

Cow - Calf Herd Management Practice

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Our practice falls way short of most of what has been talked about. A little of Dr. Barron's pet practice and mostly somewhere in between! We have a three-man practice in southern Iowa, 45 miles south of Des Moines. Seventy-five percent of our time is connected with cow-calf problems of various types; a lot of our time is spent in consultation and management—mostly on a feed basis. These herds generally range from 50 to 200 head. The other gentlemen talked about contractual work with 18 or 25 big operations. I believe that ours falls in the neighborhood of 400 and it would be a little difficult to make a very specific arrangement and fit one arrangement to all 400. Our consulting or management practices are mostly on an individual basis and attempting to handle their various needs. Our herds are mostly owner operated, owner managed herds. Corporation farming is almost completely nonexistent and the only corporation farming we have are family owned corporations. Ninety percent of the calf production in our area is sold at seven or eight months of age, or yearlings at the latest. We go into feedlot areas in northern and western Iowa primarily and are dealing basically with cow replacement heifers, the calf to about eight months of age and the bull "battery." The beef cow business is not as sophisticated as the dairy business and we do not have accessibility to computers like these dairymen seem to have, but we are at least getting beef cow men to identify their cows with an ear tag and identify their calves when a calf is dropped. We are getting a few of them to weigh their calves at birth, to base their selection on performance, and to buy performance tested bulls. We are also doing pregnancy examinations now so that we do not carry nonpregnant cows through the winter. We conduct fertility examinations on a high percentage of the bulls before they are sent to pasture in the spring.

We do have one specific area of herd management that I have been working with that happens to be on my herd of cattle, so I am putting my money where my mouth is, and this is *induced calving*. I would like to say just a few words on induced calving in Denver and a couple of other places. We all know what induced calving is—you give them an injection of steroid and a few hours later they have a calf but I am sure a lot of us are using this on a downer cow or for some specific reason. I have tried to develop an induced calving

program basically because we are dealing in our area with more and more first calf heifers. Cow numbers are going to increase and they will have to come from first cow heifers crossbred with AI. If we put those three ingredients together, we should be thinking of getting our clients live calves. So, if we follow a management program that will work and I am speaking specifically about a nutritional management program, an induced calving program will work right along with it. I am speaking about the elevated levels of TDN, protein intake, vitamins, minerals, etc., that it takes to produce a crossbred calf. We injected 70 cows this year and obtained 69 live calves—they all calved from 26 to 56 hours. We grouped them from 276 to 282 days of pregnancy. That left this operator to calve them out in two and one half days of the week and the remainder of the week where he did other things. We too had to be concerned about helping him only two and one half days a week. I am talking about my farm manager, and me as a veterinarian. These were red Angus cows bred to Limousin bulls. You are going to see a lot of this. Clients want live calves out of these cows. You will see the exotic half bloods, $\frac{3}{4}$ bloods and this way up the line. You beef people have them within your own practice. I think you should consider induced calving as a service to them since I am sure they will be questioning you about this. My experience has been excellent. I had a very low percent of retained placentas with adequate nutrition and the breed back experience. I am sure this is the key to the whole program with 66% first service, 18% second service, 9% third and I believe that leaves us with 5 or 6% problem cases. We were feeding high levels of phosphorous and I believe it caused these cows to stay in heat a little longer than you would expect and affected our first service conception rate. The second time around we waited an extra six hours and brought the first and second service total up to a satisfactory level.

Question: How do you induce labor?

We used, on this group of cows, seven ml (14 mg) dexamethazone (Azium). The theory behind this is that at 250 days, the progesterone level starts to drop rapidly. Apparently azium inhibits progesterone production, allowing estrogen to stimulate the pituitary gland to secrete the various hormones involved with calving. It is not an abortion, it looks just like a normal calving.