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What's new with heifer reproduction?

We put a lot of effort and resources into raising healthy calves that fulfill all the genetic potential that we expect after the genomic testing and mating programs. In the end, the majority of us get the pay back when the heifer calves and makes some milk. So, the only way to accomplish that is to get her pregnant as early as possible so she calves at an age where she has the most efficient milk production. We sometimes think that older heifers (calving past 26 months) make more milk but the data shows that the slight increase in milk production is offset by the 25% increase in chance of being culled before her second lactation, in addition to the extra cost and space to raise her. The bottom line is that when we set an age at which we want our heifers to calve, we have to be able to have a fertile heat to breed at the determined time.

The latest info using heat synchronisation seems to have solved some deficiencies from past protocols. The classic ovsync protocols never had good results in heifers because heifers have quicker follicle development and don't respond consistently to gnRH (fertiline). A new protocol using cidrs and prostaglandins has shown very good results. It is essentially an ovsync –cidr protocol but the cidr only stays in for 5 days and fertiline is given at breeding; as follows

Day 0 install cidr and administer 2cc fertiline IM

Day 5 remove cidr and administer 2cc bioestrovet IM

Day 6 administer 2cc bioestrovet IM

Day 8 breed and administer 2cc fertiline IM

That being the full program, an easier alternative with acceptable results is one where no fertiline is given at day 0 and a single bioestrovet shot at cidr removal.

These synchronisation programs will mainly be useful to “clean up” heifers that did not conceive using visual heat detection or simple prostaglandin injections. It would be recommended to be aggressive with cidr programs on heifers that are pregnancy checked opened because these heifers have not shown a natural return to heat.

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