

Beef Briefs

by
John Comerford

Penn State Beef Specialist

CLOSING THE GATE ON A BULL

We often talk about how important it is to turn a bull into a breeding pasture, but we often forget how important it is to get the bull out of the pasture in a timely manner.

Extended calving season are costly and can be very disruptive to good management programs.

Just think about it: if we can wean a 500-pound calf on October 1 this year, but allow that calf to be born a month later next year, it will cost about 35 pounds of weaning weight. There was no change in growth of the calf or feed requirements for the cow, but we ended up with fewer pounds to sell to pay the bills.

The major reason for an extended calving season is failure to get the bull out of the pasture. One effective method of handling bulls in most small herds is to turn him in with the cows for 60 days, pull him out for 60 days, palpate the cows, remove the nonpregnant cows, then turn him back out with the cows. This method helps to force a concise calving season, but also reduces the inconvenience of separating a bull to just two months.

It is no small thing to also force palpation of the herd and culling of open cows. As we're noted before, a cow who does not produce a calf one year will never make up for the lost income in her lifetime.

Management can also be more closely controlled with a defined,

short calving season. The nutritional requirements of the cow change drastically between the last third of pregnancy and lactation. Protein requirements double and energy needs are nearly doubled.

With cows calving on the first of February and some still calving in April and May, there is no way an effective job can be done in feeding these cows. Some them are either being grossly overfed, or more likely, some are not getting what they need.

Secondly, part-time managers will find it helpful to concentrate their management time during a shorter calving season. It is essential that cows be well managed during calving because more dollars can be lost by poor management than at any other time.

Third, an effective vaccination

and health management program can be accomplished. It will do no good to give certain vaccinations to cows that have already calved, while the timing may be just right for those who are 30 days from calving.

Extended calving seasons will result in putting the cows through the chute twice or, even worse, not doing anything because all of them can not be treated on the same day.

Finally, we constantly shoulder a marketing problem with feeder calves in Pennsylvania because of small numbers. The addition of extended calving seasons that cause more variation in age and weight to the calf crop just compound the problem. Uniformity has value in calf production, so condensing the calving season to make calves more uniform in age and weight can add dollars to your pocket.

Pennsylvania Beef Expo

The 1993 Pennsylvania Beef Expo will be held in State College on March 25-28. The educational symposium will focus on "Making Money with a Few Cows."

There is a little change in the symposium this year. It will be held at the Toftrees Resort just down the road from the Meat Ani-

mal Evaluation Center. This change will allow us to have multiple sessions running simultaneously and being repeated during the day. This will allow us to cover much more material, and participants can pick and choose what will interest them the most.

The remainder of the week will include the annual meeting and

banquet of the Pa. Cattleman's Association, the Performance-Tested Bull sale, purebred sales from five breeds, and a youth steer and heifer show.

You can get more information and registration materials by contacting me at (814) 863-3661. See you there!

Forage Handbook Available

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Pennsylvania farmers looking for information on hay quality, harvest management, and other forage topics can order an extensive forage handbook from Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

The publication costs \$28 and has more than 200 pages of detailed information on soils and forage fertility, forage quality, species selection and establishment, harvest management, hay and silage preservation, pastures, forage pests, forage-animal systems, and forage economics.

"The handbook is meant to be a comprehensive guide for forage growers," said Dr. Marvin Hall,

assistant professor of forage management in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "It contains a vast amount of information useful for anyone who works with forages."

The forage handbook contains material contributed by agronomists, dairy and animal scientists, entomologists, and agricultural economists as well as information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Pasture Laboratory.

For more information or to order a handbook, contact Forage Handbook, c/o Lisa Crytser, Department of Agronomy, The Pennsylvania State University, 116 Agricultural Sciences and Industries Building, University Park, PA 16802, (814) 865-2543.

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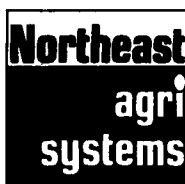
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