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# Beef Herd Management Calendar - Spring Calving Program

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# animal sciences



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE, PURDUE UNIVERSITY, WEST LAFAYETTE, INDIANA 47907

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# BEEF HERD MANAGEMENT CALENDAR—SPRING CALVING PROGRAM

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This integrated beef herd management calendar is a monthly schedule of recommended management activities for a Corn Belt cow-calf enterprise on a spring-calving program. It was developed assuming that most of your calves would be born beginning in late February through March (about 45-60 days before forage supplies are adequate for grazing) and that you have already established the following two important practices:

- 1. A herd health program in consultation with your veterinarian. Such a program includes only those measures providing protection against diseases that have been diagnosed in your herd or are known to be a problem in your area. Plan to "work" cattle during months recommended for specific health management activities to get the most benefit from your herd health program.
- 2. A herd identification and record-keeping system. Each cow should be identified with a hot or cold brand or with an ear tattop plus flexible plastic eartag, and each calf identified within 24 hours after birth with a plastic eartag. Performance data should be kept on all animals in the herd. Purdue Extension publications AS-412 and AS-416 are available at your county Cooperative Extension Service office for this purpose (see page 4).

For more information on the specific management tips that follow, obtain related publications or run appropriate FACTS computer programs (indicated in parentheses) at your Extension office.

## **JANUARY**

- Attend educational beef cattle meetings and workshops.
- If adequate supplies of corn stalks exist, supplement with good quality forage.

- Once cows are removed from corn stalk fields, feed a ration recommended for dry, pregnant cows (AS-412 or FX-110).
- In very cold weather, provide windbreak or shelter and feed extra energy, such as 2-5 pounds of corn or 15-20 pounds corn silage in addition to other forages.
- Vaccinate cows (first time) at least 6 weeks before calving and bred heifers (second time) at least 2 weeks before calving to control calf scours (VY-47).
- Obtain colostrum from a dairyman and freeze in 1-quart quantities.
- Begin preparing calving areas, they should be clean, dry and well-lighted.
- Begin readying calving equipment, such as halter, chains, calf puller and respirator.
- Familiarize yourself with the procedures for assisting cows at calving (AS-405).
- Observe cows for signs of abortion, such as stringy or cloudy discharge from vulva and cows coming into heat.
- Plan a crossbreeding program in commercial herds to capitalize on hybrid vigor in cows and calves; keep crossbred heifers for replacements.
- If considering artificial insemination (AI), obtain information on estrus synchronization and begin planning your breeding program (ID-100).

#### **FEBRUARY**

- If cows weren't removed from stalk fields earlier, remove them now to avoid soil compaction.
- Maintain the dry, pregnant cow ration up to calving; however, add extra energy or provide higher-quality feeds for bred heifers and thin cows (AS-412 or FX-110).

- Vaccinate cows (second time) at least 2 weeks before they begin calving to prevent calf scours.
- Observe first-calf heifers closely, since they will begin calving first; cows will start calving about 2 weeks later.
- Before using a calf puller, be sure the position of the calf is normal (AS-405).
- Soon after delivery, dip the calf's navel in iodine.
- Be sure that proper mothering occurs, especially with first-calf heifers.
- Give weak or unclaimed calves at least 1 quart of colostrum within the first 24 hours after birth.
- Identify each calf with eartag or tattoo (AS-410); record birth weight and calving ease score (AS-412).
- If newborn calves have scours, determine the cause with the help of your veterinarian and treat promptly (VY-26).
- When certain that cows and calves are paired up, move them to a clean area such as pasture (AS-397).
- Evaluate flesh condition of herd bulls and adjust their ration if needed (AS-412 or FX-110); also treat bulls for lice if needed (E-13).
- Frost-seed recommended legumes in pastures that contain less than 30 percent legumes (AY-251).

