

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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In this Issue

Key Factors that Affect the Percentage of Cows Cycling at the Start of Breeding

By Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

Oklahoma Fall Cow Culling and Calf Runs

By Derrell S. Peel, OSU Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

Key Factors that Affect the Percentage of Cows Cycling at the Start of Breeding

By Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

The breeding season is only weeks away for those herds that have a fall calving program. The most important factors that determine if, and when, a cow returns to cycling activity were [reviewed by Dr. Jeff Stevenson](http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/lvstk2/sections/SRP850D_repro.pdf) (http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/lvstk2/sections/SRP850D_repro.pdf). Over a period of 6 years, Kansas State scientists used more than 2,200 beef cows in estrous synchronization studies. As a part of these studies they determined which cows were cycling before the start of the breeding season both before and after synchronization treatments. They then looked at the previous data about each cow and determined the major factors that influenced the likelihood that she would have returned to heat by the start of the breeding season. The research indicated that three main factors were the most important determinants as to whether the cow would recycle before the breeding season began. **Body condition, age of the cow, and the number of days since calving** were the biggest influences on incidence of cycling activity before breeding.

Body condition: Cows ranged in body condition score from 1 (extremely emaciated) to 7 (very fleshy). As body condition score increased the percentage of cows cycling increased in a linear fashion. The Kansas data reported that there was an 18% increase in percentage cycling for every 1 full condition score improvement.

Age of the cow: The percentage of first calf two-year-olds cycling was about 10% less than mature cows that were having at least their second calf. The extra nutrient requirement for growth clearly limits the cycling activity at the beginning of the breeding season of two-year-olds. Also two-year-olds are in the stage of life where the baby teeth are being replaced by permanent teeth. Some of these young cows have problems consuming roughage similar to “broken-mouth” older cows. This explains why many producers choose to breed replacement heifers ahead of the cow herd and therefore give them more days before the breeding season begins for mature cows.

Numbers of days since calving: Cycling activity was also influenced by the number of days since calving. For every 10 day interval since calving (from less than 50 days to 70 days) the percentage cycling increased by 7.5%. A short calving season is important because it allows a higher percentage of cows to be cycling by the start of the breeding season.

Oklahoma Fall Cow Culling and Calf Runs

By Derrell S. Peel. OSU Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

As expected, the large auction runs of calves observed July through mid-September are being offset now by much smaller than normal fall calf runs. In the first three weeks of October, the Oklahoma eight-market auction total of feeder cattle is down 33 percent compared to the same period last year. Generally smaller runs are expected for the next month which should limit any price pressure despite the lack of wheat pasture demand for cattle.

The southern half of Oklahoma received substantial and much needed rain a week ago which revives some hope for wheat pasture, especially in the southwest part of the state. However, the major wheat growing regions in the north central part of the state received less than half an inch in most locations.

In contrast to the feeder cattle runs, the auction totals for cull cows are still running ahead of last year. It appears that some normal fall culling is yet to be done despite the large volume of cow sales this year. For the year to date, cow sales in Oklahoma auctions are running 43 percent ahead of last year. Although the drought has forced some culling and liquidation for several months, I suspect that some producers are still bringing cow numbers in line with winter feed supplies and others may be finding reduced pregnancy rates due to the poor conditions last spring and summer.

The latest Cattle on Feed Report shows slightly smaller than expected placements in September indicating that the drought induced summer bulge in placements is probably over. The weight breakdowns of feedlot placements includes a larger number of cattle under 600 pounds and reduced placements of heavier cattle. The cattle on feed total for October 1 was 109 percent of last year. The smaller calf runs described above suggest substantially reduced placements in October and probably in November thereby pulling the feedlot inventory down significantly by the end of the year.

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