



Beef MOOving Minutes

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TIPS FOR CALVING SEASON

Welcome to the inaugural newsletter of Beef MOOving Minutes. This is a new newsletter that is replacing the Cow Sense Chronicle.

As the temperatures warm and winter moves in to spring, it's time to start preparing for calving season. Calving season is one of the most labor intensive and important times in the year for cattle producers.

Being prepared when the first calf hits the ground can reduce the stress on the cow and calf and improve health. Cleaning calving areas, calf chains, and the calf puller can reduce the health risks to the cow and calf. Gathering and organizing the supplies needed for calving can reduce the stress for your calving crew. Don't forget to include the name and phone number of a veterinarian with your supplies. Ensure all items needed are in good working order prior to calving.

Adequate cow nutrition can improve colostrum quality and quantity and has a large impact on calf health. A good way to determine if cows are receiving adequate nutrition is to assess body condition during gestation. Separating cows that may require additional feed to improve body condition from adequately conditioned cows is one way to ensure all cows are receiving proper nutrition. Severe temperatures may also require additional feed for all cows due to the increase in requirements.

Prior to calving, cows and heifers may be separated into different lots. Heifers may require additional management to ensure an easier calving experience. Additional groups may also be separated between early and late calvers or AI and natural service.

Monitor cows and heifers closely during calving. Times may vary depending on the operation and the calving crew, but cattle should be monitored at least every four hours. This may be more intensive when the bulk of calving occurs.

After calving, different groups should be designated – neo-natal calves and cows and older calves and cows. Keeping newborn calves, up to 21 days old, separated from the older calves reduces the risk of disease transfer between the two groups.

Keeping facilities clean is essential to minimizing health risks in newborn calves. Pens and calving areas should be cleaned regularly. Fresh bedding in calving areas should also be provided.

Calves should be monitored closely immediately after calving to ensure the calf has stood and nursed. If adequate colostrum quality and quantity is not consumed by the calf within the first two hours after birth, further assistance may be needed. Following a dystocia case, the cow may be milked to obtain fresh colostrum for the calf. Calves should consume sufficient quality and quantity of colostrum by six hours after birth. Keeping a colostrum replacement or frozen colostrum available will help when calves are unable to nurse.

Having a knowledgeable and reliable calving crew is essential to a great calving season. Providing training to a calving crew about your operation, the dos and don'ts, and any additional information will make for a successful calving season.

Don't forget about the Montana Nutrition Conference and Livestock Forum coming up on April 17 and 18 in Bozeman, MT. The conference will take place at the Best Western Grantree. You can register for the conference at: <https://www.montana.edu/nutrition/>

Questions for Megan?

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