

MESSENGER-INQUIRER

 Cooperative
Extension Service



Farm Update

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES
EDUCATION

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Calving Season Returns

Many beef production farms across the area are set for the spring calving season that begins in February and will continue through April. All farm enterprises have periods throughout the year which require more management than others. Calving season is one of those time periods. While there are benefits to warmer weather in February and March, rainfall and mud create an environment that may cause health problems to newborn calves. Intensive management is required to keep calves alive during their first months on earth.

If you have not already done so, provide high magnesium mineral for the herd. Fescue will begin to grow later this month. As temperatures increase in March and April, fescue will resume rapid growth, limiting its uptake of magnesium from the soil to levels required to maintain nursing cows. Cows deficient in magnesium can develop deadly grass tetany. Feeding high magnesium mineral to nursing cows on spring pasture is a proactive way to prevent grass tetany. Cows need 20 grams of magnesium daily or 4 oz/day of a 15 percent magnesium mineral mix. Mature dry cows' needs are minimal if they are in good body condition. A protein supplement can be added if the hay being fed is below 10 percent protein. Continue feeding replacement heifers to be sure they will weigh 65 percent of their mature weight before breeding season begins in May. Feed should be increased to cows as calves are born and begin nursing.

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Three to four pounds of grain for mature cows and up to eight pounds for first calf heifers may be needed if low quality hay is being fed.

Inexperienced, first calf heifers require close attention during calving and difficulty should be expected. The animal may need assistance if no progress has been made after an hour of labor, if the calf is backwards, or if the calf's head and two feet are not visible.

If you are not already doing so, make 2025 the year to identify calves and begin a recordkeeping system. An ear tag identifying the mama cow ID number and the date of birth is absolutely necessary to determine the calf history of the cow when decisions are made to cull and replace. Beef production is a business with narrow profit margins. If you don't have a system to compare income per cow, there is no opportunity to improve profitability. If you don't have a record system, I have a few of the small red record books and plenty of the beef management wall calendars. Stop by the office and pick one up.

Bull calves not intended for breeding should be castrated and implanted. Heifers not intended for breeding should be implanted. Castration is less stressful on young animals. Implanting is research proven to increase the average daily weight gain, providing a large return for the small investment.

As mentioned earlier, wet conditions can be tough on newborn calves and soil conservation efforts. Monitor the cows and calves closely for stress/health symptoms caused by muddy conditions. Clean feeding pads and move feeding equipment often to minimize mud. Frost seeding red clover at 8-12 pounds per acre or ladino clover at 1-3 pounds per acre in February or early March on closely grazed pastures will be beneficial to renovate, increase quality, and provide a nitrogen supplement.

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Beef Cattle Production Meeting

Dr. Katie VanValin, Extension Specialist for Beef Cattle Nutrition will be at the Daviess County Extension Office this Monday, February 10 at 6:00 p.m. for the winter cattle production meeting. I've asked her to speak on evaluation of hay, interpreting hay nutrition test results, and developing a feeding program based on the quality of hay we feed. The meeting is open to everyone, and we'll have a meal prepared by the Daviess County Beef Cattleman's Association. There will be a Beef Quality and Care Assurance Certification opportunity at 4:30 p.m.

Private Pesticide Training

There will be a private pesticide applicator certification this Monday, February 10 at 8:30 a.m. Take time to look at your issued card and determine if renewal is needed. Cards are good for three years and expire on December 31 of the year printed on your card. If you are unsure if your card is expired, just come to the class. There's no charge.

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