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00;00;16;13 - 00;00;46;23
Unknown
Well, welcome back to the Pasture to Profit podcast. I'll be your host today. I'm Travis Taylor, CSU extension livestock specialist for the Golden Plains area. And I'm again joined in our 45th episode by my colleague Scott Stinnett, who is the livestock and youth specialist out of the Kit Carson County office in the Golden Plains area. And Scott, one of the things we talk about is trying to make sure that we're having a quality plan.

00;00;46;24 - 00;01;17;21
Unknown
And although it's calving season or just about in the middle or starting for some of the individuals that we have here in the Golden Plains area, I think it's time to start planning for the next calving season, which means we're going to plan our calving dates for 2027, believe it or not, prior to turnout. So, Scott, what are some things we need to think about when we start deciding when we are going to calve?

00;01;17;27 - 00;01;44;18
Unknown
Well, Travis, it's always kind of seems odd that when you're in the middle of one calving season, you need to be thinking about the next year's calving season. But because we have such a short window after we're done calving and before we either AI or Turnbull's out what we need to get done. So planning now for breeding season by planning for what our calving season is going to look like in 2027 is kind of our imperative.

00;01;44;18 - 00;02;04;20
Unknown
So kind of three questions I think most producers need to to run by themselves. And three things for us to kind of talk about today. First of all, when do you want to start your calving season? When do you. When's that first calf? When do you expect that first one to hit the ground? How long do you want your calving season to be?

00;02;04;22 - 00;02;26;15
Unknown

And then finally, if we're dealing with some bread heifers, what are we going to do. And some considerations on those heifers. So let's start out with the first one, which is, you know, when do we want calving season to start. Most producers have kind of a traditional calving season, you know, and it's all dependent on probably three main things in your operation.

00;02;26;19 - 00;02;48;25
Unknown
And those factors would be the weather conditions that you deal with during calving, your forage availability and how you're going to utilize that if you are and then your marketing strategy. So let's start out with just the first one there, which is weather. And Lord knows this has been a weird, weird winter in High Plains here right now.

00;02;48;27 - 00;03;13;10
Unknown
Today here we are in mid-March and it's 80 degrees on spring break, usually mid-March. 80 degrees in spring break means that I've left the state and gone south, you know, taking the kids back home to Oklahoma or places farther south than that to find 80 degrees. But here we are. So it's odd, but our our normal seasons, we have some folks that like to carve maybe late January and February.

00;03;13;12 - 00;03;31;11
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They like to maybe carve out on corn stalks because they'll deal with extreme cold, but it's usually dry. Sure, if you went stocks, so you might hit that one, 1 or 2 snowstorms during stock show. That kind of messes things up. But but even that is usually a dry snow. It's not that cold wet snow. It's a dry snow.

00;03;31;13 - 00;03;56;06
Unknown
And so we got some folks that weather wise prefer late January or February. We've got some folks then that are kind of this time of year. You know, they like February, they like March because they it's not quite as cold as likely to get cold. And we do have some ups and downs this time of year where if we get a snow storm, the snow is not going to usually lay on the ground for the whole rest of winter.

00;03;56;06 - 00;04;14;14
Unknown
It's going to be there and it's going to start melting in. We've had some sunshine, we've had some warming of the soil and it'll melt in and go away a little quicker. But then there's others that prefer that April May timeframe, maybe even into June, because we don't want to deal with any cold we can deal with wet as long as we're not cold.

00;04;14;16 - 00;04;34;08
Unknown
And so if we get some good, which we're all crossing our fingers and praying and everything else, that we get some rain here pretty soon. But you know, if we get some rain, we get some moisture in our normal time

frames of May through early June. And before we hit the dry out there in the middle of summer, it's not bad calving because it's not cold, so we're not cold and wet.

00;04;34;11 - 00;05;13;27
Unknown
But to go along with that in those environmental considerations, when you want to carve some other things, might go back to that forage availability. You know, if you're early Carver in January, February, March, there's not really any forage growth whatsoever. You're you're out. Maybe you're out on cornstalks and that's where you like to carve. Maybe you're on, you know, kind of a dry lot or a calving lot where you didn't plan on forage utilization, but with the highest nutritional needs of the cow being in that last 60 days or so of her gestation, plus that first 6 to 8 weeks of lactation after she calves.

00;05;13;29 - 00;05;36;14
Unknown
A lot of people like to carve in April, May. And when the forages start turning around and start growing, and the nutritional value in our forages on our native pastures really starts to go up. And so we're not having to supplement those cows for what their nutritional needs. Well, I think that brings us to to the point, right.

