

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Preparing for Calving Season

One of my favorite times of year is calving season. While my herd is still a few months away from calving, it's time to take stock and make purchases before the year's end. Save the date also for Calving School on Jan. 12 in Fredonia with K-State Veterinarian Dr. AJ Tarpoff.

The nutritional state of the cows can impact the success of a calving season. Several studies have proven that cows in a higher body condition score have more nutrient dense colostrum. Additionally, cows in good condition will have the stamina required for delivery, the calves will be thriftier, and rebreeding will be more successful.

It's likely that calving facilities haven't been used in nine or ten months. Facilities should be protected from the wind and have a dry place for the calf to enter the world. Inspect gates, pens, alleys, and head catches, fixing or replacing broken parts. Ensure the calf pullers are clean and in working order. Inventory halters or ropes that may be needed. Good lighting is practical; keep replacement bulbs on hand and test flashlights. Have plastic sleeves, obstetrical lube and chains, esophageal feeders, and calf feeding bottles available.

Colostrum should be kept available. There are several commercial products available that can be mixed with water; check the expiration dates on stored packages. Colostrum can also be frozen from other cows and used during emergencies. Be cautious bringing in colostrum from another herd, as a disease can be carried through this liquid gold.

Understanding the stages of birth is critical. There are several resources out there to review correct presentation and assistance protocols. It's very important to know your facility and personal limitations and have the phone number of your veterinarian handy. The Wildcat Extension District is hosting a Calving School on January 12 in Fredonia, at the Old Iron Club. This event will feature a life size calving simulator that includes cameras for the participants to see the stage and position of the calf as it moves through the calving process. Dr. AJ Tarpoff, K-State Veterinarian, will demonstrate assistance for difficult presentations.

Calving during cold weather can cause hypothermia risk. Have a rectal thermometer available to check newborn temperatures. For mild hypothermia, body temps between 94 and 100°F, provide body temperature colostrum and dry the baby with towels and warm air to bring its body temp up

to the standard of 100°F. For extreme hypothermia, a combination of warm colostrum with a warm bath can be used. Calves should be dry, alert and have a normal body temperature before being returned to the mother.

Having a plan and preparing ahead of time for the calving season can help minimize calf loss and reduce stress on those caring for the cowherd. For more details and to register for the January 12 Calving School, please call the Wilson County Extension Office at 620-378-2167. Dinner will be provided, so an accurate head count is required by January 4th. This event is sponsored by Merck Animal Health and Salt Creek Vet Clinic.

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