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**Joe Benton
Ext Educator, Ag & CED**

The Year to Start a Controlled Calving Season

The extremely expensive inputs of feed, fertilizer, and fuel costs have caused many cow calf operations to search for methods of becoming more efficient. One place where many smaller herds could gain some long-term efficiency is by moving to a shorter, more confined breeding season. When all the cows are bred at about the same time and are calving together, their nutritional needs are similar. By contrast, herds with long or year-round breeding seasons, have cows in different production stages consuming the same diet. Consequently, part of the cows are being underfed, or part of the cows are being over fed, or both.

In most herds on a year-round calving season, a natural calving concentration already exists. Nutrition is the major factor responsible for cows cycling and conceiving. Since pastures are usually at their peak of quality in spring and early summer, a natural concentration of calving may occur in late winter and spring. Moving to a spring calving season may be the easiest, how-

ever, some producers will benefit by converting the year round system to a fall-calving program. No system of getting on a controlled breeding program can completely eliminate the delaying of some cows from their current calving schedule. In many situations, down-sizing the herd to those cows that more closely fit the future calving schedule may be beneficial. If fertilizer applications are reduced due to price, then lighter stocking rates will be necessary.

Following is a system for converting from year round to a 90-day controlled calving season over a period of three years that would result in less cattle culling than trying to convert in one year. The following steps are suggested for getting a controlled breeding system:

1. Build a good, strong bull pen or well fenced bull pasture. An electric fence in addition to regular fence may be needed.
2. Remove bull from herd. Select removal date to coincide with latest date you want calves born. Look up the appropriate dates in a Gestation

Table.

3. Sixty days after removing the bulls from the herd (or at a convenient time near this date), pregnancy check all cows and cull all non-pregnant dry breeding-age females which have been running with the bull and all non-pregnant cows with calves five months of age or older.

4. Put bulls back with herd the first year so that calving season will be six months long.

5. Start breeding replacement heifers 20 to 30 days ahead of the final long-range planned breeding date for your herd.

6. The second year, follow the same system as outlined above except start breeding so that calving season will be about 4-1/2 months long.

7. The third year follow the same system as outlined above, except start breeding season so that calving season will be 75 to 90 days. Also, cull all open cows this year when pregnancy checking regardless of age of their calves. The breeding season may be reduced even further in the following years.

Cont'd

Maintaining a controlled breeding and calving season can be one of the most important management

tools for cow calf producers. A uniform, heavier, and more valuable calf crop is one key reason for keeping the breeding season

short. Plus more efficient cow supplementation and cowherd health programs are a product of a short breeding season.

Normalizing Live Cattle Trade in North America

The U.S. Mexican and Canadian governments announced recently that an agreement was reached to permit live cattle trade between the three countries that is consistent with OIE (international animal health organization) standards. Since Mexico closed the border to U.S. cattle after BSE was confirmed in late 2003, the Mexicans have delayed reopening the border despite OIE determination of controlled risk status in May 2007. Mexico has allowed limited importation of young dairy heifers for several months. A recent agreement between Mexico

and Canada allowed for a flow of Canadian cattle across the U.S. into Mexico while U.S. cattle were still restricted. Texas and other states bordering Mexico declined to allow Canadian cattle to pass through those states without an agreement for U.S. cattle. This action prompted swift and intensive meetings that led to the new agreement. Allowing U.S. and Canadian breeding cattle into Mexico will benefit all three countries. Many Mexican producers have been calling for access to more breeding stock to help rebuild depleted herds. The inten-

sity of domestic Mexican beef markets and strong exports of feeder cattle have resulted significant shortages of breeding females in some areas in Mexico in recent years. Obviously, sellers, especially purebred breeders in the U.S. and Canada will have new market potential to meet the Mexican demand for breeding stock. The agreement also strengthens the position of all three NAFTA partners with respect to seeking science-based access to other countries.



Anaplasmosis Feed Mix

With the warming weather we will soon be into the fly vector season. In the cattle business, Anaplasmosis is always a concern during the growing season. Here are a couple of recipes that can be fed free choice.

Anaplasmosis/Mineral Mix

- 53% Salt
- 30% Dical-Phosphate
- 10% Aureo 50
- 5% CSM
- 2% Mineral Oil

Anaplasmosis Only (200 lb. mix)

- 150 lbs. CSM
- 50 lbs. Salt
- 1/2 lb. Aureo 50

Ag Stimulus Package

What agricultural producers might not be aware of is that there is an agriculture and small business component to the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008. These incentives include a one-time increase in Section 179 Expense Election and a special 50% Bonus Depreciation allowance for qualified purchases in 2008.

The current maximum dollar amount that is eligible under Section 179 Expense Election before ESA is \$128,000. For 2008 only, under ESA, the maximum election is increased to \$250,000.

