

## Beef Briefs

by  
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Penn State Beef Specialist

### THE CALVING KIT

For many cattle breeders, the calving season will begin in a few short weeks.

This is the the most profitable time a manager can spend with the cows. It is usually tough enough to make money in the cow-calf enterprise, but more profits are probably lost during calving than at any other time.

The "calving kit" is an assembly of tools that will make calving a little easier and a little more profitable. Here is a list of the contents of the kit:

- Ear tags and tagger. Identification of cattle in the herd is a cornerstone of making genetic improvements. There is no better time to start the identification of the herd than when the calf hits the ground. After all, they are a lot easier to catch than they will be a few days later.

- Castration tools. A summary of a recent graded feeder calf sale

in Pennsylvania indicated that bulls were valued at about \$14/cwt less than steers at the same sale. That resulted in bull calves being worth about \$60 less per head. It is simply unreasonable to allow a \$60 loss per head for a management practice as simple as castration. The best time to cut a bull calf, and all male calves in a commercial herd should be cut, is when they are as young as possible. My own experience has been that the best time to do the job is when you find them after they are born. The reduction in stress and bleeding is considerable when compared to waiting until the calves are older. Our research with dairy-beef calves has shown these calves should be cut on the second day after arrival in the barn for best results. Always use a knife to castrate. Rubber bands are the scourge of the beef industry in Pennsylvania, and they contribute to lower value in feeder calves because even the best "banders" will miss about 5 percent of the calves.

- An implant gun and implants. There will be about an \$8 return for each \$1 invested in growth promoting implants, and the time to start using them is when the calf is born. There are two implants currently labeled for the newborn calf: Ralgro (Pittman, Moore Agricultural Products) and Synovex C (Syntex, Inc.)

- Obstetrical chains. If you are in the cow business, you will sooner or later have to pull a calf. A good set of OB chains are the best tool to have for this purpose. Be sure to keep them clean! There are available in many mail order equipment and vaccine catalogs.

- A thermos. I heard a sheep breeder tell me the best thing to use to warm up a cold lamb was whiskey. If you really consider the value of whiskey compared to some good strong, warm tea, the best thing to do is probably give the tea to the calf and drink the whiskey yourself. Nothing will do any good, though, until the calf is dry.

- Colostrum. Have some frozen colostrum in the freezer for the calf that does not nurse well for the first 24 hours. Do not warm up the colostrum in the microwave — use warm water and let it warm up slowly. We are still learning a lot about the effects of colostrum in the newborn calf. Some recent research here at Penn State has shown that it not only is important in developing early immunity in the calf, but may also serve an important function in male fertility

at maturity. Drench the newborn with about a quart if it came from a beef cow, but feed 2 to 3 quarts if it came from a high-producing dairy cow. If you get some from your dairyman neighbor, ask for colostrum from his lowest-producing cow (it's more concentrated.)

- A record book. Carry a pocket-sized record book to record birth information, including the date, the dam, the birth weight, and other incidental information. This kind of data will be helpful to review your breeding program, the bulls that were used, and your nutritional program.

A warm pickup and a good alarm clock also come in handy.

**Beef Expo  
Symposium Set**  
The Pennsylvania Beef Expo

## Engineering Student Wins Scholarship

NEWARK, Del. — University of Delaware agricultural engineering technology major Benjamin C. Postles has been awarded the 1993-1994 freshman Southern States Scholarship.

According to the College of Agricultural Sciences associate dean for instruction R. Dean Shippy, Postles was selected on the basis of his academic record at Milford High School and his activities in 4-H. Postles' family operates a 280-acre grain and poultry farm in Milford.

Cattleman's Symposium is set for April 8, 1994 at the Farm Show Complex in Harrisburg.

Registration material will be available soon. The topics for this year's meeting and concurrent sessions include handling the newly-arrived feeder calf, pasture management (back from last year by popular demand), and the nutrient management issue for Pennsylvania beef producers.

We have some fine speakers lined up for the program, including Rep. Sheila Miller; Dr. Sam Baringer, West Virginia University; and Dr. Steve Loerch, Ohio State University.

The Beef Expo should be a fine opportunity to get "caught up" on these topics and visit with producers from around the state, so plan to be with us.

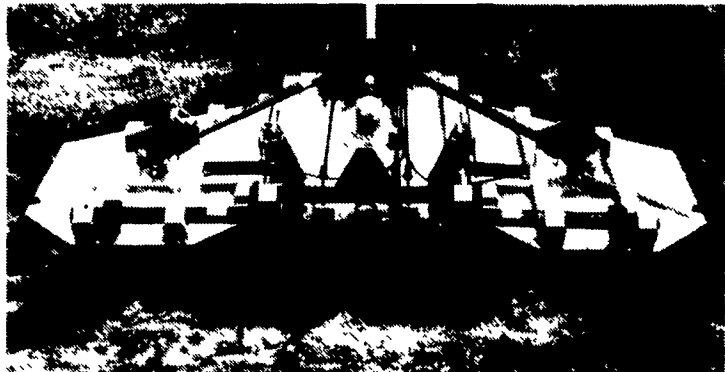
The \$800 scholarship goes annually to a Delaware resident in his or her first year in the college. Based on the student's academic record, it's renewable at \$600 per year for the sophomore, junior, and senior years. Preference is given to students who come from an agricultural background.

Sophomore Lori J. Unruh of Townsend, junior Rebecca A. O'Day of Seaford, and senior Jared C. Adkins of Laurel received renewals for 1993-1994.

The scholarship is sponsored by Southern States Cooperative, Inc.

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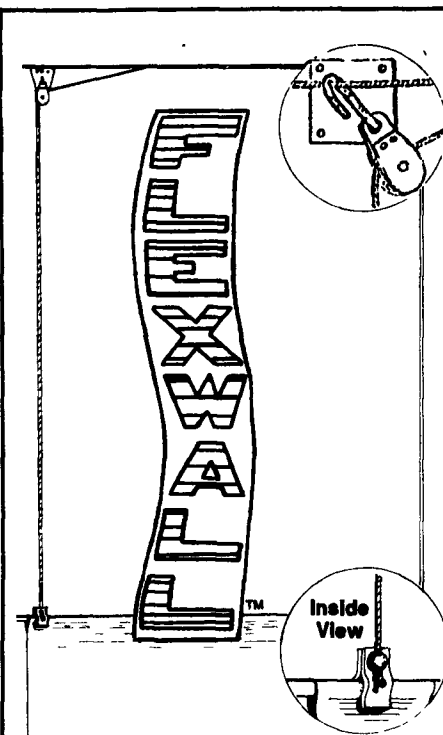
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