



BY RACHEL ENDECOTT, BEEF CATTLE SPECIALIST

COW SENSE CHRONICLE

MARCH 2015

NEONATAL CALF CARE

Greetings from Bozeman! March in Montana—some people are done calving, some are just getting started, and others are a month or more out yet. Making sure those calves get off to the best start possible is an important piece of our bottom line. Some sources cite an average rate of perinatal calf mortality of 3.5-5.0%. Of the 29.3 million head of beef cows that calved in 2012, USDA estimates 1.0 -1.5 million head of calves were lost. What are some of the causes of these calf deaths?

In one large study summarizing over 83,000 calf births, 44% of calves that died had difficult births. In fact, calves born to cows with dystocia were 5 times more likely to die as calves born without assistance. Survival rates were lowest for calves that were relatively smaller for their genetic group, gender, and age of dam. Large calves only had increased mortality when born to first-calf heifers, and calves born to first-calf heifers were more susceptible to bad weather.

The vast majority of losses occur within 1-3 days after birth—one Fort Keogh study cites 68% of calves lost were lost during this time frame. Calf sickness issues such as scours and pneumonia can cause mortality also. Remember that the calf's immune system starts with colostrum, and adequate and immediate intake are critical to set up the calf to fight off disease; this is called passive immunity. Colostrum quality is impacted by age of dam, nutritional status, and other factors. Consult your local veterinarian for information regarding diseases you should include in pre-calving vaccination for your cow herd. In a large Nebraska study, calves with failure of passive immunity were twice as likely to be ill before weaning and 5 times more likely to die before weaning than calves with adequate passive immunity.

Good animal husbandry practices also are critical for reducing the incidence of neonatal calf sickness. Providing pairs with a clean, dry place goes a long way to support their continued health.

ROADMAP OF TOMORROW: 2015 MONTANA NUTRITION CONFERENCE AND LIVESTOCK FORUM GRANTREE INN, BOZEMAN, MT

Tuesday, April 28, 2015

11:00-12:30 – Registration

12:30 – Welcome

1:00-1:50 – **The US Cattle Cycle and Calf Prices** – Dr. Gary Brester, Montana State University

1:50-2:40 – **Hay Production Options for Cow-Calf Producers** – Dr. Emily Glunk, Montana State University

2:40-3:10 – Break

3:10-4:00 – **Obesity During Sheep Pregnancy: Implications for the Following Generations** – Dr. Stephen Ford, University of Wyoming

4:00-4:50 – **A Closer Look at Weaning in Beef Cattle** – Dr. Joe Stookey, University of Saskatchewan

5:00 – Social

6:30 – Dinner and Program

Scholarship presentations

Evening speaker: **Food, Consumers, and Their Influence on Agriculture** – Dr. Nevil Speer, AgriClear, Inc.

Wednesday, April 29, 2015

7:00-8:00 – Breakfast, Grad student poster judging

8:00-8:30 – **How to Prepare for the Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD)** – Dr. Bruce Hoffman, Elanco Animal Health

8:30-9:40 – **VFD and Feed-Grade Antibiotics Panel Discussion** – Dr. Bruce Hoffman, Elanco Animal Health and Dr. Marty Zaluski, Montana State Veterinarian

9:40-10:10 – Break

10:10-11:00 – **Common Vitamin/Mineral Abnormalities, Effects, and Their Diagnoses in Cattle of Montana** – Dr. Jeff Hall, Utah State University

11:00-11:50 – **Replacements females: buy or raise?** – Mr. John Gates, Northwest Farm Credit Services

11:50-12:00 – Presentation of graduate student poster awards – Dr. Pat Hatfield

12:00 – Conference wrap-up

\$115 PRE-REGISTRATION FEE; \$135 AT THE DOOR

REGISTER ONLINE AFTER MARCH 1 AT:

<https://www.montana.edu/nutrition/>

COMPLETE CONFERENCE BROCHURE AND REGISTRATION INFORMATION AT:

<http://animalrange.montana.edu/conferences.htm>

Questions for Rachel?
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