

This week we will discuss a management practice that is one of the most practical and cost efficient ways to increase the number of pounds of calf produced per cow exposed. This equation of pounds produced per cow exposed is one of the most important figures a producer should look at when evaluating his operation on a financial basis. This number should be as high as possible, while keeping cow cost per year as low as possible.

One way to increase number of pounds of calf produced per cow exposed is to shorten the length of your herd's calving season. Because a typical producer's calving season spans over the course of a few months, yet weaning occurs on a single day, it is possible to have as many as three months separate the oldest and youngest calf in age at weaning. A young calf can be expected to gain 2 or 2.5lb of weight per day, which equates to a 60-90 pound gain per month. For each calf that is one month younger than the oldest calf at weaning, this is a 60-90 pound loss. A recent study posted in BEEF magazine supports the theory that calves born early in the calving season are worth more than calves born at the end of calving season. In addition to having a higher weaning weight, calves born in the first 21 days of the calving season returned approximately 40% of total ranch income. Calves born in the first 42 days returned approximately 72% of the ranch income.

To determine if your cows are calving in the ideal length of time, calculate the percentage of calves that were born in the first 21 days of calving season, the second 21 days, and the third 21 days. A good goal to achieve is to have at least 65% of your cows calve within the first 21 days of calving season. If this is not the case for your operation, alterations should be made to shorten the length of calving season, which will simultaneously increase the amount of calves that are born in the first 21 days of when calving begins.

One method to compact calving season into a smaller time frame is to implement a 48 hour calf withdrawal 30 days after the start of breeding season. Dams that have not been bred by day 30 of breeding season should have their calves separated from them for 48 hours. This will cause 2/3 of the non-bred cows to cycle, increasing their chance of conceiving within the first 42 days of breeding season. Implementing this 48 hour calf withdrawal has the potential to shorten calving season by as many as three weeks. It is important to continually increase the number of calves that are born in the first and second 21 days of calving season, and decrease the number of calves that are born in the third and fourth 21 days of calving season.

Please stay tuned for more articles to come consisting of other management practices that can be implemented to increase the profitability of your operation. Remember: If you are lowering cow cost while increasing pounds of calf produced per cow exposed, you are headed in the right direction. For assistance with the calculations mentioned above, or if you have any other questions, please contact us.

To read the referenced article posted in BEEF Magazine, visit: <http://beefmagazine.com/genetics/which-bull-will-make-you-more-money>