ESA also allows a 50 % write-off of qualified depreciable assets purchased in 2008. The assets must be new and placed into service before January 1, 2009. If this is something that might be helpful to you, visit with your accountant how it might affect you.

Landscape Tree Care Program Scheduled

Landscape Tree Care is an important part of creating and maintaining an attractive yard. This year the ice storm has put an unusual stress on our trees.

The Pottawatomie County Cooperative Extension Service will present a seminar on **Monday, May 5th**, beginning at **6:30 p.m.** We will meet at the **OSU Extension Center, 14001 Acme Road**. The seminar will address selection, care and maintenance of landscape trees. We'll be looking at diseases, insects, irrigation, fertilization and other practices concerning our trees. This meeting is free and open to the public. See you on the **5th**.

May Cattle Producers Meeting

The realities of the agriculture business is that we are big business. We are also a very mobile business where little is practiced by producers in controlling access to our farms and ranches. This could at some time make agriculture a target for those wanting to do harm to our country through the animals and crops that we grow.

On **Tuesday, May 20, 6:30 p.m.** at the **Tecumseh Ag Ed Building**, located on North 13th in Tecumseh, we will have a seminar concerning Agri-terrorism. We will look at some of the effects that diseases have had in other countries and what you, as a producer, might do to have more control over your ag products. We will also look at what ag producers might do as a group to protect themselves and their neighbors in case of contagious disease breakout.

This will be an excellent program for all ag producers regardless of what you grow. Local, county and first responders of emergencies are welcome and encouraged to attend, as they would be involved also in case of an outbreak of any kind.

Farm Credit Services ECOK of Stillwater is sponsoring the meal. Please RSVP to the OSU Extension Center, 273-7683, no later than **Thursday, May 15th**. This program is sponsored by the Pottawatomie Co. Cattle Producers and the OSU Extension Service. All are welcome to attend at no charge.

Your Input is Needed

With the high prices of many of our crops, I have seen interest concerning growing wheat, soybeans and corn. There are a number of things that are involved in these kind of cropping systems, land, equipment and production needs. I would like to know what the interest is in a meeting discussing growing these crops and receiving the latest production information.

The meeting would be around mid-July and specialists in these areas would like to see 15-20 producers attend. If you would be interested in attending a crops meeting, call the office, 273-7683 by June 1st and give your name, phone number and address to see if we can fill a class.

Reminder.....

Those that have a private applicators license will need to get their license renewed after **July 1, 2008**. The license will then be good for five years. Packets may be purchased at the office after July 1 for \$15.00. Please call before coming by the office to make sure the new packets have arrived. This license allows you to purchase restricted pesticides and apply them to your property. Those that have just taken the test and received a number since the first of the year will be grandfathered in and your number will be good through the next five year. This applies only to those that are receiving their license for the first time and have recently taken the test.

Management Options for Controlling “Invasive” Thistles

With the arrival of spring, the weeds are starting to grow vigorously. Perhaps the weeds of greatest impact in our yards and fields are the thistles. Although we have several native species of thistle in Oklahoma, there are 5 classified as “invasive” species. The Oklahoma Thistle Law requires a “Plan of Action” for control of “invasive” species in all counties. The Distaff and Canada thistle currently have no infestations in the state. The Scotch thistle is found primarily in the western part of the state and is difficult to control with herbicides. Bull thistle is found throughout the state, but is seldom a problem as insects that feed on native species also keep the Bull thistle in check. The Musk thistle is common in the northeastern and central counties of Oklahoma. Populations of musk thistle can be a problem. An integrated program with herbicides, mechanical and biological control can be utilized to successfully control Musk thistle. For information on identifying thistles, see the OCES factsheet PSS-2776.

Now is the time to use herbicides to control thistles. With the warming weather and rain, the thistles are moving from the overwintering rosette stage and are starting to produce the upright flower stalks. Both the rosettes and the bolted plants should be sprayed. Depending on which growth stage the thistles are in determines the herbicide that can be used for control. Not all herbicides can be used to control the Musk, Bull and Scotch thistles. However, Grazon P+D will control all three species at either growth stage and Weedmaster will control all three at the rosette stage and the Musk and Bull thistle at the bolting stage. For a complete list of registered herbicides, usage rates and expense level, see Table 1, OCES EPP-7318. This fact sheet also has information on the integrated control of thistles using biological or mechanical control and the best times to utilize these methods. The Musk Thistle Management Action List, OCES L-308 is a two page sheet that provides a good monthly summary actions to control thistles.

Mechanical control requires the use of tillage equipment, hoe or spade to cut the annual or biennial thistle off below the crown area. Mowing can prevent seed production, but the thistles must be cut off very close to the ground surface to be effective. If cut too high, the lower leaf axials can still produce late season blooms. If the mowing is delayed until the plants have begun blooming, some flowers will still produce viable seed.

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Shawnee OK 74804

