

**Week of Jan 16<sup>th</sup>-20th 2017**

**POST ROCK EXTENSION ANSWERS**

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**K-State Research and Extension**

Calving season is here for some and just around the corner for many. Calving can be one of the most rewarding, yet difficult times for cattle producers. Most cattle producers are veterans when it comes to calving but, it never hurts to review some things before the first calf drops. Usually that first calf makes an appearance earlier than expected.

**What are some preparations to make before calving?**

A good place to start is by evaluating your calving areas. Make sure the area is clean including removing old bedding and excess manure. Inspect the facilities you will be using. Are all the gates in working order? Are there welds broken that need attention or old boards that need replaced? What about making sure the head gate or chute you plan to use is lubricated properly and free of manure. Check the lights in the facilities to make sure they are still in working order. This may seem like common sense but, these details can often be overlooked.

Make a checklist of supplies and equipment that will be needed:

- Halter, cow restraint mechanisms*
- Obstetrical lube/sleeves*
- Obstetrical chains/straps*
- Calf jack*
- Tags/Applicator*
- Frozen colostrum/bottle/esophageal feeder*
- Electrolytes*
- Iodine to treat navels*
- Birth weight scales*

Another important management practice is to develop a protocol containing what to do in instances of calving difficulties, how long to wait to offer assistance, length of time before providing colostrum and contact information for your veterinarian. As the manager you may know this information, but it is important to make sure your employees or family members are aware as well. Plus in the heat of the moment sometimes common knowledge can be erased by adrenaline.

**What do you know about the feeding at dusk theory?**

It is a common consensus that it is easier to supervise calving heifers and cows during the day than at night. So is it possible to increase the number of calves born during the day light hours?

One theory is that by feeding at dusk, the number of calves born during the day versus night will be increased. The physiological mechanism of this is unknown, but some hormonal effect may be involved. There are many studies that have supported this. The most convincing study supporting the theory was conducted in Iowa. 1331 cows on 15 farms were fed once daily at dusk with 85% of the calves born between 6:00am and 6:00 pm. Starting the calves on the night feeding, the week before the expected calving date or two to three weeks earlier had no apparent effects.

Take time to inspect your facilities, develop your check list and perform other necessary duties prior to calving. Be sure to establish a working relationship with your veterinarian as well. Taking these steps and making sure everyone on the operation is familiar with your protocols will help make this calving season a successful one.

*Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Osborne, Smith, and Mitchell counties. Neil may be contacted at [ncates@ksu.edu](mailto:ncates@ksu.edu) or by calling Beloit 738-3597, Lincoln 524-4432, Mankato 378-3174, Osborne 346-2521, Smith Center 282-6823. Visit our website at [www.postrock.ksu.edu](http://www.postrock.ksu.edu) and follow our blog at: [postrockextension.blogspot.com](http://postrockextension.blogspot.com). Also follow us on Facebook at: Post Rock Extension.*