

# Livestock Notes

## The Calving Kit John Comerford

### Penn State Beef Specialist

Calves will be hitting the ground soon in most beef herds and it's time to review the 10 contents of any calving kit.

1. A record book. Not to be overlooked, we have to think further ahead and be sure there is an accurate calving record for each cow. This is essential information for all performance programs, and provides the breeder with valuable details about the success of the nutrition and breeding program for the herd.

2. Portable scales. Recording of actual birth weights has become important information for purebred producers in merchandising their cattle and participating in their breed's performance programs. It can also give the commercial breeder insight into the selection of bulls for breeding to specific cows in the herd for next year.

3. Obstetrical chains. Anybody who breeds cattle has to pull a calf on occasion. The chains are

the safest and easiest way to get the calf alive without injury to the cow. When asked when a calf should be pulled, I usually answer that I have not seen very many pulled too early, but I have seen several pulled too late. Remember: keep them clean and pull a calf down between the cow's hocks while rotating it through the pelvis. Pull only when cow pushes.

4. Implants. Volumes of research has shown the value of implanting calves at birth, particularly steer calves. Remember: do not ever implant a bull calf that may be used for breeding and be sure the implant you have is cleared for use in newborn calves.

5. Ear tags. There will never be an easier time for both you and calf to tag it than when you find it. If for no other reason, they sure are easier to catch!

6. A knife or heavy scissors. For bull calves that are destined to be steers, the least amount of stress in castration will be at a younger age. You can successfully castrate a calf at birth with a

little knowledge of testicular tissue. Be sure to use a spray antiseptic that is sprayed directly into the wound.

7. Iodine? There is a question mark because some vets tell us that if the navel is not dipped before the calf ever hits the ground, it will probably be too late. However, it sure won't hurt to dip the navel as soon as the calf is found.

8. A hammer and nails. This is used to nail the barn door shut during calving. The best calving pastures are those wooded areas on a south slope with good drainage. One of the best medicines to prevent calf scours is sunshine. Larger areas are preferable to small lots for calving because the animal concentration contributes to disease.

9. Esophageal feeder/Gatorade/corn syrup/scour boluses. For the guy who did not nail the barn door shut. The first thing that has to happen after the calf is born is to get some colostrum in it. If scours do occur, mix some Gatorade with 1/2 cup of corn syrup in 2 quarts of warm water and feed the calf twice a day with the mix. There are a lot of commercial products out there that also do a fine job, including synthetic colostrum. Early attention to the calf will decrease losses from scours.

10. A thermos of coffee or tea.

The most important economic factor in the cow-calf business is the production of a live calf. First-calf heifers are usually checked every 2-3 hours during calving season, and older cows about four times nightly. When a cow needs your assistance, she usually needs it now.

Failure to provide timely assistance can cause the loss of both the cow and the calf. Try feeding late in the evening (after 7 p.m.) and you will have many more calves born during the daylight hours.

### What is Farmer's Lung Disease?

During winter, many farmers work in buildings that may not have adequate ventilation. They may be placing themselves at risk for serious respiratory problems.

Among the more severe respiratory conditions is farmer's lung disease. Yet the disease is often misunderstood by farmers and diagnosed by medical personnel. The following information, adapted from the UC Agricultural Health and Safety Center News,

answers questions about this chronic health problem.

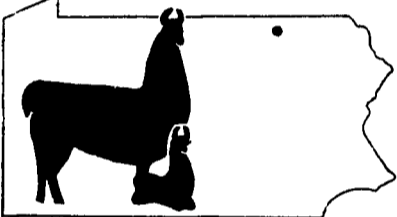
Farmer's lung disease is a respiratory illness that may develop in agricultural workers who inhale dust containing bacterial or fungal proteins. Typically it occurs in ranchers or farmers who handle silage or compost in a confined space. Symptoms include chest tightness, fever, muscle aches, chills, shortness of breath and sometimes dry cough. Symptoms may develop slowly, several hours after exposure. In the absence of repeated exposure, the symptoms often disappear. Continued exposure can cause loss of normal respiratory function and permanent damage.

The key to preventing farmer's lung disease is to avoid prolonged work with silage or compost in unventilated areas. If that's not feasible, wear personal protective equipment. The minimum respiratory protection would be a toxic dust mask that prevents inhalation of organic particulates. If you develop symptoms, seek medical attention.

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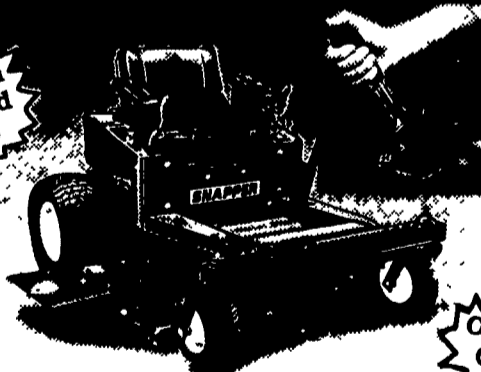
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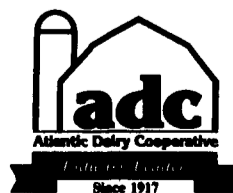
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