

Successful AI Takes Planning

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Cattle farmers can make major improvements in herd quality through proper sire selection. Superior sires can be used either through natural service or artificial insemination, but it's up to the cattleman to pencil out the costs of AI or versus natural service and weigh them against the benefits. The initial benefit of using AI is that you have access to outstand-

ing, proven bulls. Sire summaries now provide reliable genetic estimates identifying bulls with economically important traits. Dr. John Hough, director of education and research for the American Polled Hereford Association, said, "Using top bulls will result in top replacement heifers for use within your own herd or for which there may be a good market. AI also forces you to keep good

records which helps improve your replacement heifer selection and can be used to merchandise your herd." Before incorporating AI into your breeding program, be sure cows are in good condition. A high percentage of them must be cycling normally or the AI program will not be successful. If more than 20 percent of your cows are open at the end of the

breeding season, or more than 50 percent of your calves are born after the first 40 days of calving season, examine your management before starting an AI program. You should be especially certain of good nutrition, record keeping, and facilities that can handle AI for your herd. A well-organized education program is critical for cattle farmers planning to use A.I., Hough said. "You must have a good understanding of your breeding goals, adequate facilities, the right equipment, and the skills necessary to detect heat and inseminate cows," Hough said. "Working with a veterinarian is also important." Dr. P.L. Senger of Washington State University said, "Most peo-

ple who have success with AI have a good relationship with their veterinarian." "Good heat detection is one of the single most important parts of AI because a bull isn't available to interpret a cow's heat signals," Hough said. "Detecting heat isn't hard, but is time-consuming, requires regular attention, a practiced eye, and other heat detection aids." Successful AI programs depend on essentials that work hand in hand — good herd nutrition, good facilities, efficient handling, knowing semen quality and handling techniques, knowledge of a cow's estrus cycle, knowing how to detect heat, proper timing of insemination, a qualified technician, and good record keeping skills.

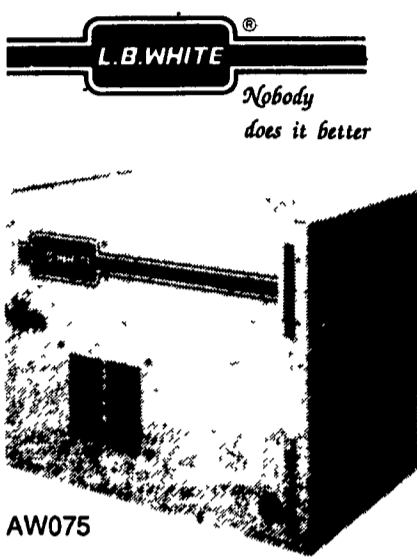
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