

Beef Briefs

by
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IT'S FALL AGAIN

Earlier in the spring, we discussed the importance of a defined calving season on profitability in the cow-calf enterprise.

Overlooking this important management feature can have a severe economic impact on the profitability of the enterprise. The upshot is that if the bull is still out with the cows, you are the big loser in lower calf weights, complications with a health program, and nutritional problems with the herd.

Fall is the period when the second most important step can be taken — determination of pregnancy in the cow herd. Seventy-five to 90 days after the bull has been pulled (or when the breeding season should be over) is probably the most effective time for this practice. Since most people are not trained in pregnancy detection, a veterinarian will need to be called in.

It will not be necessary to put the

cows through the chute only for a preg check. The fall vaccination program, deworming, grub and lice control, replacing ear tags, condition scoring, and physical exams of the cow herd can all be done at this time. In addition, pre-sale vaccinations, sorting replacement heifers, and leftover castrations can be made with the calves.

Why is pregnancy detection so important? Simply this — an open cow allowed to stay in the herd will never catch up again. That is, the cost of keeping a cow around for another 18-20 months before she returns anything to the enterprise far exceeds her ability to produce enough weaning weight to pay for it.

With all costs considered, extensive records show it costs about \$300-\$400 to maintain a cow for a year. The majority of the cost comes from harvested and supplemental feeds — just the inputs an open cow will be using in the next 8 months. Allowing

“another chance” means she has effectively used up \$600-\$700 of your money before she sells another calf. Even in the best of times, most cows are not capable of producing that much income in single year.

What are the alternatives? Sell her. She already ate your grass all summer, so get something back to pay for it. (Grass is cheap feed, but it is not free.) Replace her with a bred heifer.

A cull cow is worth about \$500-600 in today's market. Add it up: you sell a cow for \$600 now and a calf out of the heifer (assuming an 80 percent chance of selling a calf in any year) for \$300 and you have total receipts of about \$900. The heifer will cost you about \$1,000 to buy and keep until next fall, so the loss is about \$100 instead of \$300. Trading \$100 for \$300 sounds pretty good, even to a Ph.D.

The Missing Link

Texas researcher John McNeill recently reported on a retained ownership program he is supervising. Under this program, ranchers are retaining ownership on part of

their calves and receiving carcass and economic data on them.

The result from over 600 of these calves from 74 producers showed that almost one-third did not meet industry standards for one of several reasons. The major cause (1/3) for this failure was in making a profit of \$25 per steer.

Another striking feature is that the range in profitability was about \$280 per steer. Some ranchers lost over \$100 per head, while others

had profits over \$180 per steer.

I talked with John personally about this, and he said the reason some people made more money than others had nothing to do with price or feed, but it had to do with the kind of management the calves got before they got to the feedlot. In particular, those ranchers that were using good genetics and had a sound health program were the ones who made the most money. Does that sound familiar?

Somerset Farmers Association To Meet

SOMERSET (Somerset Co.) — The 706-member Somerset County Farmers' Association will hold its annual meeting Thursday, September 30 at 7 p.m. at the Berlin Community Building.

The agenda will include the election of three directors for the board, one delegate for the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau/Farmers' Association held in November,

and discussion of and voting on policy resolution.

Ticket prices are \$3.50 per member, \$1.75 for child 10 and under, and \$6.50 for non-members.

Send reservations and correct dollar amount to Deb Rohrbach, R.D.#1 Box 274A, Somerset, PA 15501 by September 27. No tickets will be sold at the door.

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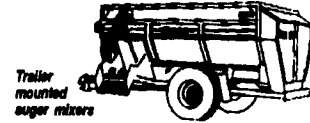
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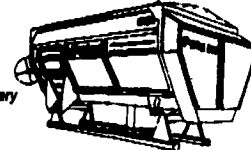
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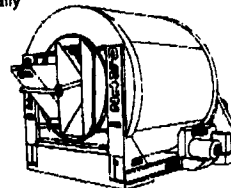
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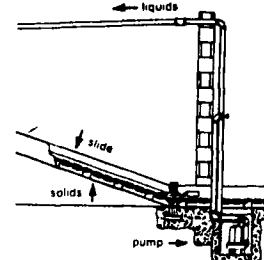
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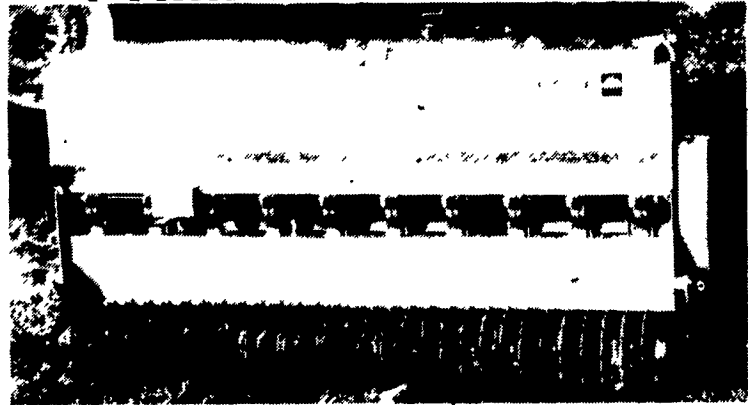


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