

Taking care of high risk stressed calves

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. This is the time of year that calves are being weaned and moved about. Which brings the question of what are the three most critical required "nutrients" for high-risk calves who have been on a truck for an extended period? Hay, water, and rest. Alright, those aren't all exactly "nutrients" per se, but they are definitely REQUIRED. The rumen thrives on constancy. The animal is designed to keep a steady supply of forage and water flowing to the rumen, a steady amount of waste products flowing out from the rumen, and a steady stream of nutrients from fermentation absorbed through the rumen wall. Cattle that have been off feed and water for a number of hours need to re-start this flow. Good quality grass or cereal grain hay, long-stemmed, needs to be available for calves to nibble on, along the bunk line and in a hay feeder. Normally we want to encourage calves to get all their feed from the feed bunk but extremely stressed calves need to feed immediately and there may not be sufficient linear space at the bunk for all calves to eat at once. There needs to be a safe place for small or timid calves to eat hay in peace. Clean, fresh water needs to be available. A separate additional water tank should be placed along the fence line so that there is room for many calves to water immediately after arrival and there is plenty of water for all the calves. Then make sure that there is plenty of dry space for these calves to lay down and rest. This is a stressful time for these calves so let 'em rest! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Time to get cows into condition

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. Spring calving cows are probably at their lowest nutritional demand right now. That's why we can get by with keeping them on corn or sorghum stalks so cheaply and easily. Well, this is also a time that if you have cattle that are under conditioned, you can more easily get them into shape. Now I'll be the first to admit that a lot of the bred cows that I see out in the county are not under conditioned. In fact, many of them may be over conditioned by a solid one body condition score. But there are times that you may have brought some cows into your herd that are a little bit on the skinny side, or you may have first calf heifers that you are still trying to grow. So right now, when their nutritional needs are much lower and the weather is still pretty mild, it becomes a lot easier to get some extra pounds on those cows. If you wait until after they calve you are often having to deal with the heavy nutritional needs of a nursing cow, you've got colder and/or wetter weather conditions that require more nutrients and it just becomes really tough to get those extra pounds on the animals. It will take a little extra effort because you need to go through and sort those cows out and keep them in a separate area. It may take nothing more than a few extra pounds of alfalfa per day or maybe a pound or two of grain. You don't want to push too much grain if you have them on a primarily forage based diet, but a pound or two won't be a problem. Get those cattle sorted out now, get some extra feed in front of them and let's get them up to the weight and condition they should be now. This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.

Growth promotants in beef production

This is Ag Outlook on 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte, Geary County, K-State Research and Extension Ag & Natural Resources Agent. There has been a lot of incorrect information and scare tactics used in regards to the use of hormone based implants to improve growth in beef cattle. There seems to be a growing anti-science movement especially in regards to food. All of a sudden science is bad and evil and not to be trusted. I fear where this trend may lead us. But lets look at two sets of facts - one economic one scientific. Bottom line, implants reduce the cost of beef production by 10%. That's the bottom line explanation why cattle producers use them. Now lets look at the science of the hormones we are using. The most common implants are based on some version of the hormone estrogen. A 3 ounce serving of beef from a steer that was never implanted contains 1.3 nanograms. A nanogram is one billionth of a gram. 3 ounces of beef from a steer that was implanted contains 1.9 ng of estrogen. Hormones are found in all animals and plants including humans. A glass of milk contains 11 ng. A serving of garden peas contains 340 ng. A serving of ice cream? 520 ng. One birth control pill contains 35,000 ng of estrogen - even an adult male produces 136,000 ng of estrogen daily. Simply eating beef from non implanted steers isn't really going to make that much of a difference in your estrogen intake. If you want to eat beef from non implanted steers, that's fine. If you want to eat beef that was raised organically on grass, that is your business. But please look at the science and admit that you are doing it for personal preference not because it's going to make a major difference in hormonal intake.

Questions? Call me! This has been Ag Outlook on the Talk of JC, 1420 KJCK, I'm Chuck Otte.