

Pickens County Cattlemen's Association

Newsletter

Volume 12

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Calving Problems Discussed at October Meeting

by RD Morrison

The PCCA held a meeting at the Pickens County Career and Technology Center on October 6th. After a nice meal from Dave's of Berea, Area Livestock Agent Lindsey Craig led a discussion of calving problems and used the calving simulator for a hands on demonstration.

Dystocia is a term used to describe a difficult birth due to a strange position (i.e., breech, backward, upside down, etc.) Calves that are too large may be caused by a mismatch in genetics during the breeding season or by the mothers hips just too small. Sometimes, feeding a skinny cow during the last trimester causes problems as the calf gets a lot of the nourishment and, therefore, grows too big for the mother to easily deliver.

Lindsey describe the three phases of cattle birth. The first occurs with cervical dialation, usually 2 to 6 hours before the actual birth. Most of the time, this is not observed as the cow moves off by herself. Her behavior is different and she is sometimes agitated. At the end of stage one, the muscles relax around the tailhead.

At the second phase, the waterbag comes out. It is preferred that the calf is born within two hours of the wa-

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

terbag coming out, but it is usually about three hours. Heifers tend to take a little longer. She stated that as long as the cow is making progress, let her go unassisted.

The third stage includes the shedding of the placenta. This usually occurs 8 to 12 hours after the calf is born. The placenta is like a big wick for bacteria and she stressed that it should not be manually removed. You should consult your veterinarian as antibiotics may be needed.

Lindsey talked about the different forms of dystocia including calves that are in the breech position, upside down tucked limbs, or tucked head. The normal delivery position is in the 'diving presentation' - front legs and nose or head. The breech, or backward, position means the calf is butt first. Turning the calf around in the womb is very difficult, but if the back legs can be brought into the birth canal, the calf can be delivered backwards. You may have to roll the calf to prevent the hips from locking with the mother. In the upside down position, the calf's backbone is down. If the cow is laying down, the calf may be pulled up and out. If a front leg is tucked, cup the hoof with your hand to prevent damage to the mother and pull as in the 'diving presentation'. The calf may need to be pushed back in to allow room to work the leg up. She stressed not to pull a calf by one limb as all of the pressure is on the one limb and damage is easily done to it. Lindsey discussed the tools needed. OB chains, handles for pulling and a calf jack are highly recommended. Also, lubrication is a necessity.

The pregnant cow should be checked frequently, but allow her to work without interrupting. If the cow has stopped pushing or actively participating, you may need to help her and get the calf out. If you have to pull the calf, assess the situation. Is the calf alive? This can be ascertained by pinching the flesh between the hoof, pinching the tongue, or, if breech, checking the sphincter muscle. What position is the calf? Is it too big? Try to correct the posi-

(Continued on page 3)

tion. Work with the cow - pull when she pushes, rest when she rests. Always begin with the chains and handles. Use the calf jack if alone and have exhausted human abilities. Call the vet if the calf is too large for the birth canal and you have tried all possibilities. The vet should be contacted if the calf is in distress and you cannot get it out without causing damage to the calf or the cow. A Cesarean section may be the best option on exceptionally large calves. The veterinarian provides experience and an extra set of hands during a difficult birth. It is imperative to have a good vet / client relationship.

The meeting adjourned to the calving simulator, Margaret. Dr. Hupp demonstrated the proper application of the OB chains to the legs and Dr. Mullikin stressed the importance to place the chains on the top of the feet. Dr. Mullikin said that if you can only get one loop on the foot, place it close to the dewclaws. Then, pull and get more room to work, slide the loop up the leg and put the second loop at the dewclaws. This spreads out the pressure. Dr. Thompson said that a lot of calving problems may be avoided by looking at the Maternal Calving Ease EPD instead of the birth weight EPD. Donald Snow did an excellent job of pulling the calf. The discussing turned to getting the calf to take the first breath. Methods include: sticking hay up the calf's nose, sticking a needle in the nose, grabbing the calf by the back legs and slinging the mucus out. Dr. Mullikin gave some tips on identifying which feet are present. If it is the front feet, you can feel the knee - there is no knee on a back leg. He, also, said that if the head is tucked back, the OB chain or a calfsaver device can be used to turn the head. The OB chains go over the ears and into the mouth. The head can be pulled around.