## **MARCH**

- Treat calves with scours promptly.
- Shop for performance-tested herd bulls or order semen if using AI (AS-395).
- Quarantine newly-purchased bulls or females, and test for brucellosis and tuberculosis before introducing into the herd. (Breeding animals imported from out of state are subject to regulations of State Board of Animal Health.)
- Separate lactating cows from pregnant cows, and feed a ration recommended for lactating cows until pastures can be grazed (AS-412 or FX-110).
- Observe lactating cows for signs of grass tetany and treat immediately; be sure that each cow receives 2 ounces of magnesium oxide daily in the mineral mix as a prevention for grass tetany (AS-412).
- Make sure that headgate, chute and corral are in working order (ID-109).
- Frost-seed recommended legumes in legume-deficient pastures, if not already done.
- Apply two-thirds of the annual nitrogen fertilizer to grass pastures in late March; also apply needed phosphorus and potassium to all pastures.

#### **APRIL**

- If herd bulls are still thin, feed 6-8 pounds of grain per head daily in addition to winter ration (AS-395).
- Evaluate semen and breeding soundness of bulls by April 15 (AS-395).
- Vaccinate yearling replacement heifers for leptospirosis and IBR (VY-47)
- Check the backs of cows and heifers for cattle grubs; if present, plan for preventative treatment next September (E-14).
- Check animals for ringworm and warts; treat if necessary.
- Dehorn calves; and if in a known blackleg area, vaccinate for that disease (VY-36).
- Castrate bull calves and implant with approved growth promotant (AS-397). (Do not implant bull or heifer calves to be kept as potential breeding animals.)
- Replace lost and illegible eartags on cows and calves.
- When pasture has adequate growth (8 inches), turn out cows and calves; pastures newly seeded with legumes should be grazed intensively to reduce competition from grasses (AY-251).
- Feed supplemental energy, such as corn silage, hay or corn, if cows are thin or if pasture quality is low.

#### MAY

- Start breeding yearling heifers around May 1 and cows about May 15, using one yearling bull per 15-20 cows, or one mature bull for every 25-30 cows (AS-395).
- Put salt and mineral feeders near water or shade; be sure the mineral mix has at least 8 percent phosphorus (AS-396).
- Graze pastures newly seeded with legumes to reduce competition from grasses.
- If more forage is available than can be fully utilized, limit pasture size and harvest excess forage as hay.
  - Make first hay cutting before grasses flower.
- Use recommended insecticides (E-12) and application devices for fly control (E-207).

#### **JUNE**

- Observe breeding pastures frequently to be sure bulls are working and exhibit no problems; especially watch for lameness and penis injuries.
- Check for pinkeye in cows and calves; treat promptly with antibiotics and eye patches (VY-33).
  - Deworm calves if worm load is high (VY-51).
- Move cattle from pastures newly seeded with legumes to allow the legumes to grow (AY-251).

#### JULY

- Remove bulls from breeding pastures July 15, and sell those that will not be used next year.
- Vaccinate potential replacement heifer calves for brucellosis; vaccinate for blackleg any calves not vaccinated earlier if in a blackleg area (AS-397).
  - Continue fly and pinkeye control programs.
  - Clip pastures and rotationally graze.

#### **AUGUST**

- Creep feed calves with homegrown grains if pastures are short. However, limit the amount of creep feed to potential replacement heifer calves (AS-397).
- Continue fly control, pinkeye treatment and pasture rotation programs.
- Adjust soil pH to recommended level on pastures where legumes will be seeded in February or March.
- Get corral, scale and squeeze chute ready for weighing, vaccinating and pregnancy testing (ID-109).

### **SEPTEMBER**

- In purebred herds, enter a sample of bull calves in a central performance test station program (AS-331).
- Continue creep feeding if pastures are short or consider early weaning, especially if calves will be sold soon after weaning (AS-397).
- If grubs have been a problem, treat all cattle including calves (E-14).
- Vaccinate calves for IBR and Pl3 at least 2-3 weeks before weaning (VY-47).
- Revaccinate calves for blackleg and other clostridial diseases with seven-way vaccine.
- Apply one-third of annual nitrogen fertilizer on grass pastures; graze grass-legume pastures lightly or rest them so the carbohydrate reserve in the legume crown can be replenished.

