

Large Animal Newsletter

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Preg Check 2009

Another year has come to an end and so has another preg check season. For the past 10 years we have been keeping records from the pregnancy exams that have been performed. To date, the doctors at Twin Forks Clinic have preg check records on about 7850 head of mature cows, 2nd calf heifers and replacements compared to about 7000 head on record a year ago. Calving season should be in full swing by the first of February and should be about 92% done by the end of April.

Pregnancy Rate

Overall, the pregnancy rate for all classes of cattle was 90.9% compared to 90.6% a year ago.

As a general rule of thumb, or goal is for the mature cows and 2nd calf heifers to have a pregnancy rate of 92%, while the replacements have a goal of 95%. As you can see, the mature cows and 2nd calf heifers exceeded the goal, while the replacements fell way short.

Preg Rate	Ave	Min	Max
Mature Cows	94.5%	46.7%	100%
2nd Calf hfrs	94.2%	75%	100%
Replacements	81.8%	44.6%	100%

One of the reasons that the replacement heifer pregnancy rate may be so low is that some producers are keeping more heifers than necessary. These producers are roughing them through the winter, and then breeding them in a 40-60 day breeding season, pulling the bulls and expecting to have some opens.

Projected Calving Pattern

We also tried to get some idea on the projected calving pattern in each herd, or the percentage of cattle calving per 20-day cycle. The projected calving pattern is just an estimate of the percentage of cows calving in 3 consecutive 20-day periods (cycles). This is based from the cow's individual projected calving date that is calculated using the veterinarian's diagnosis of fetal age. The projected start of calving in each herd was calculated by using the A.I. or bull turnout dates if they were available.

The projected calving pattern can give us an idea if any problems occurred during the breeding season. For instance, if the cows were slow to come back into heat due to low condition score after calving, or other reproductive problems, then calving percentage in the first cycle would be low. If there were problems later in the season, e.g. hurt bulls, weather, or handling stress, then calving percentage in the 2nd or 3rd cycles may fall short.

A goal commonly used for conception/cycle is 65% in the first cycle, 85% in the second cycle and

100% by the end of the 3rd cycle. Since the accuracy of fetal aging by the veterinarian varies by the stage of pregnancy, probably the most important number to look at is the percentage of females calving by the end of the 3rd cycle (60 days). However, it is also important to look at the projected calving percentages per cycle to determine if any obvious problems occurred during the breeding season.

The average calving percentage per cycle for this year is as follows...

% Calving/Cycle

	1 st	2 nd	3 rd
Mature Cows	57%	77%	92%
2nd Calf hfrs	63.7%	79.9%	95%
Replacements	63.2%	86%	94.3%

Overall, the projected calving pattern looks pretty good. The class of cattle that seems to be lagging behind the most appears to be the mature cows. Often times, there are a few "late" cows in a herd that bred back late because they were older cows, maybe they were a little thin before breeding, maybe they were late calving a year ago and just couldn't catch up. Culling should be considered on these late cows so that they do not become a problem in later years.

Body Condition Score

Of the measures that we look at, body condition score probably gives us the best picture of the cow's nutritional plane. Condition scoring is a subjective estimate of the cow's fat reserves. Adequate condition is important because it is linked to performance, affecting rebreeding rate, calving interval, calf vigor, and colostrum score. Numerical scores are assigned to each cow from 1(emaciated), to 9(extremely fat).

Body Condition Score

Class	Average	Min	Max
Mature Cows	5.2	2	9
2nd Calf hfrs	5.1	3	6.5
Replacements	5.5	4	7

Our goal is for mature cows and 2nd calf heifers to have a condition score between 5 and 5.5 while the replacement heifers should have a condition score between 5.5 and 6. As you can see, on average, all classes of cattle fell toward the bottom of their acceptable ranges. All classes probably need to gain a little more condition prior to calving season to help insure satisfactory breed-back. Condition scores ranged from 2 all the way to 9! Females with condition scores below 4.5 may have to be managed separately from more aggressive cows to be sure that they gain enough condition prior to calving. Those females at the other end of the spectrum should be investigated. It is possible that they are gaining excess weight at the expense of their calves. Obese cows also tend to have a higher incidence of calving difficulty. At any rate, these cows represent an inefficient use of feed resources.

