

Calving Season Prep

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Calving season is just around the corner, or for a few folks I talked to, they've already had a few surprises. As we head in to the final weeks there's a few items on the checklist to make sure you are ready. Start by balancing cow rations for adequate protein and energy for increased final week and subsequent lactation requirements. The weeks ahead are the most taxing on that cow. Aim to have first calf heifers at a body condition score of 5.5 to 6 and for mature cows 5 to 5.5 condition score. Work with your vet to develop a sound vaccination program to prepare the cow to produce high quality colostrum. And of course control lice and internal parasites. Make sure you have your technique, whatever it is, for recording calving data and maybe figure out some way to make backups of those records. Which may mean finding a copy machine every couple of days to copy the most recent pages out of the little red notebook you keep in your pocket. Make sure calving facilities are clean and in good condition and have your ear tags, tattoos, or whatever ready to roll. Finally, check your flashlights and other portable lights to make sure they are ready. In recent years, the LED technology has revolutionized portable or emergency lighting. Take time to visit your farm supply store and check out the LED lighting systems. These things run forever on batteries, they aren't affected by cold weather and the light bulbs rarely wear out, and they are bright. And we all know most calves come at night. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Cold Stress in Cattle

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Well, January is doing a really good job so far of reminding us that we are in Kansas and it is January! It always amazes me at how many non-farm background folks ask me, with a fair amount of concern, how cattle are surviving in this weather. It really is amazing at how quickly and how well prepared cattle are to deal with cold weather. Much of it has to do with keeping the cows in good health and in at least a body condition score of 5 or greater and then to have a good dry winter coat. Depending on coat condition and whether it's wet or dry, cattle have what we call a critical temperature. When the temperature, and some folks feel that it's the wind chill, not just the ambient temperature, drops below that critical point, cold stress then increases the maintenance energy requirements for the animal. That's energy, not protein, mineral or vitamin requirements. It is generally felt that for every degree below the critical temperature you need to increase the energy density of the ration by 1%. While we tend to see an increase in voluntary intake in feedlot settings, grazing beef cows often will spend less time grazing as temperatures drop. Therefore, higher quality forages and hay, or maybe even a little grain, is often needed to provide the more energy dense feeds. So what is the critical temperature. A cow with a dry winter coat probably won't hit critical temperature until 32 degrees. If they have a dry HEAVY winter coat, as many do by now, that drops to 18 degrees. But if they have a wet coat, as in a very wet snowstorm, that critical temperature is up around 59 degrees! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK,

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Burn Workshops

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Few things are more crucial to maintaining a good tall grass prairie native pasture than periodic burning. Now, periodic burning doesn't mean annual burning. That's something that we really need to get away from. I know not everyone agrees with me on that and feel that they have to burn annually, but that's something we'll talk about another day. You may think about pasture burning and feel that fire hasn't changed much in the past 20 or 30 years so what is there to possibly learn about burning? Well, granted fire hasn't changed, but our knowledge of plant response to fire has changed. Laws regulating agricultural burning in Kansas have changed, there's a lot more tools available to help you in planning your burns and we're under a lot more scrutiny about pasture burning than we have ever been before. It behooves all of us to be paying attention and learning a little bit more about prescribed burning. There are two burning workshops coming up in our area. One will be in Herington on January 21st - get registered soon! The other will be in Alta Vista on February 9th. The two are the same program and they will be covering the following topics: reasons for burning, burning for wildlife, notification, regulations & permits, weather, liability and burning assistance, equipment, hazards and firebreaks, planning and conducting a burn. There's a \$10 fee for this workshop, payable at the door. You do need to register - so just give me a call and tell me which one you want to attend! This is a great workshop, fast paced and moving right along and you do get lunch so what a bargain! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420

KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.