

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

February 20, 2012

In this Issue:

It's Nearly Spring in Oklahoma...Maybe

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

The Third Stage of Calving: Shedding of Fetal Membranes

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

It's Nearly Spring in Oklahoma...Maybe

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

Spring has not quite sprung in Oklahoma, though it is hard to tell since we have had very little you could call winter. It is acting more like spring with increasing temperatures and more wind. Much of the state has received moisture recently and conditions are generally much better than this time last year. Stock pond water levels remain very low, however, in many places.

Wheat pasture, though it started late, has done very well this winter and so have the cattle grazing it. Most of the wheat varieties in Oklahoma are at or very near first hollow stem stage,

which means that cattle must be removed immediately in order to preserve grain yields. I do not expect to see much market impact from a “wheat pasture run” for a several of reasons. First, overall grazing numbers are fairly limited. Secondly, I suspect, though I do not have any data to confirm, that significant numbers of heifers are grazing wheat that will be retained for replacements and third, much of the wheat that is being grazed is intended for forage only and will be grazed out.

Feeder cattle prices in Oklahoma are leaving many producers (and lenders) breathless. Based on last week’s auction prices, a 500 pound, medium/large #1 steer was priced at about \$190/cwt. or \$950/head. Just as we talk about the corn market trying to buy acres for corn production, it seems the market is trying to buy some heifer retention. Various data sets suggest that the annual cow cost for most producers is in the range of \$600-700/cow/year. Upwards of \$250/head in returns per cow should be enough to stimulate some interest in herd expansion.

It will take another 4-6 weeks to really see what kind of spring is in store for Oklahoma. If conditions are good when green up really takes off, the replacement female market will likewise take off. At the current time, bred heifer and cows; and cow-calf pairs are priced significantly below current markets farther north. I expect this gap to close by late March if green grass is happening by that time. Bred cows in Oklahoma are currently priced mostly in the range of \$1000-\$1475 per head. Prices for young bred cows in Nebraska were reported last week in the range of \$1275-\$2375/head. Bred heifers in Nebraska were reported in the range of \$1350-\$2110 last week.

The Third Stage of Calving: Shedding of Fetal Membranes

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

The process of “calving” or parturition in beef cattle is defined by three stages. Stage I occurs about 4 to 24 hours prior to calving. The major event during stage I is the dilation of the cervix. Stage II occurs in about 30 minutes in adult cows and about 1 hour in first calf heifers (when all goes well) and is the time when the calf passes through the birth canal and is delivered into the world. The third stage of calving is the shedding of the placenta or fetal membranes. In cattle this normally occurs in less than eight to 12 hours. The membranes are considered retained if after 12 hours they have not been shed. In some rare cases, the entire placenta is held in the uterus so

there is no exposed portion. This condition may go unnoticed until the cow shows an abnormal uterine discharge or an odor characteristic of tissue degeneration.

Years ago it was considered necessary to remove the membranes by manually unbuttoning the attachments. However, research has shown that improper manual removal can be detrimental to uterine health and future conception rates. When a cow calf operator notices a cow that “did not clean” in 12 hours after calving, close observation is suggested. If the cow shows any signs of ill health, such as droopy ears, lethargic behavior, or poor appetite, this may indicate that an infection of the uterus has begun. **Contact your local large animal veterinarian for the proper management of retained placenta.** Administration of antibiotics usually will help against infection and the placenta will usually slough in four to seven days. More information about working with cows and heifers at calving time can be found at the Oklahoma State University Extension publication [E-1006 "Calving Time Management for Beef Cows and Heifers"](#).

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services. References within this publication to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, service mark, manufacturer, or otherwise does not constitute or imply endorsement by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.