IN THIS ISSUE:

- Preparing for Calving Season
- Manure Applicator Certification
- Looking Back, Looking Ahead
  - Conferences Galore
  - Announcements and Updates

Preparing for Calving Season

By Chris Clark, ISU Extension and Outreach beef program specialist
As we move into the new year it will be worthwhile to spend a little time planning and preparing for the upcoming calving season. Management decisions made now can have a big impact on the success of the upcoming calving season and the following breeding season.

There is tremendous fetal growth during the third trimester of pregnancy, particularly during the last 45 days of pregnancy. Nutrient requirements of the cow will increase accordingly. Nutrient requirements will also increase with cold weather, wind, moisture, etc. Make sure that you are providing adequate nutrition to meet the high energy demands of fetal growth and winter weather. This point is particularly important this year following the drought of 2012. Some cows may have come into the winter thinner than usual. Some producers may not have the quantity or quality of winter feed that they usually do. Adequate nutrition is critical not only for the health and rebreeding success of the mother but also for the health and vigor of the calf.

One way to analyze nutritional status of the cow is to monitor body condition score (BCS). It is worthwhile to systematically and consistently evaluate body condition scores every two weeks in order to notice small changes in condition and hopefully prevent any severe loss of condition. Ideally cows should enter the calving season with a BCS of 5. For early calving cows and heifers (two and three year olds) it is usually recommended they enter the calving season with a BCS of 5.5 to 6. It is critical to assess BCS now and adjust nutrition accordingly. Nutritional demands will continue to increase through the third trimester of pregnancy and into early lactation. It will become more difficult and more expensive to improve body condition as they move later and later into pregnancy and as they enter early lactation.

Vaccinations are important to protect herd health and prevent illnesses, particularly reproductive and respiratory diseases. There are many different vaccines available and many different vaccination strategies depending on your situation. Some vaccinations are designed to be administered to the cow prior to calving in order to boost the antibody levels of the colostrum, effectively offering the calf more protection. Proper timing and administration of these vaccines will be very important. Work with your veterinarian to come up with a health management plan that makes sense for your herd.

Spend a little time this winter preparing your calving area and equipment. Make sure your calving facilities are clean, dry, and protected from the weather. Try to prepare some sort of
maternity pen with functional head-gate, crowd-gate, etc. to make things easier when you do have to assist with calving. Have plenty of bedding readily available. Have your veterinarian’s phone number readily available. Make a list of the necessary supplies and be sure to have everything on hand. Some important supplies include OB sleeves, chains or straps, calf jack, towels, halters, feeding tube, light source, OB lube, soap, water, bucket, calving book, etc. Finally, plan ahead for problems and unique situations. Consider how you might warm a cold calf, where you might house a calf with scours, where the veterinarian might be able to perform a Caesarean section, etc. A little planning can go a long way!

**Manure Applicator Certification required for confinement site operators**

*By Shawn Shouse, ISU Extension and Outreach agricultural engineering program specialist*

An increasing number of beef producers are finishing cattle in confinement buildings. Iowa law requires that if an animal feeding site has more than 500 animal units of confinement livestock capacity (all species combined), then manure from the confinement facilities must be handled, transported and applied by a certified manure applicator, and according to a manure management plan filed with the Iowa DNR.

Confined livestock are those housed completely under roof. Animal unit capacity is found by multiplying the maximum head capacity for each species by the appropriate animal unit factor (1.0 for beef and immature dairy animals, 1.4 for mature dairy, 0.4 for grow-finish swine, 0.1 for nursery swine).

Animal unit capacity for each species in confinement at the site is added together to get the combined confinement site animal unit capacity.

Manure applicator certification is required to handle, transport or apply manure from a qualifying
confinement site. Certified commercial manure applicators are people associated with a commercial manure service who handle, transport or apply manure for hire, often from multiple confinement sites. Certified confinement site applicators are those who are certified to handle, transport or apply manure from their own confinement site.

Manure applicators can obtain certification by paying appropriate fees and either passing a written examination administered by the Iowa DNR, or attending training sessions offered by ISU Extension staff. Training sessions are offered across Iowa in January and February.

For dates and locations of training sessions, and for more details on manure applicator certification and rules, contact your ISU Extension Ag Engineering specialist or see the manure applicator certification webpage.

