



Beef Briefs

by
John Comerford

Penn State Beef Specialist

ON BULLS AND GATES

As I write this, the Pennsylvania Performance Tested Bull Sale is just a few days away.

We have discussed many times the tremendous influence that bull selection has on progress and profitability in the beef herd. One other thing that may be just as important to success is when not to use the bull.

It is, of course, important to open the gate for the bull at the most appropriate time in the spring or early summer, but it even more important to know when to close that gate. Defined breeding and calving seasons are essential to effective management of a cow herd.

Some of the factors affected by planning the calving season include nutritional, health, calving, and marketing management.

The nutritional needs of a cow herd are dynamic; that is, they change throughout the year. We should not expect to feed a cow the

same thing 6 months before calving as we would just after calving. Trying to do so would result in either a waste of feed or a loss of production. Feed needs are based on the productive status of the cow and not what the date is on the calendar.

By defining and limiting the calving season, we can more closely use feed resources to their best advantage, and, at the same time, simplify the nutritional management of the herd. For example, when there is a spread in calving dates in a herd of five months, this implies there are cows in early lactation and cows that are still in mid-pregnancy.

The protein needs of the former group may be twice what they are for the dry cows, and the energy needs are about 20 percent greater. Failure to feed the cows with young calves even the 3 pounds of additional TDN they need can result in up to 10 pounds less daily milk production. With all of the cows in a 60-day calving window, they can all be fed the same way and therefore reduce the hassle of

separating cows.

A good health management program, including both vaccinations and deworming, can be planned and implemented easier when all of the cows can be treated the same way on the same day. This is best accomplished when all of the cows are at a similar period of reproduction. Again, particularly for spring vaccinations for the reproductive problems vibrio and leptos, it only makes sense to gather and send the cows through the chute on one day. More effective health management will result.

Since most of the cow-calf herds in the region are part-time enterprises and the managers have other jobs, calving management can suffer when calving is strung out over a long period. Defining and limiting the calving season will condense the management needs at calving. This will result in better planning of time and people, more live calves going over the scales, and more dollars returned to the enterprise.

Finally, we have a real marketing deficiency in the region because of herd size. Truck load lots of uniform calves are usually worth more on the market. Calves from a herd that vary in weight by as much as 200 pounds are commonly seen simply because of differences in age. This kind of variation is easily eliminated by better planning of the calving season.

How long should calving last? This question can only be answered on an individual basis. In most cases a calving season of 60

days will be manageable for most breeders. Some of the questions you should ask include: Do you have enough bull power to logically get all of the cows bred in a short period of time? This implies there should be no more than 15 cows per yearling bull, 25 cows per 2- and 3-yr old bull, and 45 cows per mature bull.

Do you have the necessary feed resources to get cows cycling within 90 days after calving? Young and/or heavy milking cows have a tremendous energy drain in the first 8 weeks after calving, and it will be necessary to do a good job of feeding cows to be sure they are capable of cycling on time.

Is the general health of the herd in good shape? There are many kinds of "bugs" and worms that can seriously effect reproduction in a herd. A sound, well maintained health program is essential to success in limited calving seasons.

Are you prepared to reduce the time involved in calving management to a shorter, more intensive

period? You may be used to having a calf arrive every other day for several months. Do you have the time needed to handle several calves a day?

The first step in better organization of a cow herd is defined calving seasons. Remember to shut the gate, too.

Real Good Timing

The recent storm in the Northeast arrived at just the right time — the right time to kill a lot of calves. I have heard of more losses this year than at any time I can remember.

We may not have seen the end of the trouble from the storm, either. Many producers have had trouble from calf scours and poor feed being available because they simply cannot get to their better feed. The result may be some cows that do not get bred on time this year. This makes it doubly important to get some condition on the cows as quickly as possible.

Secondly, be sure the bulls are in good shape to turn out.

