

Grant Dewell, DVM, Veterinary Diagnostic and Production Animal Medicine,
Iowa State University

New year, new possibilities

As we begin a new year, it is an opportune time to evaluate our plans for the cow herd in the coming twelve months.

For spring calving herds, the current calving season is already determined from last year's breeding season, but other management procedures can still be modified. Some important events that will occur in the coming year include being ready for calving, bull selection, breeding season timing, and weaning. Once these events have been set, then other related events such as vaccinations, estrus synchronization, etc. can be planned.

Calving season

Although it is only January, calving season is approaching soon. Third trimester cows need special nutritional consideration to assure that the fetus develops appropriately and the cow is in good body condition. Two critical areas associated with calving females is to make sure that heifers are capable of rebreeding so they can stay in the cow herd, and that new-born calves receive adequate colostrum to be able to thrive.

Bull selection

The breeding season may seem far away but it is a good idea to plan bull selection early.

Critically evaluate your current bull inventory, and determine how many new bulls you will need and what genetic traits are needed.

If bull needs are determined early, you can carefully select a bull from multiple sources rather than being in a crunch during planting season to find a bull.

Breeding season

A properly planned breeding season is critical to having a productive cow herd. It is a good idea to evaluate the timing of the breeding season on a regular basis to make sure that calving happens at a convenient time (avoid weather issues, not during planting, when grass is available, etc.).

Many farmers have had problems in the past few years with heat issues during the breeding season. In these cases, it may be beneficial to move the breeding season to a different time but before you do, determine the viability of moving the breeding season and the subsequent calving season. Once the timing of the breeding season is determined, you can plan pre-breeding vaccinations, estrous synchronization and AI can be organized.

Weaning

Finally, plan your weaning to appropriately meet production and marketing situa-

tions. Production considerations such as calf age, pasture availability and pre-conditioning/backgrounding plans, as well as calf prices and retained ownership options can all influence your weaning plans.

Considering what potential issues may arise now, can allow you to plan accordingly and make any adjustments well in advance. Multiple resources are available to help you evaluate and enhance your production plans.

The Iowa Beef Center has resources and extension specialists available to answer questions and assist you as you map out your plans for the coming year.

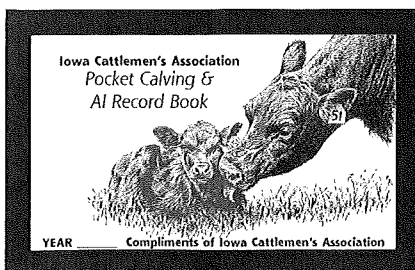
Order calving books now

Records are a key to planning for a successful calving season.

You can order Pocket Calving and AI Record Books from the Iowa Cattlemen's Association for \$1 each. (You can also buy them at the ICA booth during the Beef Expo in Des Moines, Feb. 9-16.)

Each book includes pages for birth and weaning information, as well as breeding and preg check details for 100 cows. There is also a gestation table to estimate calving dates.

Call 515-296-2266, or email Kellie@iabef.org to order the books.

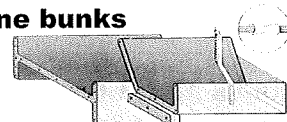


Huber Slats

1497 - 170th St. • Wellman, IA 52356
Bill Huber • Ph. 319-646-2907

Fenceline bunks

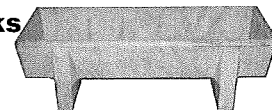
Key Benefits



- Acts as both a feeder & a fence for human protection
- Rounded interiors reduce feed waste
- Camphor edges reduce neck abrasions
- Bunks align to form any length
- Bunks are poured with 7,500 psi concrete
- Reinforced with solid rebar frame welded in place
- Optional concrete ends with drain holes available
- Features recessed post to prevent cattle from rubbing on post or cable
- Cable shim reduces wear & lengthens the life of cable
- Concrete step poured in the end of each bunk provides support for adjacent bunk
- Optional end steps are also available

Yard bunks

Key Benefits



- Allows livestock to feed from both sides and ends.
- Rounded interiors reduce feed waste and prevent damage from freezing.
- Rounded camphor edges reduce neck abrasions.
- Solid concrete ends feature drain holes. Drain holes may be plugged for use as a waterer.
- Concrete footing poured on the end of each bunk keeps feed at the appropriate height.
- Bunks are poured with 7,500 psi concrete using 3/8-inch aggregate reinforced with solid 1/2" rebar on 6"x 6" wire mesh squares.