



COW TEMPERAMENT AFFECTS REPRODUCTION

Sometimes we wonder if that cow rattling the chute is worth keeping. Recent research suggests maybe not. Studies conducted several years ago with Brahman-crosses found that cows with excitable temperaments had lower pregnancy rates than their calmer herdmates. Wanting to know if this occurred in other types of cattle, researchers at OSU in Oregon conducted a study to look at the effect of cattle temperament and acclimation to handling on reproductive performance in Angus × Hereford cross cows. Their results were reported in the October issue of the *Journal of Animal Science*.

Over four hundred spring-calving range cows at two locations in Oregon were tested for temperament using both a chute score and measurement of exit velocity from a squeeze chute. The chute score is a 5-point scale (1 = calm, no movement, 2 = restless movement, 3 = frequent movement with vocalization, 4 = constant movement, vocalization, shaking of the chute, 5 = violent and continuous struggling). Exit velocity was measured with an infrared sensor and converted to a score of 1 (slowest) through 5 (fastest). The chute and exit scores were averaged to give a temperament score, either adequate (less than 3) or aggressive (more than 3).

About 25% of the cows were scored as aggressive and these cows had lower pregnancy rates (89%) than the adequate temperament cows (95%). At one location, cows were bred by AI and then exposed to natural service clean up bulls. The second location used natural service mating only. The fact that bulls were used indicates that the lowered pregnancy rates in the aggressive cows were not due only to stress during handling at AI. Cow body condition and calf birth and weaning weights were not different between the groups and there were also no difference between groups in pregnancy loss or loss of calves from birth to weaning. Decreased weight of calves weaned per cow exposed in the aggressive groups was related to the effect on pregnancy rate alone. Based on this and other studies, the researchers suggest culling on temperament or adapting cattle to handling could help in maximizing reproductive performance in beef cows.

These researchers reported on a second study on the effect of acclimating heifers to handling on reproductive performance. After weaning, they divided 6-month-old heifers into two groups of about 44 heifers each. One group was processed through a handling facility three times a week for four weeks. Heifers receiving more frequent handling reached puberty at an earlier age than their herdmates, but pregnancy rates after AI were not different. The more frequently handled heifers had lower exit scores, but not chute scores compared to those handled less frequently. The researchers therefore suggest that exposing heifers to handling and human interaction may improve reproduction. They do caution that this training needs to occur when animals are fairly young. In a previous study, when they attempted to acclimate mature cows to handling, they were not successful at improving pregnancy rates. Questions remaining to be addressed are the minimum amount of handling needed and the best age for training.

In summary: Pregnancy rates were improved in groups of cows with less aggressive temperaments. Heifers acclimated to handling at about 6-months-of-age reached puberty at an earlier age and had slower chute exit scores than heifers handled less frequently. Acclimating young animals to handling and culling on temperament can have beneficial effects on reproduction in beef cattle

5 STEPS TO CONTROL FLIES IN CATTLE

When talking to producers about fly control, many stated they want to eliminate fly problems. That request is impossible but you can reduce their negative impact.

Biting flies are carriers of such diseases as anaplasmosis and bovine leukosis virus. Face flies can spread *Moraxella bovis* (pinkeye) animal to animal. The economic loss from each horn fly biting an animal 30 times/day can also be substantial because horn flies can exceed 1000 flies per animal.

Flies have adapted to the environment for many, many years; realistically, there is zero chance that we'll completely win the battle. However, we can use a multi-pronged approach to lessen flies' impact on cattle.

1. Feed a larvicide or an insect growth regulator like Altosid® (labeled for horn flies) or Rabon™ (labeled for horn, face, house- and stable flies) to cows, starting 30 days before flies typically emerge. Continue until 30 days after a killing frost. These products are usually added to minerals or range meal.

If an adjacent property also has cattle, the owners of those cattle also need to feed the product to their cattle or you might inherit some of the neighbor's flies. Horn flies don't travel long distances, but face flies may travel 1-2 miles.

2. Fly tags. Fly tags are another option. Newer-generation fly tags that contain a higher concentration of insecticide are quite helpful in quite helpful in controlling flies. Use pyrethroid tags for two consecutive years, then switch to an organophosphate tag for one year to reduce pyrethroid resistance. Follow label directions on the number of tags/cow or calf.