Thanks to Area Livestock Agent Lindsey Craig for this very informative program and to PCCA Directors Dr. Harold Hupp, Dr. Carl Thompson, and Dr. Jim Mullikin for their input and expertise . It was a great meeting with a lot of interaction among the attendees. Thanks to all in attendance.

PCCA / SCCA Renewal Notices Due in Columbia Jan 1

By RD Morrison

The SCCA requires us to have our SCCA members list into the state office by January 1, 2016. All that have been received have been forwarded to the SCCA. However, if you have not renewed your SCCA membership, the SCCA will drop you from their roles the first week of January. If you have not renewed your PCCA membership, you will be dropped by the PCCA by the 15th of January.

The PCCA works hard to have informative meetings, to support our youth (Junior cattlemen, 4-H, FFA), and to promote beef (Azalea Festival). We send out a newsletter on our website (www.pickenscountycattle.com) or by snail mail to our members. We issue a directory of our members supported by the sale of advertising. We make DVD's of meetings in case you miss one. We have started a classified ad section the website so that members may sell equipment, cattle, farm items, etc.

If you haven't renewed, please do so immediately. The PCCA is a worthwhile organization - one of the best in the state. Talk to your neighbor and get him to join - invite him to a meeting. Hope to see you at an upcoming meeting.

Why Am I Feeding All This Hay?

By Chan Glidewell

With permission of the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation

How about this for a New Year's resolution? Feed less hay next winter. There is nothing you can do about your forage situation for the remainder of this winter, aside from selling cattle or buying more hay. However, if you start planning now, you can put yourself in a position to drastically reduce the amount of hay that you will need to feed next year.

Why do people rely so much on feeding hay in the winter? I

(Continued from page 4)

believe the answer is that they are overstocked. When you run more livestock than your property will support, you will run out of grass. If you are buying hundreds or thousands of tons of hay every year just to get your cattle through to spring, you are either overstocked or experiencing the effects of a terrible drought. Whatever the case, you are reducing your profit margin when you buy hay. In some cases this additional cost is warranted, but in most cases it is not.

Ideally, you should set your stocking rate at about 75-80 percent of your ranch's carrying capacity. Your carrying capacity should be determined by either using your county soil survey published by the USDA-NRCS (or on the Web at websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app) or by historic stocking data for your ranch. A Noble Foundation pasture and range consultant can help you determine yours.

The county soil survey method is based on the types of soils on your property and your forage base for those soils. This tool will have vegetation productivity values for below-average and above-average rainfall years, but I want you to focus on the values listed for the elusive "normal" rainfall year. Using the productivity values for a "normal" year, you can determine your carrying capacity for your property. If you are using historic stocking data for your ranch, a 2008 *Ag News and Views* article by Hugh Aljoe will help you determine if you are overstocked ("[Top Eight Spring Pasture Management Considerations](#)"; April 2008).

Once you know the carrying capacity for your place, don't stock your pastures at 100 percent of that value. Instead, back it off to about 75-80 percent of the total to allow yourself some flexibility. If you happen to find yourself in a drought situation, your culling protocol won't be as ruthless as it would be if you were stocked to the maximum. On the other hand, if you find yourself with more grass than your

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

less-than-maximum-sized cow herd can consume, you can bring in some summer stockers to diversify your operation and convert some of that excess forage to a marketable product (beef). Or, in a cattle market like we saw in the fall of 2008, you can retain your weaned calves for a few extra months, put some cheap gain on them and capitalize on the prices that will be paid for those larger calves in January, February or March compared to smaller, freshly weaned calves.