00;05;36;16 - 00;06;15;08
Unknown
We're we're looking to economically utilize our forages to the greatest ability. And when that cows hitting peak lactation and has a positive energy gain in that summertime calving period, hopefully those guys were hitting quality nutrition level for that cow when we're trying to be at peak lactation and also that time of year, I think you had some data that suggested cows try to breed back, usually 45 to 75 days after they've carved, depending on how stressful that event was on them.

00;06;15;10 - 00;06;41;10
Unknown
Correct. And economically, we can pull up lots of studies that show us that the cheapest feed available for our cattle is always native forage grazed pasture. Anytime we have to supplement with grain or any other type of grain supplement grain based supplement that just it's more expensive. So now there's some trade offs on this stuff and we'll we'll get into that a little bit better a little later.

00;06;41;10 - 00;07;05;00
Unknown
But it has to do with marketing and your marketing plan when you want to market, you know, here in the High Plains with most of pretty much when you kind of get from I-70 north, most of our northern producers, we're going to be fall sellers, right? We're going to be spring and fall sellers. We don't tend to do much fall calving and try to keep baby calves alive through a really cold winter.

00;07;05;03 - 00;07;23;06
Unknown

So the big run is there, you know, in October, first part of November before Thanksgiving is when the big run hits. And if that's when you want to market, when everybody else is there, you know, I want to hit market. When the buyers are at market, that's then that may dictate when you're calving season is going to start.

00;07;23;08 - 00;07;53;08
Unknown
If you put off your calving because you want to take care of, take advantage of forage availability. You're also may have to feed a little bit more when it comes weaning time, but when you turn around, you're going to be marketing calves after that big fall run into a time. Whether you're getting after the first of the year, maybe you're going to market in February, maybe even March, some calves where the supply is low, but the demand is the same as it's always been.

00;07;53;12 - 00;08;17;13
Unknown
So traditionally, looking at the economics of things, there's a trade off there that you may have to feed a little bit those winged calves, but you're going to sell them for a little bit higher price than what they were necessarily back during the fall run when supply was higher. Absolutely. So the the the other question that you had posed to us was how long should our calving season be?

00;08;17;13 - 00;08;55;14
Unknown
And I know everybody has a different aspect to that. Can you share with us some of the pros and cons of a longer versus a shorter calving season? Well, I think there's a lot of things to it. Let's start with the financial part of it. The more uniform group of calves that you can market, no matter what size your marketing amount, if this this last year and a half have has kind of taught us two years has kind of taught us that sometimes we can get more money for little ones than we can for bigger ones on a per head basis with what we saw in the markets for 400 weight gas bringing per head

00;08;55;14 - 00;09;21;14
Unknown
more than six and 700 pound calves. But with that being said, we need to come back to the idea of when we're going to market these calves having a uniform group so that the bigger the group, the easier it is for the buyer to bid on that, and especially if they're all very uniform in their quality. So having a condensed versus an extended calving season is usually a little bit more advantageous to us on a, on a lot of respects.

00;09;21;17 - 00;09;46;20
Unknown
Number one, if we can let's see, 60 days is kind of our cutoff there. If we're 60 days or less we're going to call that a more condensed. If we're over 60 days, we're definitely getting into kind of an extended calving season. And so the first thing when we're having calving season is we've got we're going to have labor costs, checking cows, looking for issues, making sure we're finding all the babies, making sure everybody's paired

up once they're born, making sure mamas are doing a good job taking care of their calves.

00;09;46;22 - 00;10;11;27
Unknown
If we can shorten the number of days we're doing that, we're going to save ourselves a lot of time and labor costs there. If our calving grounds are not necessarily right up next to the house, you know, fuel and other things, trying to transport ourselves to and from, we're saving a lot of money there by condensing that that down as well as, you know, the uniformity of the calves, if we're under 60 days, uniformity, if we're at 45 days, that would be really great.

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Unknown
We can get it down as little as 30 if we really want to. We may have to take advantage of some reproductive technologies like estrus synchronization, get all our cows synced up so that they're all going to start hopefully cycling at the same time. We may add AI to that, or if not, at least if everything's synced up when we turn the Bulls out, the Bulls should find a group of cows and heifers that are ready to go, ready for breeding.

00;10;38;24 - 00;11;00;06
Unknown
So there's always some trade offs. You can make it a little bit more uniform group by using some technologies like that, but you're going to have some labor and some other pharmaceutical costs doing that. But hopefully instead of having calves that are spread out over 60 plus days and every day is 2 pounds, so 120 pounds difference in those calves.

00;11;00;08 - 00;11;26;21
Unknown
At 60 days you're down to 30 or 45 days. So we're only talking 60 pounds to 90 pounds, which can be a lot easier for buyers to deal with as far as breaking it into maybe two groups of calves to sell versus at 160 or 120 pounds on 60 days or more than we may be busting groups of calves into 3 or 4 groups, which will kind of make it a little more difficult on the on the marketing side.

