



Beef MOOving Minutes

April 2018

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PREPARING FOR THE BREEDING SEASON

Breeding season success begins with management decisions made during calving. Here are a few tips for preparing for a successful breeding season.

1. **Nutrition** – Ensuring all cattle are meeting their nutritional needs is an essential first step to having a successful breeding season. One way to determine if nutritional needs are being met is to monitor body condition score (BCS). Thin cows require additional time to return to estrous and may be delayed in rebreeding. Providing thin cows with additional nutrients and maintaining moderate body conditioned cattle may improve breeding success. This is especially important this year due to the lack of moisture in some areas, where additional supplementation may be needed prior to breeding.

Don't forget about your bulls. Your bulls should be in adequate condition to travel long distances to breed, feed, and water. Spermatozoa quality and quantity can be impacted by poor nutrition. Ensuring a good nutrition program for you bulls will aid in maintaining sperm production during the breeding season.

2. **Vaccinations** – Prebreeding vaccinations should be given 2 to 4 weeks prior to breeding. Heifers will need 2 doses of the vaccine given approximately 3 weeks apart, with the final dose given 2-4 weeks before breeding. A good vaccination protocol is essential to maintaining herd health and preparing for the breeding season. Contact your veterinarian to determine which vaccines will work best for you.
3. **Bull breeding soundness exams (BSE)** - The BSE is an exam conducted by veterinarians that includes a physical exam, semen evaluation, and an internal and external exam of the reproductive tract. Evaluating the feet, legs, teeth, eyes, flesh cover, and scrotal circumference and shape is included in the physical exam. The semen evaluation includes semen normality and motility. The BSE should be conducted 30 to 60 days prior to the beginning of breeding. It is important to note that the bull's sperm production cycle is approximately 60 days, and if illness, injury or other issue occurs, this could negatively impact the BSE and breeding capability of the bull and may need to be re-

evaluated. An additional BSE can be conducted at the end of the breeding season to determine if bull fertility decreased throughout the breeding season.

4. Inventory – Prior to the breeding season, take stock of your current inventory needed for the breeding season. This is especially important for those using AI. Inventory includes supplies needed, such as CIDRs, vaccinations, AI injectables (GnRH and PGF), and semen. Herd inventory is also crucial to a successful breeding season. Determining which cows you will cull and which you will keep, do you need to purchase another bull, or do you need to improve your herd genetically. Assessing inventory early will enable you to be better prepared for the breeding season.
5. Prebreeding checklist – I like checklists because they allow me to be better prepared. Creating a prebreeding checklist and gathering the supplies in a central area will help keep things organized when the breeding season begins.

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