

## **BEEF COW-CALF CALENDAR**

(Based on Winter Calving)

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This calendar is a guide for the beef cattle producer to aid in managing a spring calving herd. It is intended to help the owner remember important management activities. No one written program will fully serve the needs of every producer, and this calendar is only intended as a guide. Local veterinarians and extension personnel can provide further information for your specific situation.

### **Resources needed to implement a herd health program:**

- individual animal identification
- record keeping system
- adequate handling facilities
- restricted calving season
- a written herd health program
- the desire to make it work

### **General goals:**

- individual identification of every animal
  - 12 month calving interval
  - 60 day calving season
  - 90% weaned calf crop
  - preweaning death loss < 2%
  - average weaning weights - 50% of dam's normal weight
  - annual death loss of adults < 0.5 %
- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Calving season - heifers  | January 1 - February 14      |
| • Calving season - cows     | February 1 - April 2         |
| • Breeding season - heifers | March 22 - May 6 (45 days)   |
| • Breeding season - cows    | April 22 - June 21 (60 days) |

### **January**

## Calving season - heifers - January 1- February 14

**Be prepared to assist!**

### Health

Check heifers regularly and often. Move "heavy springers" to permanent pastures with catch facilities. Be prepared to assist calving. Helping too early is much better than helping too late!

Pregnant cattle must be watched closely - 4-6 times daily, a minimum of twice daily. Make an intensive effort to save every calf.

Calves must receive adequate colostrum - be sure calf is nursing aggressively within 4-6 hours of birth. Keep some frozen colostrum on hand for weak calves.

Calves need 10% of their body weight in the first 24 hours of life. Example - 80 lb calf needs 8 lbs colostrum, 1 pint colostrum = 1 lb., give 4 pints initially and repeat in 6 hours. Assist calf in nursing or bottle feed if necessary.

Monitor calves for scours. (Work with your veterinarian to diagnose cause of scours so proper prevention and treatment can be implemented).

### Nutrition

Heifers should begin calving approximately 20-30 days before cows. They are not yet fully grown and by calving early they have extra time to gain weight prior to the breeding season.

After calving, separate cows with calves from pregnant cows and increase feed to insure rebreeding. Thin cows are much slower to get pregnant. Body condition scoring is helpful. Consult your county agent or veterinarian for guidelines.

Utilize winter pasture if available, to keep costs down.

Have hay tested, then supplement based on test results.

### Management

Necessary equipment for calving season: calf pulling equipment, disinfectant for navels (such as tincture of iodine), ID tags, castration equipment, growth implants, frozen colostrum, esophageal feeder, scales, dehorning equipment

Castrate and dehorn during the first week of life.

Implant steers at time of castration. Implant heifers that will not be used for breeding.

Dip navels within 4 hours after birth, the earlier the better.

Cows should calve on clean pasture with shelter available, e.g. woods, wind break, etc.

Record calf ID, calving date, sex, dam and sire. Weigh calf. Also record any problems.

Comment: Many producers have busy schedules. An advantage of "short" calving season is that one can wait until all the calves are on the ground and castrate, dehorn and implant with all the calves still less than two months old. All the calves have the same implant date so can be re-implanted on schedule.

## February

### **Calving season - cows - February 1 - April 2**

#### Health

Keep watch for scours.

Inspect cattle for signs of lice. Treat as necessary.

Continue to monitor pregnant cows for calving problems.

Grass Tetany is more likely to occur as new grass emerges. Supplements containing at least 6-8% magnesium should be available free choice.

#### Nutrition

Do cattle have an adequate fresh water supply? Ponds may freeze.

Cows need to be gaining weight when the breeding season begins. Weight gain is most critical in thin cows. Body condition scoring is an easy, reliable way to monitor changes in cow condition. Ask your Extension agent for information on Body Condition Scoring.

#### Management

Make notes on which heifers to keep as replacements. Size is more important than age.

Heifers should weigh 65% of mature weight at breeding time.

**Have BSE (breeding soundness exam) performed on all bulls between 30-60 days prior to breeding season.**

Continue to castrate, dehorn and implant calves as they are born.

## March

## **Breeding season for heifers - March 22 - May 6 (45 days)**

### Health

Continue to watch for scours.

**Vaccinate adult cattle 30 days prior to breeding season.** Consult with your veterinarian.

IBR, BVD, Leptospira and Campylobacter (vibrio) are generally recommended  
Pinkeye +/-

Pasteurella, Hemophilus +/-

Observe for Grass Tetany.

### Nutrition

Keep a close watch on body condition of herd bulls. Herd should be gaining weight. The amount of gain needed depends on average body condition of herd. This is a critical time

for cattle - before the spring grasses have emerged and when hay quality is low.

