

# Don't Delay Assisting At Calving Says Livestock Specialist

**MT. VERNON, MO.**

**C**ow-calf farmers should be arranging their schedules in the next couple of months to devote more time to their cow herds. This is especially true for those who calve in late winter-early spring.

"The expected, favorable cattle prices throughout 2011 and beyond should make every calf saved a big plus for the bottom line," said Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

Close observation, especially of first-calf heifers, should be a must. It is impossible to be with the herd 24-7 but frequent checks will pay off with more live calves on the ground.

The use of low-birthweight, calving ease bulls helps save calves from heifers and even cows sometimes.

"Remember those heifers usually have shorter gestation periods and their calves typically arrive five days or so ahead of schedule. For this reason, check the calving pasture closely as you can find an early surprise," said Cole.

Research has shown that early intervention in the calving process helps save calves and assures earlier breed back.

"Guidelines from Oklahoma State show that if a heifer is not making significant progress one hour after the appearance of the water bag or feet examine her to see if you can provide assistance," said Cole.

Mature cows should only be watched 30 minutes before assisting. If in either case you cannot deliver the calf, seek assistance from a veterinarian.

Cole says assisted calves often are weak and a little slow in getting up. Drying them off, getting them warmed up and making sure they receive colostrum as soon as possible will help them off to a good start.

"Remember the effort involved in saving the calf helps pay the \$500 to \$700 cost per year of owning and caring for the average beef cow. Dead calves don't pay back very much," said Cole. Δ

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