Finally, the easiest way that I know of to reduce the amount of hay that you feed is to stockpile forage in the late summer and early fall. This practice is as simple as designating a bermudagrass pasture that has the appropriate acreage (1 acre per cow per month of grazing) and grazing it short by early August (not a problem for most operations). Then pull the cattle off, apply 50 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre (if the price is right) and let the fall rains come. If all goes well, you could have belly-high grass of high quality that your cows will harvest for you by early November. For maximum efficiency, utilize electric wire and "strip-graze" this forage. Many people have success with this type of system well into January before the quantity and quality become limiting.

Upstate Livestock Speaks on What Buyers Are Looking For

By RD Morrison

Col. Darren Carter and Marty Fulghum, with Upstate Livestock, hosted the meal and gave a very informative talk on what buyers are looking for at the sale. Marty began by saying that cattle prices are pretty good, not as good as they once were (and probably never will be), but pretty good. This is due to a strong US dollar and the fact that prices were so good that they paid a high cost and that feed prices are low so the cattle were held longer at the feed yard and fed to a higher weight. With too much meat

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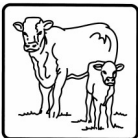
in the pipeline, supply and demand kicked in and prices went down at the auction.

Darren spoke on maximizing profit through moderation and conformity. The buyers have a split second to decide to bid on your cattle—about 20 seconds per calf. The calves are profiled during that split second by muscle, frame and color. You can have the best genetics in the world and, if there is no order to the order buyers, they do not bring good money. You cannot feed a calf to grow muscle. A good calf (1) has no discount, whereas an inferior calf (2) will be discounted 10 to 15 cents. Holsteins (3) are discounted 40 to 60 cents. Jersey or Jersey crosses (4) are discounted \$1.

Frame size is important to buyers and there is not much differentiation between medium and large. Large frame calves will feed out to choice at about 1250 pounds with heifers at 1150. Medium will go to 1100 with heifers at about 1000. Small will go to 1000 pounds with heifers at 900. Because of cheap feed, some large calves have been fed to 1800 pounds.

The color of the cattle will give the buyers a breed perception (a profile) Herefords have a bad perception because they are short. Black and black baldies are preferred and can get a premium. Color doesn't tell the buyer what breed the calf is but rather a perception of the breed based on the profile. Full or fleshy cattle are discounted about 12% because of their pot belly or gut whereas gaunt or hard calves can receive an 18 cent premium because they are taller, thicker and can gain weight easier.

Value added operations include selling steers, not bulls. Although there is no differentiation between bulls and steers at or below 400 pounds, there is a big deduction at 700 or 800 pounds. Another value added operation is



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grouping like calves. Weaning calves for at least 30 days will allow them an easier time to go onto feed. A good vaccination program will help insure that the calves will make the trip to the feed yard in good shape. Lastly, do not grow horns. Horns are discounted heavily as the calves will bruise their bunkmates at the feed yard.

The market changes seasonally and so do the orders to the buyers. The buyers reputation is on the line when buying cattle. He is driven by commissions.

In conclusion, some factors to increase profits include increasing muscle thickness fro 5 to 6, cross breed for hybrid vigor, castrate bull calves, maintain a good herd health program, and maintain average fill and body condition. Middle of the road cattle will appeal to more buyers. Bull selection is the best way to improve your calf crop.

Thanks to Upstate Livestock for this imformative meeting.

December Meeting Honors Elected Officials

By RD Morrison

The PCCA met at the McKissick Center in Liberty, SC. The meal was prepared by the Pickens County Meals on Wheels and was very good. A good crowd was on hand including several elected officials. Agriculture is the number one industry in the state and the PCCA believes that good communications is the key to agricultures continued strong showing. The PCCA sends a meeting notice to all county, state and federal elected officials that serve Pickens County to let them know that we are here and we vote. Several of our elected officials are, in fact members. The include, Sen. Larry Martin, Representatives David Hiott and Gary Clary, Councilman Randy Crenshaw and Sheriff Rick Clark. SC Representatives David Hiott and Gary Clary were on hand and spoke a bit to the members. Mr. Hiott is the chair of the House Ag Committee and is very in tune with agriculture.

