example of a “Calving Protocol” that could be laminated and hung in the barn or calving shed. Note: this is just an example. You may wish to include other important steps in the protocol. Encourage everyone that will be watching and helping cows and heifers this calving season to read Oklahoma State University Extension Circular E-1006, [“Calving Time Management for Beef Cows and Heifers”](#).

**Lubrication:** Many lubricants have been used and one of the best lubricants is probably the simplest: non detergent dish soap and warm water.

**Supplies:** The stockmen should always have in their medicine chest the following: disposable obstetrical sleeves, non-irritant antiseptic, lubricant, obstetrical chains (60 inch and/or two 30 inch chains), two obstetrical handles, mechanical calf pullers. Also have a tincture of iodine solution that can be used to treat navels of newborns shortly after birth. Don’t forget the simple things like a good flashlight and extra batteries and some old towels or a roll of paper towels.

It may be helpful for you to have all these things and other items you may want to include packed into a 5 gallon bucket to make up a “calving kit” so you can grab everything at once. Place that bucket in a location that can be found and reached by everyone in the operation.

# “Calving Protocol”

Who to call: Countryside Large Animal Clinic 400-123-1234

Dr. Jones cell phone 400-321-4321

Dad’s cell phone 400-999-0000

Billy Ray’s cell phone 400-777-1111

Watch heifers 1 hour after water bag or baby calf feet appear

Watch cows 30 min after water bag or baby calf feet appear

Find calving kit on North wall of calving barn

Use plenty of lube or soap and water

Determine that cervix is dilated and calf is coming head and both front feet first. Call for help if something is unusual.

Don’t pull until cervix is completely dilated

Apply ¼ turn as hips go through pelvic bone

Backwards calf must be delivered within 4 minutes after calf’s tail appears

Briskly tickle nostril of calf with stiff straw to start breathing

# Clean chains and handles and replace calving kit

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