

COW/CALF CORNER
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By Derrell S. Peel, OSU Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

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Oklahoma Cattle Numbers Steady

By Derrell S. Peel, OSU Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

Oklahoma cattle numbers remained relatively steady compared to national trends according to the most recent USDA cattle inventory report. The January 1 estimate of all cattle and calves in Oklahoma was 5.4 million head, unchanged from one year ago. This contrasts with the national total, which decreased by 2 percent to 94.491 million head. As a result, Oklahoma now ranks fourth nationally in total cattle numbers behind Texas, Nebraska and Kansas. The national total was the smallest inventory level of cattle in the U.S. since 1959.

The Oklahoma beef cow herd was estimated at 2.038 million head, a decrease of 0.7 percent compared to the national decline of 2.4 percent to 31.671 million head. This continues a trend of recent years where Oklahoma beef cow numbers have increased relative to the national total. Oklahoma moved up to second place nationally behind Texas in terms of the size of the beef cow herd. Nationwide, the beef cow herd is at the smallest level since 1963.

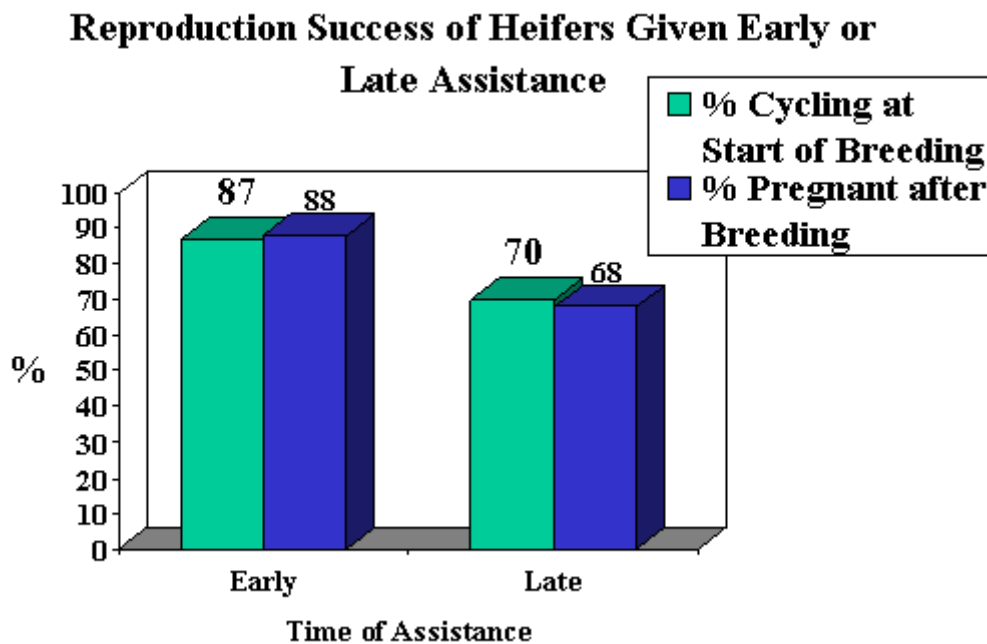
However, things could be about to change in Oklahoma. The January 1 estimate of beef replacement heifers in the state dropped by nearly 5 percent compared to the national decrease of 2 percent. It appears that Oklahoma producers are less inclined to replace beef cows in the coming year. The estimated 2008 calf crop for Oklahoma was 1.88 million head, down 3

percent, compared to a national total of 36.113 million head, down 1.8 percent. The 2008 U.S. calf crop was the smallest total calf crop since 1951.

Will a Long, Difficult Delivery of a Calf Affect Rebreeding of the Cow?

Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

In addition to being the greatest cause of baby calf mortality, calving difficulty markedly reduces reproductive performance during the next breeding season. Cattle suffering from calving difficulty have been reported (Brinks, et al. 1973) to have pregnancy rates decreased by 14% and those that did become pregnant to calve 13 days later at the next calving. Results from a Montana study (Doornbos, et al., 1984) showed that heifers receiving assistance in early stage 2 of parturition returned to heat earlier in the post-calving period and had higher pregnancy rates than heifers receiving traditionally accepted obstetric assistance. In this study, heifers were either assisted when the fetal membranes (water bag) appeared (EARLY) or were allowed to progress normally and assisted only if calving was not completed within two hours of the appearance of the water bag (LATE).



Heifers that were allowed to endure a prolonged labor had a 17% lower rate of cycling at the start of the next breeding season. In addition, the rebreeding percentage was 20% lower than the counterparts that were given assistance in the first hour of labor. First calf heifers should deliver the calf in about one hour. The starting time is the first appearance of the water bag and ends with complete delivery of the calf. Mature cows, that have calved previously, should proceed much faster and should deliver the calf in about a half hour. *Prolonged deliveries of baby calves*

(in excess of 1.5 or 2 hours) often result in weakened calves and reduced rebreeding performance in young cows!

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