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Farm Focus - Spring 2009

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IT’S THAT 
TIME OF YEAR

Spring Brings Calving 
Season and Sleepless Nights for Some Farmers.

While most cattle do not need help calving, animal owners must be 
prepared to offer assistance without delay when a cow is experiencing 
trouble. In order to provide rapid and effective assistance you must: 1. OBSERVE, 2. EXAMINE, 3. ASSIST and 4. BE PREPARED TO CALL for help.

OBSERVE: Heifers should begin calving about 20-30 days before 
cows. They are not yet fully grown and by calving early they have 
extra time to gain weight prior to the breeding season. Pregnant 
cattle must be watched closely; preferably four to six times daily 
but at least twice daily. Heifers need to be checked more often. 
Move 'heavy springers' to permanent pastures with catch facilities. 
Cows should calve on clean pasture with shelter available (woods, 
wind break, etc.).

Throughout the labor, a cow should make significant progress every 
30 minutes, and a heifer should do the same in 30 to 60 minutes. 
The second stage of labor (delivery of the calf) may take between 
30 minutes and three hours. Extended time during delivery without 
significant progress puts undue stress on the calf and the cow, reducing 
the likelihood of a positive outcome for both.

EXAMINE AND ASSIST: If a cow or heifer is not making 
significant progress take her into the barn to assess the situation. 
Adequate facilities help ensure your safety and that of the animal. 
Keep essential supplies ready during calving season:

1. Soap or non-irritating disinfectant to wash the genital area 
of the cow.
2. Plastic sleeves for the person assisting the cow.
3. Lubricant for birth canal and plastic sleeve.
4. Sanitary nylon rope or obstetrical chains with handles.
5. A calving jack or mechanical calf puller for emergencies.

Clean the cow’s vulva to help prevent infection, and wear a well-
lubricated obstetrical sleeve while performing a vaginal exam. Many 
situations can be corrected, resulting in the calf’s delivery. However, 
if the calf is in an abnormal position, use experience and judgment 
to determine if you can correct the situation or need to call for aid.

CALL: Don’t hesitate to call your veterinarian for help when you 
encounter an unfamiliar situation, a problem, or if 30 minutes have 
elapsed without significant progress delivering the calf.

(continued on page 3)
MEET YOUR TEAM...

ERIC EThERIDGE, DVm
Dr. Eric Etheridge was raised in Memphis, Tennessee. After completing his undergraduate degree at the University of Florida, he attended UTCVM. Following graduation, Dr. Etheridge worked for several years as a mixed animal practitioner near Memphis. Now back at UT, he enjoys spending time with his young daughter, Zoe, and his wife, Lydia, who is a resident in veterinary anesthesia at UTCVM.

AMY PLUMMER, DVm, DACVS
Dr. Amy Plummer received her undergraduate degree from the University of Tennessee and her veterinary degree from The Ohio State University. Following vet school, she completed a one-year large animal internship and a three-year large animal surgery residency at Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Plummer joined the faculty at UTCVM in the summer of 2006, first serving as an emergency clinician and then as an equine field service clinician. After passing her board exam last winter, she became a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons in February 2008. Dr. Plummer's special interests include lameness and equine sports medicine as well as surgical conditions. She resides in Louisville with her four-legged family.

MARIa E. PRADO, MV, PhD, DACViM
Dr. Maria Prado was born and raised in Maracaibo, Venezuela where she obtained her degree in veterinary medicine. Following two years of bovine-exclusive private practice, Dr. Prado came to the United States to further her education. She completed an internship and a residency in Food Animal Medicine & Surgery at Oklahoma State University and obtained board certification in internal medicine. Dr. Prado also holds a PhD from OSU where she studied a bacterium that causes respiratory disease in cattle. Dr. Prado is married to Dr. Tulio Prado, a theriogenologist at UTCVM, and they have an 8-year-old son, Daniel.

KRISTIE J. STEuer, DVm
Dr. Kristie Steuer joined UTCVM’s Field Service team last summer as an intern. After receiving her undergraduate degree from Cornell University, Dr. Steuer worked as a substitute teacher and led horseback pack trips into the Teton Wilderness in Wyoming before attending veterinary college at Colorado State University. After completing her internship at UTCVM, Dr. Steuer hopes to return to Wyoming to work as a large animal practitioner. She shares her home with a horse, two dogs, and two sugar gliders.

