

The benefits of early cattle pregnancy checks

Vet tips
Dr. Aaron White



The benefits of early pregnancy checking in cattle are significant when the cost of feeding open cows over the winter is considered. Winter feed costs represent 60 to 70 percent of the expense of maintaining a beef cow, but less than 20 percent of beef producers perform a pregnancy check in their herds. November is historically the low point in the cull-cow market, which coincides with the time most producers wean calves and pregnancy check cows. Based on the average cull-cow market price for 2005 to 2010, the price difference between selling in August instead of November is roughly \$8 per hundred weight. For a 1,250 pound cow the price difference would be \$100.

All of this is dependent on producers having a set breeding season. If bulls are continuously run with the cows, producers have no way to determine the cows' true pregnancy status. Cows that feel "open" via rectal palpation or are visualized to be "open" with ultrasound actually may have been bred recently. Pregnancy exams should be performed as accurately and efficiently as possible. In order to do this, ultrasound exams should be performed from 26 to 30 days and rectal palpation 35 to 40 days after the last possible breeding date.

When producers adhere to these guidelines and a veterinarian's expertise is utilized, pregnancy detection should be very accurate. One must realize, that a small portion of cows determined to be pregnant during examination will have fetal loss naturally prior to calving, occurring whether or not producers have the cattle pregnancy checked.

Another major factor to consider is nutrition of your cows. Pregnant cows need more food. By removing open cows, the remaining pregnant cows have more access to the available food supply. This is especially important when pasture and feed is scarce. Always plan ahead for the day of pregnancy checking. Make sure sufficient labor is available to gather and work cattle and that the facilities are in good repair. Also, be mindful of the weather. Hot weather is stressful to both the cattle and workers.

Early pregnancy checking of cattle benefits the producer's pocket book and the herd viability. Please call us at Norton Animal Health Center at 785.877.2411 with any questions!



It is always smart to plan ahead

My mother used to have a sign hanging in her utility room that said, "Plan Ahead" with the letter "d" sitting a-kilter because there wasn't enough room. Wish I could find a sign like that to hang in my kitchen.

I actually thought I had everything under control. Second Sundays are Fellowship Dinners at our church and I knew exactly what I wanted to make: Sweet Amish Macaroni Salad. It was one of the "keepers" from my new on-line recipes. I scanned the recipe, confirming in my head that I had everything on hand. When you live 15 miles from the nearest supermarket, you can't just run to the store for a missing ingredient.

Saturday night I hard boiled the four eggs called for; I sat the mixing bowl and all the non-refrigerated components on the counter; filled a kettle with water and sat it on the stove. Everything was ready.

Sunday morning I awakened at six to give myself a little extra time. I was slicing and dicing; mixing and measuring; peeling and paring. Right up until I reached for the mayonnaise jar. The recipe called for two cups, specifying mayonnaise NOT salad dressing. No matter how hard I scraped that jar, there was scarcely a quarter of a cup. What to do? I was too far into the recipe to change my mind.

Out Back
Carolyn Plotts



The macaroni was boiling and all the other spices, onions and celery had been combined. I did what I always do when faced with a culinary dilemma – I reached for my "Joy of Cooking" cookbook. I figured somebody had to have been the first to make mayonnaise. It didn't just magically appear on grocery shelves without having first been created in someone's kitchen. And, it was probably somebody French.

Sure 'nuf. There was a recipe for mayonnaise. It originated in France and as the story goes, there was a great deal of competition between households to see whose mayonnaise was the best. The directions said for the best mayonnaise it had to be whisked by hand. At this point I didn't really need to have the best, it just had to be edible. I pulled out my No. 1 power tool for the kitchen – my stand mixer.

I had all the ingredients, but the yield was only 1 ¼ cups. I would still be ½ a cup short. So I doubled the recipe. The

directions said to beat egg yolks until a lemony yellow color and to add one cup of olive oil, alternately with one cup of lemon juice, one teaspoon at a time. Are you kidding me? One teaspoon at a time? I did better than that. I cranked the speed up a notch and began pouring. Slowly, to be sure, but more than a teaspoon at a time. Other additives were dry mustard, vinegar, salt, sugar and cayenne pepper. It still took over 30 minutes to mix everything, but in the end, it tasted pretty good. And, I dare say, in the salad, it was great.

Am I going to start making my own mayonnaise from now on? Not on your life! But now, I know I can if I have to. What I am going to do is buy two jars next time I'm in the store, so I'll always have one in reserve.

-ob-

Our nephew, Brian, was moved to the rehab unit of the hospital where he's been the last three weeks following a wreck. Last week he sat up by himself and put on his socks. A major accomplishment and one of many that lie ahead now that physical therapy begins in earnest.

His cousin sent a quote. "What doesn't kill you will make you stronger. Except for bears, bears will kill you." Perhaps I should wait until his ribs are healed better to show him that one.

Conditions are better but we aren't out of the drought yet

Rainfall during the end of July and the first week of August has provided hope for farmers and cattlemen across Kansas – even in the far western corners of the state.

As southwestern Kansas farmers prepare for fall wheat seeding, there are more happy faces than during the last couple years, but that's not to say some areas don't need moisture.

"I don't believe we're out of the drought by any means," says Stevens County farmer Ben McClure. "I know we haven't gone back to a wet period. We were just blessed to have rain when we needed it badly."

McClure received five inches of rain on his farm during the first week of August. Stevens County averages 17 inches of moisture annually. Most farmers in this county are still at least 12 inches shy and in many cases more.

The rains that fell in early August were spotty. A couple miles south of McClure's fields, thirsty crops received half about two inches. Two miles north, even less.

For those dry-land wheat farmers in this region of Kansas, the rains have given them the prospect of planting wheat this fall. Many haven't harvested a crop here in three years.

"Maybe we can get it up," McClure says. "That wasn't the case before the rain."

Insight
John Schlageck



If, and this is a big if, these wheat growers receive another half, three-quarters or even a full inch of rain between now and the end of October, dry-land wheat will have a good chance of getting up and going heading into the winter.

"Just the possibility of planting, growing and harvesting a dry-land wheat crop would be great," McClure says. "After three years of little, if any moisture, the early August rains allowed everything out here to take a deep breath."

From a soil conservation point of view, these summer rains were a real "life saver."

Farmers like McClure were able to go into fields that hadn't grown a crop for three years and plant a crop to cover the bare soil. Watching the precious top soil blow during this three year drought has been especially painful with no residue to hold the soil in place.

Last winter the Stevens County farmer watched the soil blow down

to the hardpan – a layer of soil so compacted that neither plant roots nor water can penetrate.

That's gut-wrenching. It leaves a scar on a farmer and the land.

This year will be different, thanks to the summer rain.

"We planted some feed on some of our land after we received the moisture," McClure says. "If we hadn't received the rain, the crop wouldn't have grown."

Instead, the feed crop covers the land and stands between three and four feet high.

The pheasants are enjoying the feed and cover, McClure says. He's hoping for a couple good hunts in November.

This year even the road sides sport green weeds. Last year was totally brown.

"The pigweed and kochia are doing well since the rain," McClure says. "It's even been nice to see some weeds grow in places."

When's the last time you heard a farmer talk about "liking" the looks of weeds on his land?

Troubled times and conditions lend themselves to unlikely conversation, especially in western Kansas during a prolonged drought. Let's just hope and pray these farmers receive the much needed rain for which they are desperate.

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