

SELECTING AND MANAGING REPLACEMENT HEIFERS

The selection and management of replacement heifers is one of the most critical decisions made by beef producers. The decisions made will influence productivity for many years to come. The cost associated with the development of heifers makes it necessary to select those heifers that have the highest probability of developing into a productive cow. Producers should make a selection of potential heifers at weaning and then make a final selection at breeding time.

Questions to ask when selecting replacement heifers:

- Were heifers born during the first part of the calving season?
- Are the heifers of the breed desired for the cow herd?
- Are the heifers of the desired frame score?
- Have records been used to select the most productive heifers?
- Do heifers have a good disposition?
- Are heifers structurally sound?
- Do heifers have the proper conformation?
- Do heifers have four properly formed and spaced teats?
- Have implants been used only for heifers not being kept for replacements?
- Have heifers been fed to prevent the accumulation of too much fat?
- Are heifers old enough to breed and fit into the normal calving season?
- Have heifers grown adequately between weaning and breeding?
- Did heifers start cycling at the desire time?
- Do heifers weigh 65% to 70% of mature weight at breeding?
- Do heifers have a body condition score of 6 at breeding time?
- Have 50% more heifers been kept than the number actually needed as replacements?
- Have heifers been evaluated at breeding with those unsuitable as replacements being sold?

Replacement heifers need to go through a rigorous selection process. Following selection the heifers must be managed to maximize the possibility of their being productive cows. A good health program includes vaccinations for shipping fever (IBR, BVD, PI3 and BRSV), Leptospirosis (5-way), and Clostridials (7-way). These should be administered according to manufacturer's recommendations and Beef Quality Assurance guidelines. Heifers should also be dewormed at weaning. Heifers should be fed to gain 1.5 to 2.0 pounds per day between weaning and breeding.

Breed heifers to bulls with low birth weight EPD's. Cull those heifers that do not breed during a limited breeding season. Saving heifers with problems breeding the first time results in cows with breeding problems.

For additional information on the selection and management of replacement heifers, contact your local Extension office.

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Additional information on managing beef cattle can be obtained
by contacting your local Agricultural Extension Service Office or from the
Animal Science Home Page: www.utextension.utk.edu/ansci
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