Looking Back, Looking Ahead
By Dan Loy, IBC director

For many, the New Year is a time for both reflection on the year past as well as new beginnings in

**Conferences Galore**
January 19. Cornbelt Cow-Calf Conference. Bridge View Center, Ottumwa. $15 admission at the door.

**Announcements and updates**
Make plans now to attend Driftless Region Beef Conference at the Grand River Convention Center in Dubuque on Jan. 31-Feb.1.

Cooperative Extension folks in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin have teamed up to offer this conference.

Conservation of the soils and protection of the waters in the Driftless Region are best accomplished with much of this land seeded to forage production. That requires cattle
the form of resolutions.

News and issues related to the drought dominated the last 6 months of 2012. It is easy to forget that prior to that there was considerable discussion of herd expansion. Iowa producers appeared to be retaining more heifers and it appeared that the cattle cycle may be turning the corner, at least locally.

Feedlots have been challenged by high feed costs and feed availability challenges, but are adjusting feeder prices and putting an extra focus on efficiency.

So what challenges and opportunities will 2013 hold? This month the USDA

From feed and water options to cover crop possibilities, experts from universities and private industry in the Midwest will lead these sessions and offer producers valuable information to put into practice on their farms.

**January 22. Feedlot Forum.**
Terrace View Event Center, Sioux Center. $25 fee due by Jan. 16.

This year's program focuses on all things new, from animal welfare audits to feed processing methods to environmental inspections and verification programs.

**January 23. West Central Iowa Beef Cattle Forum.**
American Legion Hall, Arcadia. No charge when preregistered by Jan. 17. Call 800-888-1870.

The agenda offers general and breakout sessions, and the registration fee includes breaks and the evening meal. Early bird registration of $80 is due by Jan. 23. See the agenda and registration information on the conference website.

**Managing Through Stress: A Livestock Information Event**
set for Feb. 4 at 14 Iowa locations. ISU Extension and
will release its annual report on cattle numbers of all classes, which will give us an insight into just how much the drought has delayed cow herd expansion, the extent of heifer retention and herd culling, and the availability of feeder supplies. Look for Dr. Lee Schulz’s analysis of this report and its implications in his column next month in the “Iowa Cattleman” or the Iowa Beef Center’s electronic newsletter, “Growing Beef.”

Also, expect to hear more about sustainability in beef production during the coming year. Sustainability is increasingly being defined as systems that are economically (profitable), environmentally

The first ever West Central Iowa Beef Cattle Forum will offer producers and others in the beef industry to hear from experts on a variety of timely topics. From environmental issues and market outlook to housing and nutrition updates, the daylong program has something for everyone. This is organized by IBC, ISU Extension and Iowa Cattlemen’s Association.

January 29. 4-State Beef Conference. Armstrong Research Farm, Lewis, and Southwest Iowa Community College, Creston. $20 fee with reservations requested by Jan. 25.

Outreach and Iowa Farm Bureau Federation are teaming up to deliver current market and management information to Iowa livestock farmers in these challenging times.

The event starts at 10 a.m. with a morning general session delivered via the Web. Farmers will hear from leading experts on livestock and feed price outlook and strategy, weather outlook, financial strategies and managing the stress of farming in challenging times. After lunch, each site will have local presentations geared toward the challenges faced by a specific species of livestock – beef, swine or dairy. Afternoon sessions will be facilitated by ISU Extension and Outreach livestock specialists.

IFBF commodity services manager Ed Kordick said, “This information is vital for Iowa farmers right now because they are making 2013 livestock business decisions and there is a lot on the table for them. This event will provide timely information to
sustainable (protect soil and water resources) and socially (being a good neighbor,humanely treating animals) sustainable. Dr. Kim Stackhouse, director of sustainability research at the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, previewed a major study at the ICA convention last month. Expect to hear more about this effort as well as continued discussion of these factors—profitability and efficiency, environmental management and animal care.

Read the rest of this column on the IBC website.

Morning presenters are Chad Hart and Lee Schultz, ISU Extension economists; Elwynn Taylor, ISU Extension climatologist; and Mike Rosmann, agriculture behavioral health psychologist. Hart and Schultz will present 2013 feed and livestock price outlooks and strategies, and Taylor will give the weather outlook. Rosmann will speak about indicators of human stress. The seminar is free to farmers; there is no registration required.

The Iowa Beef Center drought resources web page is updated as resources are available.