The key to using tags is to wait until you have 200 flies/cow to place the tags. Be sure to remove the tags in 3-5 months, in order to prevent resistance issues.

3. Pour-ons. Use a pour-on at the same time you fly-tag the cows. If it's spring turnout time, you can use a product that also kills internal parasites. Later in the year, use products only labeled for flies and/or lice. Using pour-on dewormers many times throughout the year could lead to internal parasiteresistance issues.

4. Dust bags/cattle rubs. The advantage of a dust bag or rub is that, if placed at a site where all cattle must use it, it can provide very economical control of face and horn flies. Proper placement and keeping it charged with insecticide are the keys.

5. Sprays. Timely spraying of cattle throughout the year can be effective in reducing the fly population, but can be time-consuming.

There are many products on the market for fly control. Develop a plan to control flies that fits your operation. Using just one strategy from the above list likely won't give you the results you want. A multifaceted approach will work better.

For more information contact Joe Paul at 870-898-7224.

STRATEGIC DEWORMING CAN ADD PROFITS AND IMPROVE HERD HEALTH

Regardless of one's location throughout the United States, a common goal among cow-calf producers is to wean a healthy calf crop each year. With today's markets where calves are earning north of \$200 per hundred-weight, producers should have further incentive to ensure their calves are raised under optimal conditions to wean as many pounds of beef as they can.

An important step in that process is controlling internal parasites. Left unchecked, stomach and intestinal worms can cause production loss, create health issues throughout the herd, and thus result in economic loss for the producer. Investing in and following a strategic deworming plan can help minimize the effects of parasites on cattle. Rather than waiting until cattle show signs of parasitism, producers should follow a deworming program that reduces infection by interrupting the lifecycle of the parasites before symptoms occur.

Adult parasites produce eggs that are shed in manure and larva hatch from the eggs. The larva develop, become infective and migrate from the manure into moist grass. When cattle graze on the infected grass, they ingest the larva, which then develop into adults that produce eggs and the process starts over again. According to research from the University of Arkansas, larvae can survive up to one year on pastures.

Parasites can result in production losses, ranging from depressed feed intake and conversion, reduced weight gain, lower milk production and lower reproductive performance. They can also have negative effects on immunity and cause visible, disease like symptoms that include anemia, edema, diarrhea and more.

To achieve the best return on investment in a deworming program, it is important to deworm cattle when it is most effective. Parasites burden peaks during the spring when grass is wet from rain or dew and is lowest during hot summer months when grass is typically drier. Deworming programs should start when cattle first start grazing in the spring, with subsequent dewormings depending on the length of the persistent activity of the dewormer used and weather conditions.

The age of the animal is also a factor to consider. Older cows develop immunity to parasites over time and are not as susceptible. Young calves, however, are at a higher risk making deworming even more crucial. Studies have shown that effective deworming can provide 20 or more extra pounds of gain during the grazing season.

There are many products on the market from which to choose when it comes time to deworm your cattle. Some are pour-on products while others are ingestible and a few are given orally. When selecting a product, consider these factors: (1) age of the animal; (2) ease of application; (3) product efficiency; (4) broad spectrum of control; (5) cost effectiveness; (6) withdrawal time; and (7) personal safety.



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We are a university without walls, with faculty in every county.*

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Private Applicator Training (P.A.T.) will be held May 11 at 2:00 p.m. in Sevier County at the Cossatot Community College Agri Building. This will probably be the last class in the area until next year.

Little River County Cattlemen's Meetings will not reconvene until September 28, 2015. Enjoy your summer.

Food Plot Seminar — If you would like to sign up to attend the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission Food Plot Seminar you need to hurry and register by clicking on the AGFC FOOD PLOT SEMINAR link below and sign up. It is Free. It will be held at the Southwest Research and Extension (SWREC) in Hope on Saturday, September 12 from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. The first part of the day will be spent inside with speakers and the last part will be a field demo/hands on. There can be only 50 participants you need to sign up now.

For more information you can contact Biologist Jeffrey Taverner at 870-777-5580 (office) or 870-331-7653 (cell).

Go to: AGFCFoodPlotCourse.eventbrite.com to sign up to attend.

