

Jody Holthaus, Agent  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Livestock and Natural Resources

## **No Pinocchio Stories Here!**

I recently saw a video on Facebook, of the poor little dairy calf being taken away from its mother. Those responding were horrified. Of course, PETA was probably behind all of this, the workers were extremely rough with the baby calf, almost throwing it. There is no Pinocchio story here, yes, baby calves are taken away from their mothers. Yes, the cows are milked for human consumption. Dairy calves, for their own good, are taken away from their mothers. By removing them, the dairyman can harvest the colostrum and give to the calf in the right amount. If left with their mothers they will consume too much milk and will get diarrhea and can become sick. We spend a lot of time in the beef industry choosing cows with good maternal instinct. That is not true in the dairy industry. Dairy cows are selected for superior milking ability, and thus, some of them are lousy mothers. Some of them will step on the calf or even charge it.

Three key management concepts can help commercial cow calf operations improve the productivity of their cow herds. The key areas to consider are: bull power, immunize heifers and breed heifers ahead of the cows.

**Bull Power-** Do you have enough bulls to meet the needs of the cow herd? Young bulls 12-15 months old, can service 18-24 females. More mature bulls should be able to breed 25 females or even more if in a small pasture. If you purchase a new bull, they should be brought to your place at least a month before breeding. This gives them time to adapt a new environment. If you are needing a new bull, there are plenty of opportunities to buy some. One of the opportunities is the Legacy Bull Sale at KSU on March 3<sup>rd</sup>, following Cattlemen's Day.

**Immunize the heifers-** Vaccinate for respiratory diseases such as IBR and BVD. Use a modified live vaccine for longer lasting protection. Vaccinations should be given at least a month before breeding. Your veterinarian can recommend other reproductive disease protection vaccines. **Breed the heifers ahead of the mature cows-** breed young heifers about a month before mature cows. This is important for two reasons. Two-year old first calf heifers normally take longer to return to heat cycles after calving than do older cows. Therefore, if they calve early, then when they rebreed, they are in synchrony with the rest of the cows. This can also allow you to watch the heifers more closely early in the calving season. They are the most likely to need assistance.

As you're planning for next year, another thought would be to plan your calving season to coincide with the weather. Are you matching peak green grass with peak lactation? If you are considering changing your calving dates, remember this will effect weaning weights. Be sure to consider all aspects.

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

### **Soil Temperature and Vegetables**

Some of you are probably getting itchy! When temperatures get in to the 70's – with sun to boot! – it's pretty tough to hold off getting in the garden!

Air temperature (or the calendar for that matter!) may not be the best indicator of planting time, however. A better, and one of the most neglected, tools for vegetable gardeners is a soil thermometer. Why? Planting when soils are too cool result in seed rots and transplants that just sit there. Neither of those is real positive for plant growth!

A number of vegetables can germinate and grow at cool temperatures. For example, peas will germinate and grow well at a soil temperature of 40 F. Though lettuce, parsnips, and spinach can sprout at a soil temperature of 35 F, they prefer at least 45 F for best germination and growth. Radishes also do well at a soil temperature of 45 F. Warm-season crops such as tomatoes, sweet corn and beans prefer at least 55 F for germination (or transplanting), but others such as peppers, cucumbers, melons and sweet potatoes need it even warmer, about 60 F.

Taking soil temperature isn't as easy as just shoving a thermometer in the ground! Doing so accurately is a bit of a science. First, use a metal soil thermometer, which is sold in many garden, auto parts and hardware stores. Take temperature 2.5 inches deep at about 10 to 11 a.m. Temperature variations throughout the day and night affect soil temperature, with lowest readings after dawn and warmest around mid-afternoon. The late-morning reading gives a good average temperature. If taking the soil temperature at this time is not practical, take a reading before you leave for work and a second when you return home and use the average. Also be sure to get a consistent reading for four to five days in a row before planting, and make sure a cold snap is not predicted.

An excellent guide sheet on this subject is published by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and is titled "Soil Temperature Conditions for Vegetable Seed Germination." It can be found at <http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-1061/ANR-1061.pdf> .

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

#### Upcoming Extension Events

##### Barn Quilt Workshop to Be Conducted

Barn quilts are a way of promoting agritourism and showcasing rural pride. Coming up on Thursday, March 23, we will be conducting a barn quilt workshop at the Northeast Kansas Heritage Complex, south of Holton. This complex is located at 12200 214<sup>th</sup> Road. This workshop will be held from 12:30 to 4:00 p.m.

We will have limited number of spaces and the enrollment deadline will be Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup> to the Meadowlark Extension District Office in Oskaloosa. Cost of this workshop will be \$35.00 which covers supplies and boards. Payment is due at time of registration and is non-refundable. Checks are to be made payable to the Jefferson County 4-H Council. In case the class is full, we will place you on a waiting list in case of cancellations.

To register, contact the Oskaloosa Office at 785-863-2212 or visit our district website for a link to the registration form. Contact the Oskaloosa Office with further questions.

## **Stay Strong, Stay Healthy is Your Ticket to Better Health**

Our bodies are made for activity, but modern conveniences allow us to be increasingly inactive. Physical inactivity can place our health at risk for many chronic diseases.

Here's good news! We have something fun planned to get you up and moving. The Kansas State Research and Extension Stay Strong, Stay Healthy program will be conducted in Ozawkie, Kansas.

This eight-week program can help you get started on the road to better health. The Stay Strong, Stay Healthy program is built on simple, strength-building exercises that will improve balance, health and state of mind. No, it's not difficult or complicated weight-lifting. You'll start at a level that's right for you. No one is too inactive to participate. Building strength promotes quality of life and independence, especially for adults over 50. Instruction is provided by Kansas State Research and Extension faculty.

This class meets for one hour, two times each week at 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m., on Tuesday and Thursdays, starting on April 4<sup>th</sup>. Class size is limited and will be held at the Ozawkie Methodist Church.

To find out more about this class, an information will be held on Friday, March 10<sup>th</sup>. Registration packets will be available at this meeting. Pre-registration is required. For more information, contact Cindy Williams, Meadowlark District Extension Agent, at 785-863-2212.

Nancy Nelson, Agent  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Family Life

**No News**