Pregnancy Rate vs. Condition Score

Condition Score	Pregnancy Rate
<=3.5	83.5%
4	91.7%
4.5	92.9%
5	94.5%
5.5	94.1%
6	93.2%
6.5	93.3%
>=6.5	93.4%

The above chart shows the distribution of pregnancy rate vs. condition score. The optimum body condition score is between 5 and 6. This chart shows pregnancy rate decreasing as condition score gets below 5. This chart also shows that pregnancy rates really don't get any better when the condition score is above 6. When you consider the extra feed that was required for that cow to reach a condition score of 6.5 or higher, it becomes obvious that those feed resources were simply wasted.

When we summarized condition score vs. pregnancy rate on the preg check reports that we sent back to our producers, we only split up condition score into 3 groups. We also included the percentage of the

herd that fell into those condition score groupings. I will include those total numbers so you can compare them to your reports if you wish.

Body Condition Score vs. Preg Rate

Condition Score	% of Total	Pregnancy Percentage
<= 4	9.3%	90.7%
4.5-6.5	89.5%	93.9%
>= 7	1.2%	93.4%

Cow Weight

As been the case for the last 10 years, only about 17% of the cows that were preg checked this year were weighed as well. That being said, we were still able to see quite a weight range amongst the different classes of cattle

Weight at Preg Check

Class	Average	Min	Max
Mature Cows	1285	822	1850
2nd Calf hfrs	1083	858	1398
Replacements	1039	700	1320

There was over 1000 pounds difference between the lightest and heaviest cows preg checked! Believe it or not, that range has been almost that wide for the last several years.

Some producers have been weighing their calves at weaning time and their cows at preg check time to get a look at cow efficiency in terms of percentage of cow weight weaned (calf weaning wt./cow preg check wt. X 100). Depending on calf age at weaning, most producers would expect their cows to wean 40-50% of their own weight. Simply put, with the "average" cow weighing 1285 pounds, she would have to wean a calf weighing 643 pounds. On the extreme end of the speculum, the 1850-pound cow would have to wean a 925-pound calf to wean 50% of her body weight. Couple that with the fact that it would take about 12 more pounds of grass a day to maintain the 1850-pound cow compared to the average. With feed costs being the highest expense behind the cost of the cow, it might be worth taking a hard look at the heavier cows to make sure they are producing enough to justify keeping them.

Corn Molds/Feed Testing

Many producers have noted ear mold during corn harvest. The problem is, we had a wet, cool summer that delayed maturation. We had severe hail in the area that stopped or at least slowed down corn development. We have also had above average moisture this fall and as a result some of the corn moisture has been over 20% and has been showing signs of superficial mold.

There are many different fungi that can develop mold on corn, some ears can show a variety of fungi on them. Some of these fungi such as Fusarium, can produce mycotoxins. The current recommendation from UNL is to dry the corn to less than 15% moisture quickly prior to storage. There is potential for the mold to cause significant damage to stored corn if it is not dried down significantly. Mycotoxins can develop in stored corn if it is not dried down as well.

If you are noticing significant amounts of corn mold it may be advisable to have the corn tested for mycotoxins prior to feeding it. It may also be advisable to have corn tested from cornstalk fields prior to grazing if there was a lot of ear droppage this year.

There are several resources on the internet that can provide answers to your questions about corn mold....
<http://cropwatch.unl.edu/web/cropwatch/archive?articleID=1904835>

<http://csuplantdiagnosticclinic.blogspot.com>

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/cropnews/2009/1030robertsonmunkvold.htm>

We would also recommend that you test cornstalks for nitrate if the corn was stressed for moisture or recieved hail damage.

If you have any questions, or would like us to assist you with collecting and sending samples, feel free to stop in or give us a call!!