Sheep Industry Calls Meeting To Tackle Wool Problem

DENVER, Colo. — In an effort to combat the polypropylene-in-wool problem aggressively, the American Sheep Industry Association's Wool Council and Production Education and Research Council have teamed to sponsored a polypropylene summit meeting.

The meeting, which has not yet been finalized, will include producers, wool merchandisers, mill manufacturers, hay producers, bale equipment, and polypropylene manufacturers, and other natural fiber representatives. The initial effort is to create an awareness of the polypropylene problem in the United States sheep industry and to develop a dialogue and cooperative effort involving all segments of the wool and allied industries associated

with the issue.

"In our efforts to clean up the clip, we won't just be talking to producers," said Gene Brune, president of the American Sheep Industry Association. "We will be looking for ways to negotiate with some of the manufacturers and users of poly to see if feasible alternatives can be found.

"Poly is not a problem we can solve today," he said. "But we can continue to educate producers not to use poly around their operations or feed hay baled with polypropylene twine. The effort today is a long-term commitment to overcome a problem we know is critical to textile manufacturers."

Wool contaminated with polypropylene has been a serious problem for years and has caused the sheep industry millions of dollars in lost revenue because of discounted product and extra labor costs to handle contaminated fabric.

KEN CLUGSTON
(717) 665-6775

CRAFT-BILT CONSTRUCTION INC.

FARM-HOME BUILDING
1242 Breneman Road
MANHEIM, PA 17545
PH: (717) 665-4372

BUILDING & REMODELING FOR —
DAIRY RESIDENTIAL
SWINE POLE BUILDINGS
BEEF STORAGE

FRANK A.
FILLIPPO, INC.

- WANTED -

DISABLED & CRIPPLED
COWS, BULLS & STEERS
Competitive Prices Paid
Slaughtered under
government inspection

Call: Frank Fillippo -
Residence - 215-666-0725
Elam Ginder - 717-367-3824
C.L. King - 717-786-7229

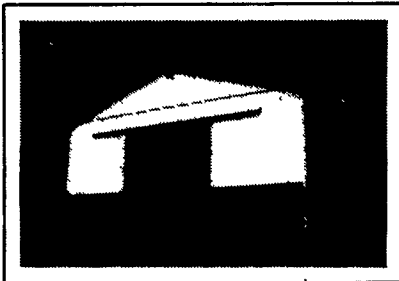
**Brecknock
Builders**

DESIGN • BUILD • CONTRACTORS

337 Panorama Dr.
Denver, PA 17517



MORTISE & TENON
*NEW & RESTORATION



AGRICULTURAL
*EQUIPMENT STORAGE
*DAIRY & LIVESTOCK
CONFINEMENT

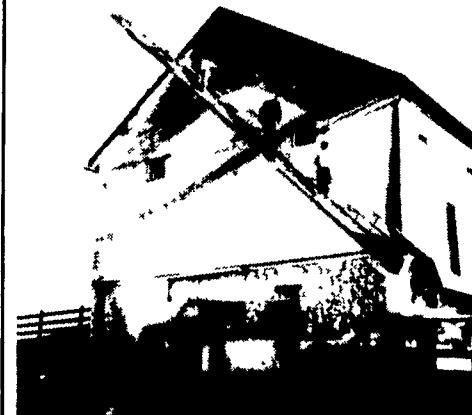


EQUESTRIAN
*RIDING ARENAS
*STABLES, ETC.

FROM DESIGN TO COMPLETION, OUR GOAL IS CUSTOMER SATISFACTION. WE OBTAIN THAT BY QUALITY CONSTRUCTION WITH COMPETITIVE PRICES. CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION

(215) 445-7897

SANDBLASTING AND SPRAY PAINTING WITH AERIAL LADDER EQUIPMENT



Farm Buildings — Feed Mills
Commercial - Industrial

HENRY K. FISHER, INC.
667 Hartman Station Road
Lancaster, PA 17601
717-393-6530