### Management

Breed heifers beginning 20-30 days prior to the mature cow breeding season.

Use low birth weight or calving-ease bulls on heifers.

Breed 50% more heifers than needed and keep those that get pregnant first.

If artificially inseminating, check heat at least twice daily. Dawn and dusk are good times.

Confining heifers to a limited grazing area will make them easier to monitor.

Use a teaser bull.

Use an experienced inseminator. Breed approximately 12 hours after observation of heat.

Keep records!

## April

### **Cows breeding season - April 22 - June 21 (60 days)**

#### Health

Cows should be gaining weight during the breeding season.

Check condition of bulls - it may be necessary to hand feed extra grain to maintain their body condition.

#### Nutrition

Pastures should be at their best. Exercise good pasture management. Contact the UT Extension Service.

Offer a complete mineral mix with at least 8% Phosphorous and a Calcium: Phosphorous ratio of 1.2 - 1.5: 1.0 and a copper level of at least 1000 ppm (ask your Extension agent for update information on mineral nutrition of the cow herd. High magnesium should also be maintained for nursing cows through April and May. Mineral supplementation should be continued free choice throughout the year.

Maintenance of pregnant heifers - heifers should reach 85% of mature weight by calving at 23-25 months.

#### Management

Complete castration, dehorning and implanting of calves. Reimplant calves as indicated.

Provide adequate "bull power"

1 yearling bull → 15 cows, but with care

1 two year old bull → 20 -25 cows

1 mature bull → 30-35 cows

Single-sire breeding groups are preferred. If it is necessary to use more than one bull with a group of cows, the bulls should be of the same weight and age. Rotating sires weekly is another good way to use bulls in multi-sire breeding groups.

Keep records of breeding dates in order to estimate calving dates. Also if cows are failing to conceive, determine the cause and correct it. Observe for heat at least twice daily.

Work on facilities.

## May

Perform routine spring herd work in mid April to early June.

Cow breeding continues.

## Health

Monitor cows returning to heat or not yet settled. Record breeding dates.

Are any bulls not breeding cows?

Check and treat for pinkeye.

Is the water supply fresh and adequate? Cows need 10-20 gallons/day.

Vaccinations: consult with your veterinarian

calves - IBR, BVD, BRSV, PI3

calves should be 4 months old before vaccinating

Clostridial 4 way or 7 way, PI3, BRSV

Brucella (heifers 4-10 months) +/-

Pasteurella, Hemophilus +/-

Leptospira +/-

Pinkeye +/-

Fly control is Very Important - tags, sprays, feed-throughs and boluses, back rubs, dust bags, others. Initiate control measures when fly numbers reach or exceed 50 flies/cow. Keep records of what was used, when it was used, how it was used and the observed response.

## Nutrition

Pastures should be of good quality at this time. Is a mineral supplement available? Begin planning for fall/winter forage grazing. Consider creep feeding calves - if economical.

Rotate cattle among pastures.

## Management

ID any calves not already done.

Implant calves with a growth promotant. Follow directions of specific product.

Castrate and dehorn calves not already done.

Remove bulls from heifers - May 6.

## June

**Continue fly control program.**

### Health

Fly populations will be increasing.

Monitor cows for abortions. Submit any and all aborted fetuses to a veterinary diagnostic lab for necropsy.

Discontinue Magnesium supplementation - threat of Grass Tetany is past.

Vaccines for calves given during spring herd work should be boosted, according to label directions. This is extremely important to achieve proper protection.

### Nutrition

Pregnant heifers and thin cows should be put together and fed a good quality feed. A complete mineral mix or blocks and salt blocks should be available to entire herd throughout the year.

Mow pastures to control weeds and maintain quality.

### Management

Reimplant calves with growth promotant as the product recommends.

Heifers can be pregnancy checked now - cull ALL that are open.

Work cattle in the morning to avoid heat stress.

Market calves that were backgrounded through the winter.

Remove bulls from cows June 21.

Drag fallow pastures to break up and disperse cow manure and leave vacant for 2 weeks after. This will create an unfavorable environment for parasite larvae, and more uniform grazing by the cattle.

## July

### **Deworm herd.**

### Health

Continue vigorous fly control. This is the best way to control pinkeye. Fly populations will be the greatest during July. If fly tags are failing, consider other control methods.

Observe herd daily. Monitor for pinkeye, cancer eye, lameness, abscesses or any other illnesses. Treat promptly.

Rotate and utilize the better pastures.

Monitor cattle for abortions.

### Nutrition

Replacement heifers should be on quality pasture.

Yearling bulls may need extra feed to regain condition.

### Management

Bulls should be away from the cow herd.

Do not allow bulls to get over-conditioned through the year. Provide adequate area for exercise.

Which heifers do you want to keep for replacements?

