

# A Calendar Of Events For Your Herd



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**S**o you survived the holidays – the holiday travel, visiting with family members and, of course, the great holiday meals. With everything that has happened the last two weeks, it's time to get back to business. With any business, planning is essential for smooth operation and profitability. Planning requires knowledge of what is expected (for example, calving) to occur in the future. This knowledge, in turn, requires asking a multitude of questions. The answers to these questions can be used to develop a working calendar of events, which is extremely useful when life becomes hectic with other responsibilities.

To develop this calendar, first start by asking questions about the cattle's current stage of life. For example, are all the cows and/or heifers bred and, if so, what stage(s) of gestation? How much longer before rations need to be increased for late gestational fetal growth? Remember, rations need to be adjusted for age of animal (heifer versus mature cow), stage of gestation (early versus mid versus late gestation), and any environmental stressors (mud, wind, freezing rain, etc).

After answering these questions, the next set of questions should focus on calving. When will calving begin? How long is the calving season? What bull was used? What, if any, information is available on the calf birth weights from this bull to know in advance whether assistance may be needed? If assistance is needed during calving, will the local veterinarian be called? Do

I have everything needed to process (tag, dip the navel, weigh, etc) the calves? Will natural mating or artificial insemination be used? If using AI, what criteria will be used to select the bull? If using natural mating, who should perform the breeding soundness exam on the bull? Keep in mind that a bull should be tested well in advance of the breeding season to allow time to retest, if necessary, or to acquire a different bull.

The next set of questions concerns breeding heifers and re-breeding the cows. What pre-breeding vaccinations should be given, when should they be given, and how far in advance must they be purchased? What is the body condition of the cows/heifers? Will I synchronize estrus before AI or bull exposure? When will I begin the breeding season for the heifers and cows? Do I want the heifers to calve before the cows and, if so, how far in advance does their season need to begin?

Between the breeding season and calving, the following questions should be considered. Will fly control be used? Approximately when will fly control begin? When should the cows be dewormed and vaccinated? When will the calves be de-wormed? Once the breeding season has finished, the next major focus would be on weaning. When will weaning occur? What vaccinations should be administered at weaning? When will the pregnancy check be performed? Will open cows be culled?

Answers to these questions can help you develop a management calendar of events. This calendar, in turn, can be used as a gentle reminder to improve the productivity of your cow herd. Δ

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