

Planning Time Is Now For Artificial Insemination

MT. VERNON, MO.

Many cattle producers with fall calf crops turn bulls out with the cows in late November or early December. Eldon Cole, a livestock specialist with University of Missouri Extension says that is a good plan only if you want late-August or early September calves.

"I'd like to challenge cattle producers to help bunch the 2014 fall calf crop by following a fixed-time artificial insemination protocol and get 60 to 65 percent of your females bred on one AI service," said Cole.

Cole says with AI that can be successfully done with only a little effort.

"Even though you breed all your cows on a given day, they won't all calve on the same day. Normally, they'll stretch the calving period over a 10 to 14 day time frame," said Cole.

For producers who have never tried fixed-time AI (also called "breeding by appointment" by some) Cole says it is time to try it. University of Missouri Extension reproductive specialists have worked hard over the years to improve conception rates to the 60-65 percent level.

"Recently, I worked a set of 70 or so heifers with a veterinarian who early preg checked with ultrasound the timed AI heifers. When we tallied up the percent bred it was slightly over 70 percent. That was exciting. Once in a while I hear of an 80 percent preg rate, but it's rare," said Cole.

Cole says that even using high fertility, older bulls will not typically result in a 60 to 65 percent breeding success rate of cows on the first day of the breeding season.

"A well-bunched calf crop makes management feeding and marketing of the calf crop much easier," said Cole.

When it comes to artificial insemination, there are different protocols for cows and heifers. For cows that have calved at least 40 days earlier the protocol that is used successfully is a 7-day CO-Synch CIDR. This requires the cows be put through the chute three times covering a 10-day time frame.

A protocol for virgin heifers utilizes similar products but covers either a 9 or 33-day period. Any of the protocols requires management of time, scheduling with AI representatives and fol-

lowing the protocol to the letter.

Tips that make fixed-time AI successful include:

- Good, sturdy working facilities
- A quiet low stress working crew
- Use a portable breeding barn – AI companies have them and several extension offices have them to rent.
- Be willing to attend to details and follow the protocol
- Have females identified and keep records
- To aid in identifying the AI success, don't turn the cleanup bull in for 14 days after the AI date.
- Do an early preg check before 90 days following AI
- Work with experienced inseminators who know their limits on numbers they can breed in a short time period.
- Inquire of the AI company if the sire or sires have been successfully used in a timed AI program.



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- Cows should be a body condition score of 5 or above.

"Artificial insemination has a lot of potential for increasing quality and the reputation of a cow herd. I recommend taking advantage of this technology to improve your bottom line," said Cole. Δ