

Byproduct of AI:

Extra Pounds at Weaning



Above: Jerry and Judy Timmons watched the sale weights of their calves jump when they started using AI.

Below: Jason and Jerry Timmons work together to synchronize and AI both heifers and mature cows.



Cow herd uniformity and quality are the main goals of these Georgia producers but weaning weights are the first payoff.

Story by
BECKY MILLS

By 2007 Jerry and Judy Timmons had made great strides turning their rainbow herd black. But Jerry wanted the 200-cow commercial operation to be even more uniform and stacked deep with top-quality females.

With help from American Breeder Service (ABS) representative Steve Valente, the Leary, Ga., cattleman jumped into artificial insemination (AI) that winter, breeding both his replacement heifers and mature cows to top-quality predictable Angus bulls. While it obviously takes longer than four years to make over a cow herd, Timmons started to see results with the first year's calf crop.

"The sale weights of our steers went from 675 pounds to 720 pounds (lb.)," he says.

The next year, sale weights jumped to 800 lb. Last fall, drought and heat knocked sale weights back to 768 lb., but Timmons says he is still pleased. "They weighed 609 pounds on July 19 when we vaccinated them

before weaning. On August 5 they weighed 649 pounds. On September 10, when we shipped them, they weighed 768 pounds. That's 3.3 pounds a day on a 50:50 mix of soy hull pellets and corn gluten. That's genetics."

On Valente's recommendation, Timmons uses the seven-day CO-Synch program with a CIDR® (a controlled internal drug-release device inserted in the female's vagina to secrete progesterin), then breeds according to a fixed-time AI (TAI) program.

"That's the most proven program," says Valente. "It isn't the cheapest one, but it is the most convenient. We spend three days, actually three half days, putting cows through the chute."

The Timmons have good working facilities, which helps.

In the program, GnRH is injected on Day 0 and a CIDR is inserted.

On Day 7 the CIDR is removed and a prostaglandin is injected. After 60-66 hours, all the females are inseminated, whether they show heat or not, and another GnRH injection is given.

Virginia Tech Professor Emeritus

"The ability to breed without heat detection is what makes this program require less labor than some others."

— Bill Beal

Bill Beal says the three injections and CIDR put the seven-day CO-Synch program in the higher-cost and medium-labor category when compared to other synchronization programs. However, he says, "The producer using the seven-day CO-Synch plus CIDR program can expect maximum

control of estrus and ovulation, therefore allowing the use of timed AI without any heat detection. The ability to breed without heat detection is what makes this program require less labor than some others."

He adds, "Given the high cost but reduced labor requirements,

the seven day CO-Synch program is a good choice for producers who have limitations on their time or limited facilities. Pregnancy rates following the seven-day CO-Synch program should be comparable or slightly lower, 4% to 5%, than other lower-cost programs that require heat detection and breeding after an observed heat.”

Timmons estimates the synchronization supplies and semen average \$35-\$40 per pregnancy. While wife Judy and son Jason help during synchronization and breeding, they also have a row-crop and poultry operation taking their time and labor.

Since the CO-Synch program with TAI is the only synchronization program Timmons has used, he can't compare the conception rates to others. However, the first year he had a 40% conception rate.

“We synchronized too many cows too early after calving,” Valente says. Now they don't synchronize females unless they are at least 50 days past calving.

That strategy works better for them, and their 2008 conception rate jumped to 61%. In 2009 it was 56% and in 2010 it was 57%.

Timmons says it is time and money well-spent.

Besides the weight gain of the steers, he says, “With synchronization and AI we're able to tighten the belt of uniformity.” He is down to a 60-day breeding season on his heifers and a 90-day season on the cows, including both the one-service AI breeding and breeding with the cleanup bulls. To help shorten the calving season

(Continued on page 44)



Top-quality AI-sired heifers raise growthy quality calves.

No pain, no gain

The uniform, quality calves in Jerry Timmons' pastures didn't just magically appear. “Everything you have to do to be successful in breeding with a bull you have to do more with AI (artificial insemination),” says ABS representative Steve Valente. “AI will really tell on your management. It is because of Jerry's management it is working so well on his operation.”

Here are the factors Timmons says are key to a successful AI program:

- It takes a lot of want to and dedication.
- It takes a lot of organization and planning. Timmons synchronizes and breeds his replacement heifers in December, a month before his main herd, then breeds the mature cows in two groups. This past year he synchronized and bred 152 females.
- You have to get your facilities where you can handle your cattle. With the seven day CO-Synch plus CIDR[®] program, the females have to go through the chute three times for injections, CIDR insertion and removal and breeding.
- You have to feed them adequately so they'll cycle.

“It is just plain a lot of work,” Timmons admits. “But it pays in the end.”

Extra Pounds at Weaning *(from page 43)*

even more, he gives all the cows that are 30 days or more past calving but less than 50 days an injection of prostaglandin to try to get their heat cycle in line with the cows that have been AI-bred.

“That way some of them might come on and cycle and the bull might pick them up,” he explains.

There is also the quality of genetics available through AI, as well as the option to breed his whole herd to one sire. High-accuracy Angus bulls have been his AI sires of choice. Timmons says, “We’re trying to get all of our females Angus. Then we’ll work on heterosis. Angus cows aren’t too big and have good mothering

ability. They milk and do a good job overall.”

He adds, “The industry wants the black Angus influence.”

The buyers back up his statement. Timmons markets his calves through the Georgia version of the Southeast Alabama Feeder Cattle Marketing Association (SAFE) sale. In August 2010 his steers sold for \$114.20 per hundredweight (cwt.) with

Since the CO-Synch program with TAI is the only synchronization program Timmons has used, he can’t compare the conception rates to others. However, the first year he had a 40% conception rate.

a projected weight of 710 lb. By the time they were shipped they weighed 753 lb. so the slide went into effect, bringing the actual price down to \$112.08. With the extra pounds to market, though, Timmons says, “I wish I could do that every year.”

SAFE sale manager John Moseley Jr. gives much of the credit to AI. “Jerry Timmons’ calves have improved tremendously since he has been AIing and doing some culling.”

Then there is his original target, the females.

“We’re saving all our AI-sired heifers,” Timmons says. The first year he only had a handful of AI-sired heifers to develop as replacements, but this year he says, “I really like the looks of the second set.”

Valente notes, “We’re really impressed with the consistency of the heifers. They flesh easy.”

“With an AI bull we have the ability to go in and use a bull that we know will give us good cows. We know what they’ll be,” Valente adds.

“That’s why we started using AI,” Timmons says. “To improve the uniformity and quality of the cow herd. But I’m well-pleased with the steers. That’s a plus.”

3



Judy and Jerry Timmons are building a uniform, quality commercial herd with whole-herd AI.