Twin Forks Clinic Spring Trade Show

Twin Forks Clinic will be hosting a Spring Veterinary Trade Show. It will give producers the opportunity to learn about new and existing products for the approaching calving and branding seasons. Drug company representatives will be available to discuss products. Twin Forks Veterinarians will be present to aid in matching products and plans to meet your needs. A booking program is available with savings for the producer.

This event will take place at:

**City of Wray Round House
245 4th Street
Wray, Colorado**

**Wednesday, January 20, 2010
12:00 PM until 2:00 PM MST**

Lunch will be provided.

If you are unable to attend please call or stop by either of our clinics by January 29th, 2010 to discuss your spring needs and take advantage of the booking discounts.

Your Sponsors will be:

Twin Forks Clinic
Pfizer Animal Health
Elanco
Intervet/Schering Plough
AgriLabs
Merial
Solitech
Boehringer Ingelheim
Fort Dodge

The IRM Redbooks are in!!

The new Integrated Resource Management Redbooks are available free of charge at either of the Twin Forks Clinic locations. These books contain a wealth of information including a gestation table, the body condition scoring system, NCBA beef quality assurance guidelines, and 7 steps for improved injection-site quality control.

Probably most importantly, these books allow for a means of keeping track of everything from calving records, pasture usage, inventories, health records, weaning data and much more.

For those of you who would rather keep this information on the computer, an excel spreadsheet version of the Redbook is available for download on our website at...
www.twinforksclinic.com/links.php. Just right click on "NCBA Redbook" and download the spreadsheet to your computer.

Now's the Time to get Ready for Calving Season

Even though many of you will not start calving until February, the staff at Twin Forks Clinic has created a checklist to help you get ready for calving season.

- Make sure that all calving facilities are clean and freshly bedded.
- Make sure that chutes and restraining equipment are clean and in good working order
- Make sure calf pullers, o.b. chains, and o.b. handles are clean, in good working shape and available just in case you need them.

Other items that you might include on your checklist include..

Equipment

- Calf Saver (resuscitation device)
- Fluid Feeders (One for new calves, one designated for scouring calves)
- Calf weigh tape
- Calf warming equipment for cold weather stress.

Medications and Supplies

- Nolvasan disinfectant (for chains and other equipment)
- OB lube or soap
- Iodine solution for navels
- Artificial or frozen colostrum
- Oxytocin
- Antibiotics
 - Excenel
 - Penicillin
- Uterine Boluses
- OB Sleeves

Records and Identification

- Tags
- Buttons
- Taggers and Tagger Pins
- Marking Pens
- Calving Record Book (Available at Twin Forks Clinic)

Scouring Medications and Supplies

- Bluelite C (oral fluid/electrolyte supplements)
- Naxcel/Excenel
- TMS boluses
- Fluid Feeder
- Syringes
- Needles
- Balling gun

Other Products

- O-NO more (Calf Claimer)
- Alpha 7 (7way given at birth to prevent overeating deaths)
- Multimin (Injectable trace mineral supplement)

Also please remember when administering vaccines or medications, to consult your veterinarian and to use clean equipment and proper technique. Most vaccines and medications are worthless if not given correctly.

A word about colostrum management, make sure that calves nurse within the first 6 hours of birth to help make sure they get satisfactory passive immunity from the dam. Calves that are weak or sluggish may need to be bottle-fed

colostrum or a colostrum supplement like Colostrx to get going.

Natural colostrum is best either fresh out of the cow or frozen. One thing to remember about frozen colostrum is that it should only be kept for a year. Also, frost-free freezers are not the best for long-term colostrum storage because these freezers go through cycles of freezing and thawing that can allow the colostrum to partially thaw, thus reducing the storage life of the colostrum.

Kevin L. Cawthra, Animal Scientist, Twin Forks Clinic

Twin Forks Clinic is on Facebook

Twin Forks Clinic now has a Facebook page. For those of you that are not familiar with Facebook, it is a "social networking" website that allows you another way to stay in contact with friends, family and your favorite organizations or businesses.

If you already have a Facebook account, simply go to Facebook and search for Twin Forks Clinic, to find our page. If you become a "fan" of our page you will be updated whenever updates are made to our services, or our webpage. We also have some interesting case studies and information posted on our page.



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