Thanks to all of our elected officials.

OSHA Quick Card - Protecting Farm Workers from Tractor and Harvester Hazards

[Wwww.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov)

Tractor incidents are the leading cause of death and injury on farms. Farm workers are especially at risk from rollovers, tipping and highway incidents.

Employers and supervisors should take steps to ensure a safe work environment by providing:

- Safe and adequately maintained equipment
- Proper supervision and training
- An emergency first aid plan (i.e., each vehicle with a first aid kit and a fire extinguisher)

To prevent injuries, train workers to:

- Inspect farm vehicles for safety guards, seat belts and rollover protection systems (ROPS) before driving
- Check that the slow moving vehicle (SMV) emblem is clean, visible and not faded
- Avoid traveling at night and during bad weather or low visibility
- Watch traffic patterns, obey speed limits and avoid highways during busy travel times
- Use the tractor's platform to enter and exit
- Be aware of overhead power lines, people, and uneven ground
- Carry passengers only when there is appropriate seating with seat belts
- Take extra precautions when driving on steep slopes and downhill
- Always shut down the tractor before climbing down

Safe work practices

- On highways, farm vehicles should display flashing lights and reflectors, or consider escort vehicles.
- Provide workers with emergency phones numbers and the address of the closest hospital.

PCCA Website Now Offers Classified Ads For Members

By RD Morrison

The PCCA Board of Directors has shown great vision by starting the website, www.pickenscountycattle.com. After a slow start, it was running at 40,000 hits per year for the first year. Now, it has 130,000 hits per year. We added the sale of advertising on the site to defray the cost and keep membership dues low. Meeting notices are listed on the calendar page and the newsletters are posted on the Newsletter page. Our members (and anybody else) can get this kind of info online, thereby, saving the PCCA a lot of money.

The website continues to grow with the PCCA. We are starting a new feature - classified ads. These are free to members. The classifieds are intended to list farm items (cattle, tractors, equipment, etc.) and not 'yard sale items' (lamps, free kittens, bowling balls, etc). With the number of hits that the site receives, this feature should help our members move unwanted or no longer needed items.

Check it out!

*Thoughts from the President -
David Elias*



Well, whether we like or not, another year has come and gone. It really is hard to believe. I hope everyone has had a " Great Holiday Season ". As the new year starts, make sure we remember to think safety in our everyday adventures.

With this new year also comes Resolutions, and Challenges. I would like to challenge all of our members to make the PCCA a Great Association for all of us. At-

tend all our meetings for fellowship and knowledge from all of the key speakers that we line up for the year. If we are doing something you don't like, or if you have some ideas, let one of us know and we can make changes and implement new ideas. This association is for all of us. We would also like to grow. If any of your neighbors or friends that have cattle, invite them to come to our meetings and join. If you know for sure they will attend, when you call in for attendance add them to the count. We would also like to put faces with names, so plan to come to the next meeting for pictures for the new and upcoming directory.

Speaking of our Directory, its getting better and better each year. Make sure you keep this handy and use the advertisers for all your needs. Its becoming a great tool. Another great tool we have is our Web page . We are receiving more and more hits each day. We would like for this to be come larger and larger each year. One way to do this is to have a fresh new look monthly. We encourage you to write up a brief summary of your operation along with pictures so we can put it on the web for the month.

Be Safe and have fun this new and upcoming year.

PCCA Synopsis Report	Donation	\$2395.90
for period as of 1/23/15 -	Sam's Club	\$45.00
PCCA Balance as of 1/23/15:	Postage	\$575.00
\$13404.97	Printing	\$1357.95
INCOME:	Azalea Festival	\$35.00
Ads	Meals	\$3504.34
Dues	Website	\$620.00
Reimbursed	Office Supplies	\$211.93
EXPENSES:	Computer	\$400.00
SCCA dues	Squeeze chute	\$119.90



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