#### OCTOBER

- Wean and weigh calves when 7-8 months old; compute their 205-day weights and ratios (AS-331).
- Deworm calves to be kept as replacements or fed out; also use preventative treatment for grubs and lice.
- Vaccinate replacement heifer calves for brucellosis while under 240 days of age; vaccinate all calves for BVD if part of the herd health program.

- Accustom weaned calves to eat grain or silage from a bunk (AS-397).
- Vaccinate bred heifers and cows for leptospirosis (VY-52); revaccinate them for IBR, Pl<sub>3</sub> and BVD. (Do not include BVD if it's not in your herd health program).
  - Retag cows and calves that lost eartags.
- Deworm, delouse, degrub and pregnancy test cows; check their eyes and treat early cancer eye.
- Sell open and unsound heifers and cows, and sell cows that weaned calves with low weaning weight ratios (AS-396).
- Overgraze pastures that are to be renovated with legumes (AY-251)

### NOVEMBER

- Select replacement heifers with 205-day weight ratios over 90, provided they are structurally sound and not overfat (AS-396).
- pounds per day, depending upon frame size, weight and condition (AS-412 or FX-110).
- Market or feed out the rest of the calf crop. If feeding out, reimplant the steers and non-replacement heifers with an approved growth stimulant; in purebred herds, put remainder of bull calves on postweaning gain test (AS-331).
- Continue to overgraze pastures that are to be renovated with legumes.
- Turn cows into cornstalk fields or graze forage aftermath; be sure the mineral mix contains at least 20,000 IU vitamin A per head daily and is at least 8 percent phosphorus (AS-396).
- In grass tetany problem areas, be sure all cows get at least 1 ounce of magnesium oxide per head daily in mineral mix or protein supplement (AS-412).

#### **DECEMBER**

- Begin feeding legume hay or protein supplement fortified with vitamin A to cows grazing cornstalks; if they have been removed from corn stalk fields, feed a ration recommended for dry, pregnant cows (AS-412 or FX-110).
- Watch for rubbing, scratching or other signs of lice, and treat (E-13).
- Vaccinate bred heifers at least 6 weeks before calving to control calf scours.
- If considering an AI program next year, attend a training school in your area.

# **Related Publications and Computer Programs**

Single copies of the following publications referenced here are available free to Indiana residents from their local county Cooperative Extension Service offices:

- AS-331 "Beef Performance Testing—Questions and Answers"
- AS-395 "Selection, Management and Nutrition of Beef Bulls"
- AS-396 "Selection, Management and Nutrition of the Beef Cow Herd"
- AS-397 "Management and Nutrition of the Beef Calf Crop"
- AS-405 "Assisting the Beef Cow at Calving Time"
- AS-410 "Beef Cattle Identification Methods"
- AS-412 "Cow-Calf Record Book"
- AS-416 "Individual Beef Cow Record"
- AY-251 "Improving Pastures by Renovation"
  - E-12 "Fly Control on Beef Farms"
  - E-13 "Cattle Lice"
  - E-14 "Cattle Grubs"
- E-207 "Self Application Devices for Cattle Insect Control"
- ID-100 "Management and Economics of a Beef Cow Herd Al Program"
- ID-109 "Handling Facilities for Beef Cattle"
- VY-26 "Control of Calf Scours"
- VY-33 "Infectious Keratitis (Pinkeye) in Cattle"
- VY-36 "Blackleg in Cattle"
- VY-47 "Cow-Calf Herd Health and Disease Management"
- VY-51 "Treating for Internal Parasites of Cattle"
- VY-52 "Leptospirosis of Cattle"

The following FACTS computer program referenced here is available to use at county Cooperative Extension Service offices:

FX-110 "Ration Analyzer for Beef Cattle"

