Wilson County Agricultural Article from Ruth Correll, Agricultural Extension Agent

Proven Practices to Optimize Calf Performance

“Producing a healthy, heavy, high-quality calf to sell should be the goal of all beef producers” according to Dr. Mark Hilton, DVM at Purdue University of Veterinary Science. Everyone understands the importance of calf vigor, but there are other management practices for young calves that can add to significant profit. The following are some management practices which Dr. Hilton recommends:

1. **Fly Control** - Flies pester calves from spring to fall, and there are many tools at your disposal to control them. Ask your veterinarian about fly tags, insecticide feed additives, sprays, pour-ons and dust bags. Don’t allow flies to infest cows and calves all summer. Treating cows benefits their calves.

2. **Deworm Cows**. The cows are shedding many parasite eggs, and deworming cows decreases pasture contamination, which lessens exposure for the entire herd.

3. **Implant Nursing Calves** – Research trials show a daily gain improvement of 0.10 to 0.14 pound during the suckling phase. Suckling steer calves and heifer calves can benefit from being implanted. Suckling implants work primarily by improving the efficiency of the milk and grass the calf ingests. This produces more muscle mass, which improves weaning weight.

   There are exceptions to implanting recommendation. •If a heifer will be kept for breeding, do not implant. •Never implant bull calves. •Implants cannot be used by producers of organic and all-natural beef.

4. **Castrate Bull Calves** – Bull calves should be castrated at less than 3 months of age. Calves castrated early do not experience the stress of those castrated late. Calves castrated near weaning have a one- to two-week period of weight loss soon after castration that is never regained. Meanwhile, late castration lowers quality grade and decreases tenderness compared to calves castrated early.

   With our beef herd at an all-time low, we could use the extra beef to help meet consumer demand. (Source: W. Mark Hilton, DVM, Purdue Univ.)

Agricultural Market Trends

Cattle Market Trends

Feeder steers steady to $5 lower, $185.00-$360.00; Feeder heifers steady to $6 lower, $165.00-$320.00; Slaughter cows $1 to $2 higher, $88.50-$119.00; Slaughter bulls steady, $130.00-$151.00.

Grain Market Trends

Corn, cotton, and wheat were up; soybeans were down for the week. Corn – cash price, $3.60-$3.89. July futures closed at $3.65 a bushel, up 2 cents a bushel. Soybeans – cash price, $9.45-$10.11. July fu-

For additional information on these and other topics, contact the UT Extension Office, 925 East Baddour Parkway, Lebanon, TN 37087, 615-444-9584 or acorrell@utk.edu. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in all programs. Visit the UT/TSU Extension webpage at http://utextension.tennessee.edu/wilson or look for UT & TSU Extension, Wilson County on Facebook.

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