

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Body Condition Score at Calving is the Key to Young Cow Success

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Research data sets have shown conclusively that cows that calve in thin body condition but regain weight and condition going into the breeding season do not rebreed at the same rate as those that calve in good condition and maintain that condition into the breeding season. The following table from Missouri researchers illustrates the number of days between calving to the return to heat cycles depending on body condition at calving and body condition change after calving.

Predicted number of days (d) from calving to first heat as affected by body condition score at calving and body condition score change after calving in young beef cows. (Body condition score scale: 1 = emaciated; 9 = obese) Source: Lalman, et al. 1997

	Body Condition Score Change in 90 Days After Calving						
Condition score at calving	-1	-.5	0	+.5	+1.0	+1.5	+2.0
BCS = 3	189 d	173 d	160 d	150 d	143 d	139 d	139 d
BCS = 4	161 d	145 d	131 d	121 d	115 d	111 d	111 d
BCS = 5	133 d	116 d	103 d	93 d	86 d	83 d	82 d
BCS = 5.5	118 d	102 d	89 d	79 d	72 d	69 d	66 d

Notice that none of the averages for cows that calved in thin body condition were recycling in time to maintain a 12 month calving interval. Cows must be rebred by 85 days after calving to calve again at the same time next year. This data clearly points out that young cows that calve in thin body condition (BCS=3 or 4) cannot gain enough body condition after calving to achieve the same rebreeding performance as two-year old cows that calve in moderate body condition (BCS = 5.5) and maintain or lose only a slight amount of condition. The moral of the story is: “Young cows must be in good (BCS = 5.5 or better) body condition at calving time to achieve acceptable rebreeding performance.” Make certain that the supplement program is adequate for your young cows to be in good body condition this spring.

Oklahoma Livestock Roundup This Week

Derrell S. Peel, OSU Livestock Marketing Specialist

Oklahoma is dry! Much of the state has received little or no precipitation in the last month. The Drought Monitor shows drought conditions spreading into western and south central Oklahoma. It has been a bizarre weather year, beginning with extreme drought conditions through the first quarter of 2007, followed by record rainfall from April through July and increasingly dry conditions since then. This will be a year where the annual average will be very misleading in terms of just how challenging it has been for both crop and livestock producers.

As I write this, cold wet weather is developing that may bring some precipitation across much of the state in the next few days, possibly in the form of ice, sleet or snow. The moisture is welcome but livestock producers will be facing the first blast of winter weather that will boost animal feed requirements significantly. There are reports that the last of the winter wheat was still being seeded last week so there is much wheat that is barely up and much more that is quite small. Relatively few cattle are grazing wheat and they are rapidly consuming available forage. Wheat growth has been limited due to moisture limitations.

Oklahoma auctions this week had a large run of feeder cattle that included many preconditioned cattle. Although feeder prices are quite strong, they continue to be somewhat muted by poor forage conditions and limited feedlot demand. Casual observation suggests that premiums for preconditioned cattle were limited, especially for heavier weights, but complete analysis is needed to account for all of the market factors. The unusually large run of cattle may have overwhelmed demand a bit thus limiting premiums. The first week of December has emerged as a popular date for preconditioned calf sales. Year to date feeder cattle auction totals are still nearly 14 percent below 2006 while cow and bull auction totals are down nearly 40 percent from last year's drought forced liquidation.

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