

# ***COW/CALF CORNER***

## ***The Newsletter***

From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

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### **In this Issue:**

#### **Prepare a “Calving Kit” Before Calving Season Begins**

Dave Sparks, DVM, Area Extension Food animal Health and Quality Specialist  
and Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Animal Reproduction Specialist

#### **Anaplasmosis Prevention, an All Season Program**

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## **Prepare a “Calving Kit” Before Calving Season Begins**

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Before the hustle and bustle of the spring calving season, now is a good time to put together the supplies and equipment that will be needed to assist heifers and cows that need help at calving time.

**Equipment:** Before calving season starts, do a “walk-through” of pens, chutes, and calving stalls. Make sure that all are clean dry, strong, safe, and functioning correctly. This is a lot easier to do on a sunny afternoon than a cold dark night when you need them.

**Protocol:** Before calving season starts develop a plan of what to do, when to do it, who to call for help (along with phone numbers), and how to know when you need help. Make sure all family members or helpers are familiar with the plan. It may help to write it out and post copies in convenient places. Talk to your local veterinarian about your protocol and incorporate his/her suggestions. He or she will be a lot more helpful when you have an emergency during the kids’ school program if you have talked a few times during regular hours.

**Lubrication:** Many lubricants have been used and one of the best lubricants is probably the simplest: non detergent soap and warm water.

**Supplies:** The stockman should always have in his medicine chest the following: disposable obstetrical sleeves, non- irritant antiseptic, lubricant, obstetrical chains (60 inch and/or two 30 inch chains), two obstetrical handles, mechanical calf pullers and injectable antibiotics. Don’t

forget the simple things like a good flashlight and extra batteries and some old towels or a roll of paper towels.

It may be helpful for you to have all these things and other items you may want to include packed into a 5 gallon bucket to make up an OB kit so you can grab everything at once.

## **Anaplasmosis Prevention, an All Season Program**

Dave Sparks, D.V.M., Area Extension Food animal Health and Quality Specialist

Many Oklahoma beef producers associate anaplasmosis with horse flies, and keep up a prevention program only during the fly season. Unfortunately, many of these same producers are still experiencing anaplasmosis problems well into the winter, because biting flies are only a minor vector compared to other ways the disease can be transferred. In many areas, especially wooded or brushy pastures, ticks are more important vectors than biting flies. Ticks are an all-year problem in many areas of Oklahoma, so the control program also needs to be maintained all year. Stockmen also spread the disease from carriers to susceptible animals by not removing all traces of blood from equipment when processing adult cattle. The organism can be carried by needles, dehorners, castration knives, ear taggers, or any other implement that draws blood. It is sometimes possible to determine the source of the outbreak by the way cases develop. When insect vectors are responsible there will usually be one sick animal, followed several weeks later by multiple cases. If human transfer is the cause, several sick animals will show up at the same time 2 to 4 weeks after the cattle were worked.

The most popular means of anaplasmosis prevention is the use of mineral mixes that contain chlortetracycline (CTC). When fed at a rate of 0.5 mg/lb. of body weight CTC will prevent anaplasmosis infections. It is important to note, however, that CTC is added to minerals for several different reasons, including use as a growth promotant for yearlings, and these other uses require different levels of drug in the mineral. Make sure that the product you choose states on the label that it is formulated at a rate for the prevention of anaplasmosis, and gives the specific amount of daily consumption needed to supply that level. The next step is to monitor your herd to make sure that the product is being consumed at the appropriate rate. If not, you may need to look at other products or change your management practices in order to correct consumption deficits. Recovered animals will be carriers of the disease and a source of infection for susceptible individuals. Clear them of the organism with high levels of injectable antibiotics, isolate them from susceptible animals, or cull them from the herd.

The signs of the disease include orange coloration of the mucous membranes due to breakdown pigments released from red blood cells that are destroyed. As more red blood cells are destroyed the animals become slow and short of breath. They may exhibit aggressive behavior due to a shortage of oxygen supply to the brain. By the time signs are noticed, the disease is usually far along and you may easily cause the death of the infected animal while trying to bring them in for treatment. If you suspect an anaplasmosis problem contact your veterinarian who can make a definitive diagnosis and recommend a course of treatment before other animals are exposed. Sick animals are about 10 times as infective as recovered carriers are, so it is important to either

move them away from their herd mates, or if this is not possible, move the herd mates away from them.

If you live in an area where ticks are active in the winter, or you sometimes work your cows in cool weather, using CTC medicated mineral all year can save both the hard work involved with treating active anaplasmosis cases and the losses associated with the disease.

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