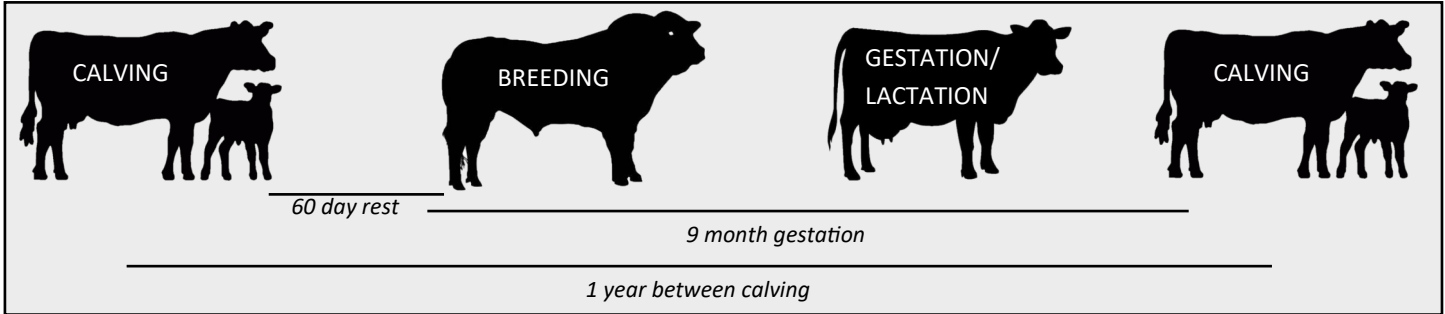


# Cow/Calf Management

## General Information

- **Estrous/heat cycle is every 21 days** (but can be suppressed by hot summer months in Texas)
- **Gestation** (pregnancy length) is an average of **283 days** (approx. 9 months)
- Breeding females should have a **60 day post-calving rest phase** to allow for proper recovery of their reproductive tract prior to next breeding
- Breeding females should have **one calf per year**
- Heifers should be bred at 65% of their mature body weight

Palpate cows once or twice annually based on breeding season



## Body Condition Score:

- Before breeding and calving, BCS scores should be:
  - 6 for heifers
  - 5 for cows
- Expect a drop in BCS of 1 after calving and during lactation, so:
  - 5 for heifers
  - 4 for cows

BCS	Description
3	Thin
4	Moderately Thin
5	Moderate (ideal)
6	Moderate fleshy
7	Fleshy

## Pregnancy Determination:

- Palpation, blood tests, ultrasound are commonly used to determine pregnancy
- Palpate cows once or twice annually based on breeding season
- **Rectal palpation is similar in cost per head to blood tests but provides much more information regarding the animal's reproductive tract, such as cystic ovaries, metritis, and non-viable fetuses**
- Pregnancy blood tests only tell you if the animal is pregnant, no other information is provided
- Ultrasound can provide additional information, such as fetus gender, but requires specialized equipment and can be more costly

## 3 Stages of Labor:

Stage 1 = Contractions to "Water Bag" (12-24 hours or more)

**Stage 2 = "Water Bag" to calf on ground** (30 min for cows, 60 min for heifers)

Stage 3 = Calf to expulsion of fetal membranes

#1 cause of Dystocia is Fetopelvic Mismatch

## Dystocia (difficulty in calving):

- Number one cause of dystocia (difficulty with calving) is fetopelvic mismatch (calf is too large in relation to a pelvis that is too small)
  - This typically is caused by a heifer that is bred too early/small or bulls that sire calves that are genetically predisposed to be larger at birth.
  - Cattlemen can help avoid calving issues by using proven sires with EPDs for low birth weights and great calving ease scores
- If dystocias occur, please consult a veterinarian for proper delivery procedures
  - Avoid using mechanical devices that can put excessive tension on the calf (ie. Come-along, vehicle, etc.)
    - These commonly lead to uterine tears, paralysis/paresis, and other permanent injuries to the cow and calf
  - If a calf cannot be delivered vaginally with just the force of one human pulling, a veterinarian should be consulted for possible repositioning of the calf, caesarian-section surgery, or fetotomy.

## \*\*\*WHEN TO CALL A VETERINARIAN\*\*\*

- Stage 2 lasts longer than 30 min for cows, 60 min for heifers
- Progress is stalled for more than 15 min during stage 2
- Feet appear upside down (either backwards or uterine torsion)
  - If you see feet with no head, or head with no feet
  - If you see or smell a foul discharge
  - If a dead calf is partially out of cow/heifer



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## Estrous Synchronization:

- Synchronizing the estrous cycle allows for more uniform calf crops and ultimately better profit margins
- Medications are available for synchronization to reduce breeding and calving season intervals
- Reducing calving season intervals allow for better monitoring of adults to avoid calf loss from dystocia, thus creating a greater return on investment

## Udder Health/Colostrum Management:

- Mastitis can occur in beef cattle and is most commonly associated with injury to teats/udder
- **Large/swollen/firm/hot teats are signs of mastitis**
- Consult with your veterinarian for appropriate treatment regimens
- Calves receive their immunity through “Passive Transfer” by receiving antibodies through their mother’s colostrum. Failure to receive adequate colostrum can lead to chronically ill calves.
- Annual vaccination of adult females, yields higher quality colostrum and better protective immunity for calves.
- **Nutrition** of breeding females is correlated highly to **colostrum quantity**
- **Vaccination** of breeding females is correlated highly to **colostrum quality**

## Calf Management:

- Environment
  - Clean Housing—no mud/manure and isolation of sick animals to prevent the spread of disease
  - Dip navel in iodine at birth
- Preventative medicine/vaccines
  - Colostrum—crucial to calthood survival
    - Calf’s immune system is gained from colostrum intake
    - **Colostrum from the cow is better than bagged colostrum**
    - **Within 2 hours of birth**
      - **Beef calves need 2 L of colostrum**
      - **Dairy calves need 4 L of colostrum**
    - If using bagged/powder colostrum, select **>50 g/L IgG**
    - Calves should be able to stand and nurse within 2 hours
    - Colostrum intake can be verified by serum protein levels within the first 5 days of life (consult a veterinarian)
- Vaccines
  - Intranasal Respiratory—at birth to decrease the changes of early BRD for at risk calves (twins, orphaned, etc)
  - Viral/Lepto—2 doses—1 month apart prior to weaning (before 4-6 months)
  - Blackleg/Clostridial—2 doses—1 month apart prior to weaning (before 4-6 months)
  - Brucellosis—1 dose between 4-12 months

### Signs to watch for in calves:

- Naval ill (swollen umbilicus)
- Joint ill (swollen joints)
- Scours
- Respiratory disease (coughing, droopy ears, lethargy)
  - Aspiration Pneumonia (tube fed calves)
  - Infectious Pneumonia

## How to feed orphan calves:

- Calves should receive 10% of their body weight in milk replacer/milk daily split between 2-3 feedings
  - 1 qt = 2 lbs
- Select milk replacer
  - **Whey protein NOT soy protein**
  - **Minimum of 22% crude protein/20% crude fat**
    - Typically more expensive replacers are better quality and have higher protein and fat concentrations
- **Mix according to label on bag exactly (Powder to water ratio is very important)**
- Heat to 105°F (warm to touch, but not so hot that it would burn the mouth/esophagus)
- Slowly introduce calf starter at 1 month of age



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