MATT WeLBORN, DVm, MPH, DACvPM
Dr. Matt Welborn grew up on a small beef farm in southern Mississippi. He graduated from Louisiana State University School of Veterinary Medicine and worked for one year in a private practice near his home, before returning to LSU for additional training in food animal production medicine. Dr. Welborn has worked in the Field Services section since 1990, and has recently returned after a year's absence. He earned his Master of Public Health from UT in 2003, and is board certified in veterinary preventive medicine. He enjoys working with students, clients and their livestock. Dr. Welborn has been married for 21 years to his wife, Nancy Welborn, a 1990 graduate of the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine. They have one daughter, Ashley.

BRIAn WHItLoCK, DVm, DACt
After being raised on a small tobacco and dairy farm in central Kentucky, Dr. Brian Whitlock attended Michigan State University where he earned his Master’s degree in Animal Science with an emphasis in dairy nutrition. After earning his veterinary degree from Auburn University, Dr. Whitlock worked as a large animal veterinarian in central Michigan. He recently completed a residency at Auburn in Theriogenology and will defend his Ph.D. with an emphasis in reproductive endocrinology this spring. Dr. Whitlock and his wife, Lynette, have boy/girl twins, Grayson and Lydia, who will be four in May.

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Veterinarians are perfectly happy with clients who have all their calves born unassisted or with limited help from the owner. However, they are also glad to assist you with those more difficult cases to help ensure a live cow and calf.

**NUTRITION AND MANAGEMENT:**
After birth, calves must receive adequate colostrum. The calf should be nursing aggressively within 4-6 hours of birth. Dairy calves need 10% of their body weight in the first 24 hours of life. For example, an 80 lb. calf needs 8 lbs of colostrum. Give 4 pints initially and repeat in 6 hours. Beef calves may need less, as the colostrum from their dams is more concentrated. During calving season, you should have frozen colostrum or colostrum replacement. Obtain one or two gallons of colostrum from a local dairy (if possible) and freeze for later use. If you are unable to obtain colostrum or are concerned about acquiring infectious diseases from another farm, purchase colostrum replacement at a local livestock supply or Co-op. You should also have an esophageal feeder to force feed calves that are unable to nurse the mother or a bottle. Monitor calves for scours. Work with your veterinarian to diagnose causes of diarrhea (scours) in order to better treat or prevent future cases. Dip calves’ navels within 4 hours of birth—the earlier the better.

After calving, separate cows with calves from pregnant cows and increase feed to insure re-breeding. Thin cows are much slower to get pregnant. Body condition scoring is helpful. Ask your county agent or veterinarian for guidelines. To keep costs down, utilize winter pasture if available. Have hay tested, and supplement based on test results. Other items such as scales, ID tags, castration equipment, growth implants, and dehorning equipment should also be available for processing baby calves. These items can be purchased from a local retailer or veterinarian.

Castrate and dehorn calves during the first week of life. Implant steers at time of castration. Implant heifers that will not be used for breeding. Don’t forget to record the calf ID, calving date, sex, dam and sire. Weigh the calf, and record any problems.

Since many producers have busy schedules, keep in mind one advantage of a “short” calving season is that a person can wait until all the calves are on the ground, then castrate, dehorn and implant all of them while they are still less than two months of age. Additionally, all the calves will have the same implant date and can be re-implanted on schedule.

**Castrate and Dehorn Calves During the First Week of Life.**
IT’S IN THE BAG!

Pegasus Paper Products produces more than pretty packages. While providing horse-themed gift bags, gift wraps, and other equestrian gift wrapping accessories, the company also raises money for the UTCVM large animal hospital. A portion of the proceeds from the sale of Pegasus Paper Products will help fund Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT) research at the college. Company owner Jeffrey Ray has first-hand experience with HBOT and credits it for saving the life of Angel, one of his horses. Learn more about Angel’s story at www.pegasuspaper.com.

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