

Weekly Article

12-26-2022

When Fall Calving Becomes Winter Calving

Hello, my name is Richard Purdin with OSU Extension, Ag and Natural Resource Educator, and Community Development Educator for Adams County. I hope to better inform local producers and the public of the latest news in the world of agriculture. Well, this is it, the last article for 2022. 2023 is knocking on the door and old man winter decided to give much of the country a nice Christmas gift literally straight from the North Pole! The weather experts call this extreme weather occurrence a Bomb Cyclone (sounds scary) but this is actually an occurrence that is closely associated with the La Nina weather pattern we seem to want to stay in. Warm air from the south is pushed up in the northern hemisphere or arctic and forcing very cold air south and not just south but as far south as Florida with reports of temperatures dipping to 19 degrees. This Bomb Cyclone's effects on agriculture have yet to be calculated but I would assume that loss of crops and livestock can be expected. Weather events like Bomb Cyclones get their name for the pace at which they come and go. According to the NOAA Weather service southern Ohio saw a 39°F Drop in temperatures in 6 hours, this broke the record set in 1948 but the largest dip in temperatures in a 6-hour period occurred on January 29-30th 2008. If you are like me and can't, take the winter weather hold on just a little bit because New Year's Day is expected to hit 60°F! With this fast-paced weather, systems come weak immune systems, and as many cattle producers continue to switch their calving season to fall it is critical to keep an eye on those young developing calves or even the ones still being born!

Fall calving has become very popular among beef cattle producers in recent years due to the higher demand for feeder calves in the spring of the year. As backgrounding and stocker operations continue to grow in Southern Ohio and Northern Kentucky, cattle buyers are offering higher premiums for healthy calves ready to start on feed or turn out to grass. The keys to making a backgrounding/stocker cattle operation efficient and lucrative include buying healthy/ weaned calves, utilizing as many farm-grown forages (preferred growing grass) as possible, and marketing larger even sized groups above 10 head but 48 preferred. The first key to purchasing healthy calves starts with cow-calf producers and the crazy weather can put even the most detailed managers to the test! Here are some considerations to keep in mind if you have young calves on the ground or yet to come.

- It starts with mom- No matter if the calf is 3 weeks old or 3 weeks away from hitting the ground proper cow nutrition is critical. When mother cows are fully content, well-hydrated, and relaxed they will produce rich colostrum at birth and

rich milk throughout the growing season. Not only will the cow produce rich milk she will produce more milk. A 1200lb mature cow should intake 24 lbs. of dry matter feed a day and protein should be a minimum of 12% but I prefer 14%, with a 55% TDN minimum. If you baled your dry hay at 15% moisture you will need to feed roughly 28lbs of forage/head per day to meet that intake.

- TLC makes for healthier calves- When I was writing this article, I couldn't help but think back to my childhood days of helping grandpa with the milking. I remember that he always had a radio playing in the parlor and it was not playing rock and roll! The cows eat grain while being milked and were very content. At the time I thought that the radio was for grandma and grandpa's entertainment while working but I quickly learned when the cows were relaxed, they let down milk faster, milk production went up, and healthier animals were the result. This can be achieved even in a beef cow operation, providing bedding areas, shelters to get out of the weather, and recreational items such as brushes can make for a happy cow which will equate to healthy calves.
- Start creep feeding early -Providing 3-4lbs/head of 16% crude protein creep feed can help calves maintain growth and energy through the winter season. The addition of molasses can help the feed be more attractive, but it is critical to keep watch on the intake to prevent acidosis in young developing rumens. If you do start creep feeding don't forget about the cow, studies show that creep feeding has little effect on nursing pressure on the cow.

Last but not least, stay diligent, stay warm, and Happy New Year!

Dates to remember

- 2023 Crop Year safety Net enrollment has begun, and coverage for ARC/PLC coverage will be open until March 15th, 2023, contact the USDA FSA office for more information.
- 1-11-2023, first night of the OSU beef team virtual Beef School with updates on Beef inputs and marketing outlook for 2023 and beyond. To register contact me at (937) 544-2339 or go to go.osu.edu/beefschool23. The webinar begins at 6:30 pm.
- 2023 Pesticide/Fertilizer Applicator recertification training 1-26-2023 at The Ohio Valley Career and Technical School 175 Lloyd Road West Union, Ohio 45693 5:00 –9:00 pm. Call to register (937) 544-2339

Ag Educator Words of encouragement – “Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365-page book. Write a good one” – **Brad Paisley**