

Calving Checklist



Calving season has already started for some and others it is just around the corner. The anticipation and excitement of seeing the arrival of newborn calves and planned genetic matings can be very exciting. Around my home place, it's like kids opening a present at Christmas with the arrival of each new calf! We all know not all calving goes perfect. Weather, big calves, premature calves, nutrition and health are just a few of the factors that can play into any calving scenario. Extension Beef Specialist Sandy Johnson and Extension Veterinarian Dr. AJ Tarpoff have created a checklist designed to help you plan and prepare to improve the success of your calving season and weaned calf crop.

- Balance cow rations for adequate protein and energy for increased third trimester and subsequent lactation requirements. Group and feed cows by body condition and age to the degree possible. Target body condition for first calf heifers at calving of 5.5 to 6 and 5 to 5.5 for mature cows.
- Develop sound vaccination program to prepare the cow to produce high quality colostrum.
- Control lice and internal parasites.
- Plan for recording calving data and consider ways to backup records.
- Make sure calving facilities are clean and in good repair
- Plan for ear tags, tattoos, scale or weight tape, banding or castration.
- Check flash lights and other quality portable light sources.
- Check-list for calving assistance
- OB chains, calf puller, OB gloves, OB lube (non-detergent soap & water is one option), non-irritant antiseptic (Betadine or Nolvasan), flank rope to lay cow down
- A cooler can be used to keep warm water in calving barn if no other source available.
- Old towels or similar
- Review basic treatment plans with local veterinarian for retained placenta, calf scours, colostrum replacers and supplements and ensure necessary treatments and supplies are on hand or readily available. Include a functional thermometer.
- Know the difference between colostrum supplements and replacers, in most instances use replacers that contain at least 100 IgG per dose.
- Have on hand at least 2 clean and functional esophageal tube feeders, clearly marked, one for healthy calves, one only used for sick calves.
- Plan and watch for opportunities to collect colostrum from within the herd. Date and freeze in quart sized plastic bags for future use.
- If replacement calves are obtained from outside the herd, plan for their isolation and testing before exposing to entire herd.
- Plan for severe weather; wind, freezing rain and blizzards are not uncommon. Plan for correcting calf hypothermia. Calf shelters should be in good repair, bedding on hand. Plans for portable windbreaks and calf shelters are available from your local extension office.
- Shift feeding to dusk or later to promote day time calving one week before anticipated start of calving season.

Next week, I will share information on calf health and scours.