

Extension Notes

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AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

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Spring Tasks for Beef Cattle Producers

Rural Kentucky pastures are beginning to show off spring calves. For cattle producers, this brings in a new cycle of farm management. Farmers have a lot to remember to ensure healthy calves and to successfully rebreed cows.

Observe spring calves closely, checking them at least twice a day. Check first-calf heifers even more. Be ready to assist heifers after one to two hours of hard labor or 90 minutes after the 'water bag' is visible. Be prepared to dry and warm chilled calves as soon as possible. Remember that each calf should get colostrum within an hour of birth.

It's also important to begin identifying calves with ear tags or tattoos while they are still young and easy to handle. Record the birthdate and the dam ID. Castrate and implant commercial male calves as soon as possible and weigh registered calves within the first 24 hours of birth.

Go ahead and separate cows that have calved and increase their feed. Supplemental energy is important for cows receiving hay to prepare them for rebreeding.

A 1,250-pound cow giving approximately 25 pounds of milk per day will need about 25 pounds of fescue hay and five pounds of concentrate daily to maintain good condition.

To go from a condition score of 4 to 5, add an additional two pounds of concentrate to support that cow. Cows must be in good condition to conceive early in the upcoming breeding season.

Avoid feeding hay in excessively muddy areas of pastures to avoid contaminating cows' udders. Calf scours is something to watch for in the herd. If scours becomes a problem, move cows that have not calved to a clean pasture.

Calves with scours may become dehydrated and need fluids to reverse the situation. Consult your veterinarian and send fecal samples to the UK Veterinary Diagnostic Lab to determine the most effective drug therapy.

Plan to vaccinate calves for clostridial diseases like blackleg and malignant edema as soon as possible. It's also a good time to get yearling measurements on bulls and heifers, if necessary, for special sales. You may need to increase bulls' feed to increase their conditioning for breeding or order semen if you plan to use artificial insemination.

For more information on beef cattle management, contact the Carter County Cooperative Extension Service. Educational programs of the Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expressions, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, or physical or mental disability.

Upcoming Events:

- **Farmer's Market Taxes & Record Keeping** – March 23rd @ 6:00 PM via zoom – Call 474-6686 to register.
- **Northeast Area Livestock Association** – March 28th @ 6:00; Speaker: Dan Miller, KY Beef Network
- **Sheep & Goat Predator Control Workshop** – April 1st @ 8:30 AM – Call 474-6686 to register.
- **Little Sandy Beekeepers** – April 4th @ 6:30; Speaker: Caroline Kane; Topic: Viruses & Nutrition Supplements
- **Hike & Learn** – April 6th @ 1:00 – Carter Caves State Resort Park – Natural Bridge Trail & Stream Stomp