

Pregnancy checking improves reproductive performance in cow herds

The pregnancy-checking management phase is an opportune time to improve cow-herd health and to maximize each cow's ability to produce a healthy calf. Following are some practical health-management tips to increase cow-herd reproductive performance when you "preg check."

- ✓ Examine and cull cows based on pregnancy status and their previous performance. Cows should be examined for pregnancy about 60 days after breeding. This allows the veterinarian to identify open cows and to estimate days of gestation in pregnant cows. If cows are open or were bred late, consider culling them. By doing so, you shorten your calving season and produce a more uniform calf crop.
- ✓ Evaluate and sort pregnant cows according to nutritional needs. This maximizes feed utilization, can positively affect pregnancy rates the following year and enhances the response to vaccines. According to Jon Seeger, senior technical services veterinarian with Pfizer Animal Health, producers should work closely with their veterinarians and nutritionists to develop a sound nutritional program for each stage of pregnancy based on time of year, forage quality, climate and cow condition. This will help ensure a hearty, healthy calf crop.
- ✓ Help prevent diseases that cause open cows. Preg-check time is one when producers can enhance protection of

the cow herd from abortion-causing diseases. By administering appropriate vaccines at this time, producers can protect against diseases that cause late abortions, such as leptospirosis, and enhance immunity against diseases such as infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR) and bovine viral diarrhea (BVD), which can cause reproductive disease and other more common clinical conditions.

- ✓ Prevent losses due to internal and external parasites. Grazing cattle can ingest worms, and closely confined cattle can become infested with lice. Controlling parasites lowers worm burdens in cows, resulting in improved feed intake and efficiency. Treating and controlling parasites allows cows to be in better condition for the rigors of late pregnancy and calving.

A healthy calf crop starts long before a calf is born. It includes managing the dam's health, providing proper nutrition to maintain a viable pregnancy, and keeping cows in optimum condition to breed back early. These aspects help to improve efficiency and increase net profits.



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