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Meadowlark Extension District
Livestock and Natural Resources

Early Preg Check on Heifers

August is not the time when many cattle producers think about pregnancy testing. However, for producers that have yearling heifers that were bred early this spring, many of those heifers are far enough along to be pregnancy tested.

The minimum length to identify a positive pregnancy diagnosis is approximately 26 to 30 days post breeding utilizing either an ultrasound machine or a blood test. The minimum length to identify pregnancy through rectal palpation requires that heifers be at least 35-45 days post breeding.

Heifers that are not pregnant can be identified and managed differently than their pregnant herd mates. Non-pregnant heifers that are going to be retained can be implanted, improving average daily gain and feed efficiency. Non-pregnant heifers could be moved off grass resources and sold.

Historically August and September are seasonally strong markets for feeder cattle, with prices tending to trend down in the fall. Early identification of non-pregnant heifers allows for selling into this market.

The best method for early pregnancy diagnosis will vary based on goals, costs and resources available. A combination of methods may be used under some circumstances to identify pregnancy.

For example, consider a group of heifers that were artificially inseminated and then exposed to a clean-up bull for 30 days. Pregnancy testing 30 days after the bull was removed would mean heifers that conceived to artificial insemination on the first day of the breeding season would be 60 days along. Heifers that conceived on the last day of the breeding season to the bull would only be 30 days pregnant. Heifers that conceived early in the breeding season could easily be identified with palpation. Those that conceived late in the breeding season would require either a blood test or ultrasound in order to be confirmed as pregnant.

In this situation, if palpation was being used to identify pregnancy, heifers identified as not being pregnant could have a blood sample drawn while still in the chute and sent off for analysis to verify the non-pregnant designation. It is likely that some of the heifers that were identified as non-pregnant through palpation are indeed pregnant, but are not far enough along to be recognized. The blood test would identify which heifers were non-pregnant and which are very early on in their pregnancy.

There are a number of blood test options available on the market today. Producers should realize that stress to heifers early in pregnancy can result in embryonic loss. Research has shown a pregnancy loss of 1-3.5% when palpation or ultrasound are used for pregnancy diagnosis at 40 - 75 days of gestation.
Research

David Hallauer, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Crop and Soils, Horticulture

Eastern Kansas Grazing School

Any successful livestock producer that relies on grazed forages knows that grazing that forage crop is more difficult than it looks! In fact, most successful graziers would contend that their management has to be part art and part science. In other words, it doesn't always work like the book says it should work!!

Understanding how the science of forage production fits with the art of making it efficient and economical is the base of the Eastern Kansas Grazing School which makes its way to northeast Kansas on September 13-14 at the NEK Heritage Complex south of Holton. Day one will kick off with a discussion about the balance between art and science and give participants an overview of grass growth and development before putting that information to work using a real world pasture allocation exercise. After the cattle are turned out for the start of their 24 hour grazing period, we'll discuss weed and brush control (Walt Fick, KSU Range Management Specialist), the economics of varying grazing systems (Wesley Tucker, University of Missouri Extension Ag Economist) and touch on animal behavior (Jody Holthaus, Meadowlark Extension District Agent, Livestock and Natural Resources), stocking rates, and a number of other topics that help producers build a base for a new grazing system – or improvement of an existing one.

Missouri NRCS District Conservationist Mark Green will give presentations on his extensive experiences on two topics of particular interest to graziers: fencing and watering systems. Mark's knowledge of these two topics will be a great asset to producers trying to enhance their grazing system. Kansas NRCS Range Conservationists Dustin Schwandt and Doug Spencer will lead presentations on resource inventory, stocking rates, and forages to fill the gap to give producers a baseline for doing a thorough inventory of the forage crops they have available – and how to use them! We'll put this information to work during the school using a hands on demonstrations and in the field discussions. Day two will include a return visit to the pasture allocation exercise to see if what we knew on day one was enough to help us allocate our forage effectively! We'll discuss potential layout and design options and wrap up the two-day program with a brief exercise to get you thinking about where to go next!

The EKS Grazing School is limited to a maximum of 35 farms on a first registered basis. Registration is \$60 for the first person from a farm (includes lunches, snacks, and handouts). Additional registrants from the same farm are \$30 (includes lunches/snacks). Make registration payable to: Meadowlark Extension District, Holton Office, 114 W. 5th St., Holton, KS 66436 (registration forms are available online at: <http://www.meadowlark.k-state.edu/livestock-natresource/eastern-kansas-grazing-school.html> or by contacting a Meadowlark Extension District Office. Please send questions to Jody Holthaus at jholthau@ksu.edu or 785-364-4125.

Cindy Williams, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Food and Nutrition, FNP

Acorn Squash Day!

September 7 is designed Acorn squash day. So give it a try! It can be served as a main dish, a side, or even dessert. Roast or steam for easy preparation. Then add it to pasta, puree into a soup, or stuff with your favorite meatloaf mix or apple mixture. Save the seeds and toast them like a pumpkin seeds for a snack.

The shells are useful as a serving bowl or soup bowl. Acorn squash come in a variety of colors such as yellow, dark green, tan, and orange.

Drying Meat Safely

As fall hunting season approaches, there are many ways to preserve the meat. One of those is dehydrating meat jerky.

Optimum drying temperature is 140°F. But, meat must be heated to 160°F to eliminate possible E. coli bacteria. Pick one of these methods for safe jerky.

*Prior to drying, heat the strips of meat in the marinade by boiling them for 5 minutes, drain, and pat dry. Proceed with dehydrating the meat.

*After dehydrating the meat, place the jerky on a baking sheet and put into a 275°F oven for 10 minutes.

No Juice before Age One

Because of the rising rates of obesity and dental health issues in children, the American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends against feeding children under age one any fruit juice.

They recommend 100% fruit juice as part of a healthful diet for children over age one. It should be limited to 4 ounces daily for ages 1-3; 4-6 ounces for ages 4-6; and 8 ounces for children 7-18. Toddlers should not drink juice from sippy cups or bottles and not served juice at bedtime.

This change marks the first change since 2001 by the American Academy of Pediatrics

Nancy Nelson, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

No Today