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Flushing cows

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Abstract

Starting to flush cows 95 days before the breeding season began significantly increase conception rate and required less total feed.

Keywords

Cattlemen's Day, 1976; Report of progress (Kansas State University. Agricultural Experiment Station); 262; Beef; Flushing; Conception rate; Feed

Flushing Cows

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Summary

Starting to flush cows 95 days before the breeding season began significantly increased conception rate and required less total feed.

Introduction

Flushing ewes and sows before breeding has been a standard practice for years. It increases twining in sheep and litter size in swine. Flushing cows has the same effect by increasing conception rate. Work reported in the 1974 Cattlemen's Day Report (Kansas Ag. Expt. St. Report of Progress 210) indicated flushing cows gives an economic advantage.

Experimental Procedure

We used spring-calving Polled Hereford cows in a two-year flushing study involving 120 cow years. One group received 3 lbs. alfalfa hay and 3 lbs. cracked sorghum grain from early November to late April. The other, 3 lbs. of a range cube that was half dehydrated alfalfa and half cracked sorghum grain the first part of the winter. February 15 (95 days before the breeding season began) the cubed ration was doubled to 6 lbs. per head daily. Breeding season was 66 days.

Cows were pastured on native Bluestem all year. Conception was determined by rectal palpation and daily estrus checks during the breeding season. Cows and calves were weighed monthly and calves were weaned in early October.

Results and Discussion

Cow weight changes, calf birth and weaning weights and average date of conception were similar in both groups (table 3.1). However, flushed cows had 15% higher conception rate on 34 lbs. less crude protein and 183 lbs. less TDN during the wintering period. Flushing decreased the percentage of open cows regardless of how early the cows calved. However, flushing's greatest contribution was improving conception rate of cows calving late.

Table 3.1 Effects of flushing on reproduction of beef cows (1974-75)

Indicated factor	Continuous feeding	Flushed
No. observations	51	78
Ration Nov. to Feb. 15		
CP per day (lb.)	0.83	0.46
TDN per day (lb.)	4.05	2.17
Ration Feb. 15 to April 20 (64 days)		
CP per day (lb.)	0.83	0.92
TDN per day (lb.)	4.05	4.34
Total feed per cow		
Alfalfa hay (lb.)	513	
Dehydrated Alfalfa (lb.)		352.5
Sorghum grain (lb.)	513	352.5
CP (lb.)	142.1	108.1
TDN (lb.)	693	510
Cows'		
Oct. wt. (lb.)	989	987
Dec. wt. (lb.)	938	970
Feb. wt. (lb.)	928	925
May wt. (lb.)	845	789
Sept. wt. (lb.)	1012	991
Calves'		
Birth wt. (lb.)	74	76
Weaning wt. (lb.)	451	461
Cows'		
Conception rate (%)	78.4	93.6
Conception date	June 17	June 17