Some Custer County Producers Are Using A $25 Bull

The situation

With the development of economic ways to synchronize estrus, beef producers can take better advantage of artificial insemination (AI). Heat detection has long been one of the major objections to using AI in beef cattle herds. Estrus synchronization eliminates this step and allows producers to time breed their cattle.

Time breeding provides producers with at least two advantages. The first is at breeding. By knowing when the cattle will come into heat, all the cattle can be bred at once, or if large numbers are to be bred, the timing can be separated into equal numbers of cattle. This can eliminate several return trips by the AI technician. The second advantage comes at calving time. Knowing that the cattle are all scheduled to start calving on a certain day allows the producers to be better prepared. Short calving season's also equal to larger, more uniform calves at sale time; and pounds equal dollars.

Our Response

Over the past two years, data has been gathered on approximately 400 head of replacement heifers. Out-of-pocket cost has run $20-25 per head for estrus synchronization and breeding. For less than the total cost of one proven herd sire, these producers have been able to take advantage of all the latest genetics. By studying the expected progeny differences (EPD’s), they have been able to use bulls with proven small birth weights, additional growth and milk, all the things anyone would want to add to their beef herd. All for less than $25 per head!

Achievements

Estrus synchronization is not for everyone. To be successful, other management practices must be in place. Cattle must be cycling before synchronization will work. This means the cattle must be on a good nutrition and herd health program. Replacement heifers, especially, need to be physically and psychological old enough before contemplating such a program.

Future

Although AI is not a necessity when using an estrus synchronization program, it does offer a chance to dramatically change the genetics in a herd rather inexpensively. Cattle can be bred naturally after synchronization, but the use of proven herd sires holds many obvious advantages.
Being able to access the top bulls in a given breed may make the use of natural service a thing of the past.

The producers using estrus synchronization in combination with AI are satisfied with their programs. They still have room for improvement as first service conception is 55-60 percent. This is lower than what has been achieved in dairy operations, but the numbers are improving as handling facilities and techniques improve.

. Considering initiating such a program? Want to take advantage of the best genetics available? Are short calving intervals and heavier calves of interest to you? If your answers are yes, then you might be ready to adapt this program to your outfit. Check with your veterinarian or visit the Custer County Agent's office.

For more information:

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