

# **COW/CALF CORNER**

## **The Newsletter**

**From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service**

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Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

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## **Some Rain Raises Cattle Hopes in Oklahoma**

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Unsettled weather for most of a week brought rain in varying amounts to much of the state. Some of the hottest, driest areas received little if any moisture but much of the state received from one half inch to three or more inches. Unfortunately, the forecast going forward is for a return to 100+ temperatures with very limited chances for additional moisture for the next ten days or so. The change has brought relatively cooler weather and even the return to high temperatures this week is expected to be accompanied by lower nighttime low temperatures which will relieve some stress on animals.

The impact of the rains so far is mostly one of getting hopes up. Most of the rain did little to fill any ponds so limited water supplies are still a major concern for many producers. The moisture may result in a slight greening of some pastures but is likely to provide little significant forage growth. Producers should remember that pastures are vulnerable to damage if not managed carefully in this situation. Pastures need time to recover and immediate use after marginal growth could be detrimental longer term. The desperate need for grazing forage should be balanced against the health of the pasture, especially at this late date in the growing season.

Perhaps the most hopes are pinned on the prospects for wheat pasture which are raised from virtually zero to slight with this moisture. Many producers are hoping for wheat pasture, maybe not just to run winter stockers, but to provide forage for cows this fall and winter. If fall forage develops there will certainly be plenty of demand for it.

Auction totals in Oklahoma indicate that cattle liquidation is continuing. Both feeder and cow totals are still higher than year ago levels. Feeder cattle totals continue to include significant numbers of early-weaned lightweight calves. The cow and bull total volume is still nearly 3

times higher than last year. However, slaughter cow prices rebounded some this last week. This is likely due to the fact that some of the bottlenecks at auctions and with trucking, caused by huge runs this last month, have eased a bit. There are more indications that cows are being bought and relocated north of Interstate 70 into areas of Nebraska and the Dakotas and other regions. This is particularly true as the liquidation cuts deeper and deeper into cow herds and more younger and productive cows are being sold.

Cattle producers still face a long winter. The recent rains helped morale by reminding everyone that it can still rain in Oklahoma but it will take significantly more moisture to substantially change the situation for cattle.

## Hot Weather in Late Pregnancy Affects Gestation Length

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Oklahoma State University physiologists studied early fall (August) and late fall (October) calving cows. Data from two successive years were combined for 50 Angus X Hereford crossbred cows. The “early” and “late” fall calving cows had been artificially inseminated in early November or early January, respectively. Semen from the same sire was used for all cows. All cows were exposed to a single cleanup bull for 35 days at 4 days after the AI season. The weather prior to calving was significantly different for late pregnancy in the two groups. The average maximum temperature the week before calving was 93 degrees F. for the “early” fall group. The average maximum temperature the week before parturition in the “late” calving group was 66 degrees F. There was a 100% survival rate for calves in both groups and both groups of cows had very high re-breeding rates (93% and 96%, respectively).

The average gestation length for the “early” cows was 6 days shorter (279 days) as compared to the “late” cows (285 days) in year 1. The average gestation length for the “early” cows was 4 days shorter (278 days) as compared to the “late” cows (282 days) in year 2. Producers with early fall-calving cows should expect calves to start coming several days ahead of the “textbook gestation table” dates. **They should begin their routine heifer and cow checks at least a week to 10 days ahead of the expected first calving date.** Source: Kastner, Wettemann, and co-workers. [2004 Oklahoma State University Animal Science Research Report](#).

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