- Keep notes.
- Select larger heifers for replacements.
- Select heifers from dams that milk well, with a history of regular calvings.
- Select against conformational defects - screw claws, post-legged, etc.
- Select 50% more heifers than are needed - some will be culled for failing to conceive.
- You may decide to keep all heifers - then cull based on which get pregnant first.

Deworming cows and nursing calves in the last half of June, July or August with ivermectin, fenbendazole (10 mg/kg dose), oxfendazole, albendazole, moxidectin or doramectin may be cost beneficial in some herds.

It is hot, so work cattle early in the day.

## August

Have soil tested.

### Health

Continue fly control. Watch for abortions. Minimize stress - provide adequate shade and fresh water.

### Nutrition

Continue to mow for weed control.

Soil test for proper fertilization of winter pastures.

Heifers with their first calves need the best grazing.

Monitor pastures closely, move cattle to fresh pastures as needed. Supplement with hay if necessary.

### Management

Cows can be pregnancy checked now-cull all that are open.

Reimplant calves as indicated.

Work early in the day.

This would be an opportune time to deworm, and no extra money would be wasted on open cows.

## September

Perform routine fall herd work in late September or October.

### Health

Risk of poisonous plant toxicosis is high if drought occurs. Worst offenders are purple mint, frost-killed Johnson Grass/Sorghums and acorns.

Continue to monitor for abortions.

Continue fly control.

### Nutrition

Are cows and heifers maintaining adequate body condition?

Now is the time to plant winter forages.

Replacement heifers may need supplementation. Should gain 1.25-1.5 lbs per day in order to breed at 14-16 months of age.

**Wean calves this month (6-8 months old).**

May allow calves to nurse as long as quality pastures last. Do not let cows get too thin, however. Body condition score cows.

As pasture quality declines, cows are more likely to consume poisonous plants.

Keep pastures clipped.

Now is the time to stockpile fescue.

### Management

Cull cows based on pregnancy status, condition of feet, legs, udder, teeth, and adjusted weaning weight of calves.

Develop a plan to market steers, heifers and cull cows. Get the most money for your cattle.

Fall herd work:

deworming: deworm retained calves 3 times at 3 week intervals (fenbendazole, oxfendazole, albendazole), two times at 5-6 week intervals (ivermectin, moxidectin or doramectin).

## **Remove fly tags.**

Pregnancy examine cows. Palpate 45-60 days after bulls removed.

Pregnancy examine heifers if not already done.

Cull ALL open cattle.

When working cattle, do not stress or bruise.

Weigh calves at weaning.

Supplement retained calves with concentrate feeds if economical.

Reimplant backgrounded calves as indicated.

Vaccinations: consult veterinarian for specific protocol

cows and calves - IBR, BVD, Leptospira

cows - Campylobacter (vibrio)

retained calves - Clostridial 4 way or 7 way, PI3, BRSV

+/- Brucella any heifers missed in spring

+/- Pasteurella/Hemophilus

## **October**

### **Are records up to date?**

#### Health

Watch for abortions; if they occur, get diagnostic help.

#### Nutrition

If late-weaning any calves, be sure cows go onto good forage until calving. If not, they may have problems breeding back.

What target weight do you have in mind for your heifers at breeding time (begins March 22)?

A complete mineral mix should be available to the entire herd throughout the year.

#### Management

Late wean any remaining calves. Weigh them and record.

Market remaining calves if they will not be backgrounded.

## November

### **Are heifers gaining adequately?**

#### Health

Prepare for heifers calving next month.

Continue to watch for abortions.

Lice will be more evident now since winter hair coats are on and cattle will often graze closer to each other. Treat as necessary.

Grass Tetany may occur when hay from magnesium-deficient soils are fed during the winter.

Offer an effective magnesium supplement (blocks, loose minerals, etc.) now for adequate prevention.

#### Nutrition

Check replacement heifers. Target weight: 65% of mature weight by March 22.

Provide pregnant beef cows an adequate ration for the last 30-45 days of pregnancy to insure strong calves at birth and that the cow begins cycling in a reasonable period of time.

Have hay tested for nutritional value - contact Extension agent to make arrangements for testing by the Forage Testing Laboratory in Knoxville. Be sure to include information on form about cattle types and performance if a ration recommendation is desired.

#### Management

Cows should calve in good body condition. Body condition score of 5 to 7.

Check breeding records for expected calving dates.

## December

**Are lice a problem?**

### Health

Monitor cattle for lice.

### Nutrition

Permanent pastures are possibly poor. Supplement as needed.

### Management

If purchasing a new bull, purchase one with performance that exceeds the average cow herd.

Isolate any new additions from the herd for at least 30 days. Vaccinate and deworm before introducing to the herd.