

The series we have been covering is one that encourages producers to find more efficient, more productive ways to manage their cattle operations. Thus far, we have encouraged you to perform an assessment of your operation, find areas that need improvement, and then take the steps necessary to strengthen those weak areas. We discussed how this way of thinking can be applied to the environmental portion of your operation. This week we will continue our discussion by focusing on two management areas that can greatly impact animal performance.

One aspect of an operation that directly affects its profitability and productivity is the calf crop percentage and uniformity. The best way to ensure a uniform calf crop is to have a narrow breeding season, which in turn, results in a narrow calving season ideally lasting no more than two months. This is best achieved when the cows breed back quickly after calving. Cows that are in good condition should begin cycling within two months of calving. Adequate nutrition should be provided to the females so they are able to meet all of their nutritional requirements for maintenance, reproduction, and lactation. Cows that are not meeting their requirements likely will not come in heat after calving. They then do not breed during the desired time frame, and thus, do not calve with the remainder of the herd. This causes a calf crop that is a very low percentage, and/or comprised of calves that vary greatly in age. At weaning this may present a problem, as some calves may be old enough to wean, but others may not. Additionally, the older, usually bigger calves will often sell for more money than the younger, smaller calves. We believe that if you spend a little more time and money by guaranteeing that the cows are meeting their requirements, they should cycle regularly, be quick to breed back, and calve in the desired time frame, which increases your calf crop percentage and uniformity.

Proper nutrition can affect other aspects as well. Without providing adequate nutrition, a producer may experience a case of “downer cows” in his herd. This can be caused by mineral deficiency, and is identified by a cow that is down and cannot stand up. Cows are most susceptible to mineral deficiency in the last trimester of pregnancy and within two weeks of postpartum. This occurs as a result of the cow’s increase in requirements due to lactation and her need to sustain pregnancy. The minerals that are most commonly deficient in this situation are Calcium, Magnesium, and Phosphorus. Depending on the severity, treatment for downer cows may range from anywhere between simple and impossible. The best way to ensure that you do not have mineral deficient downer cows is to provide access to these minerals. These minerals can be found in green forages, but it is wise to also provide a free choice loose mineral or mineral block. This will allow the cows to meet their requirements if there is not enough green forage available to do so. Providing mineral may require a little extra work now, but in the long run it will result in cows that are healthy and able to perform at their best.

These are just a couple of areas a producer should be aware of when considering ways to improve his operation. We encourage you to continue to assess your operation and find ways to make it more efficient. Sometimes this may require extra effort, but we urge you to take the opportunity you have now to put yourself a step ahead in the future.

This time of year it is important to closely watch your cattle for bloating if they have access to clover pastures. Ball clover, identified by its small rounded white blooms, is currently in early bloom stage, and

poses the biggest threat for bloat. Producers should do what they can to prevent bloat in their cattle. If you have ball clover in your pastures where cattle are grazing, the best way to prevent bloat is to have bloat blocks out for the cattle to consume. Bloat is also less likely to occur if there are other types of forages other than just clover available for grazing. Another possible option is to not let the cattle graze the clover until after it has matured. If you have any questions about clover or bloat prevention, please contact us.

Prices for feeder steers medium and large 1 sold through the Oklahoma National Stockyards on Tuesday, April 7, 2015 are as follows: 474lb- \$304, 569lb- \$278.30, 686lb- \$232.48, and 777lb- \$215.94. The price for May 2015 750lb feeder steers on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange was \$214.8 on closing Tuesday, April 7, 2015.

Thanks,
Jesse Richardson, DVM

Henderson County Veterinary Hospital
903-675-5613
hcvethospital.com
hcvethosp@me.com