00;11;26;21 - 00;11;54;07
Unknown
And you've seen that working at the sale of arms. Yeah, absolutely. I think that that's a huge factor. And particularly for those of us in our area, those producers that maybe have other jobs and they're raising cattle as a supplemental source of income, or they're raising cattle and have a job as a supplemental source of income. A shorter calving season definitely has advantages for their labor.

00;11;54;09 - 00;12;18;13
Unknown
It also, like you said, when I have a smaller number of cows and I'm getting down under 100, where I only have 50 head of steers to sell, if I can sell those in two groups versus three smaller groups, I think that's

a huge advantage when you see it at the sale barn, or when you're trying to put a load of cattle together to ship on a truck for a video market.

00;12;18;16 - 00;12;40;22
Unknown
Yeah, let's let's face it, cattle buyers, if we're going to a market of sale, barn cattle buyers are just like you and I. They want to get their job done as quickly and efficiently as possible. If they can buy less, group less groups of cattle to start filling their orders, instead of having to sit there for a longer amount of time and go through more and more small groups at the sale barn, that's going to make them happier.

00;12;40;22 - 00;13;08;17
Unknown
They're going to give it a little bit more to get that done. But along with that, one of the considerations we need to come to is what we're going to do with our heifers and heifers are always fun because heifers are doing two things at once when we get a heifer bred. She is growing a calf just like our mature cows are, but she's also trying to develop and mature herself, and that puts a little extra strain on nutrition.

00;13;08;24 - 00;13;40;12
Unknown
That puts an extra strain physiologically on her to be able to recuperate from Kabi. So we're friends up at the Beef Research Technologies out of out of Canada. They've done some really great research, and at one of their symposiums they had a presentation talking about how quickly estrus will come back after calves are born. And as you mentioned earlier, with mature cows at 45 to 70 days is the range.

00;13;40;12 - 00;14;02;21
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So, you know, if you pick 50, 55 days for cows to come back, that's not a big deal. You know, 280, 85 days of calving plus another 55 on top. We fall weight right under our 365 days to have one calf every year. No problem. But with heifers, the consideration is for them to recuperate from that first calving.

00;14;02;21 - 00;14;24;27
Unknown
If it's a good calving for them, a good experience, low birth weight, no issues with dystocia or any other problems that go along with first carvings, they may not come back in on average from 70 to 120 days is the range. So if you kind of split that in the middle of you're around 95, 97 days. So that's quite a bit of extra time.

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Unknown
So one of the things we might suggest producers need to think about is we need to get these heifers bred earlier. And we're talking 30 days plus before we even start breeding our cows to give them kind of a running head start. Now the nice thing is heifers are open. They've not been bred, so they're not like a cow.

00;14;47;01 - 00;15;07;27
Unknown
We can't it's hard to move a cow at 30 days. But with heifers we can we can start them 30 days earlier. But the big keys are going to be some of our, our definite old school keys. And you and I kind of talked about this on the side of just random things we talk about. The old rule of thumb is, you know, 60 to 65% of their mature body weight.

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So if you if they're your own heifers and you're retaining mints, pretty easy to know that, hey, these heifers came out of 1,500 pound cows. And so at, at breeding time, they need to be 60, 65% of their mature weight. They need to be hitting around that 1,000 pound mark. If you're going out and buying heifers open heifers, you need to know the age.

00;15;30;04 - 00;15;49;07
Unknown
You need to kind of estimate their what size the cows they came out of. Those are questions you really need to ask. You know, that's some information you may not get if you're trying to buy heifers at a sale barn or through a livestock auction. But if you're trying to buy them private treaty, you know, you can ask, well, how big are the cows?

00;15;49;10 - 00;16;13;24
Unknown
You know, what should I expect? You know, are these girls going to need to be 1,000 pounds? They need to be 900. They need to be 1100. How big are they going to be when it's they're hitting at about 14 months of age where they should hit full maturity. They should be reproductively available to start being bread. And, you know, the other thing is body condition score.

00;16;13;26 - 00;16;43;02
Unknown
And we've hammered on body condition score before. But that five six range man that's the magic number on our cows when they carve. If they're cabinet sixes they should come right back into estrus in that 45 to 70 day window. No problem. But with our heifers that may be a little bit more of a challenge. We may have to supplement supplementary feed those heifers because again, they're trying to grow a calf internally as well as mature their own body.

00;16;43;10 - 00;17;04;24
Unknown
So you can add a higher percentage nutritional need there because they're not just trying in that last 60 days of gestation to grow that calf. They're also trying to help finish mature their own body and structure. So let's give those heifers a run and start. Let's give them an extra 30 days or more head start a breeding before we start breeding our cows.

00;17;04;27 - 00;17;33;26
Unknown

I think that's wise. I also think it it does help us get back into that grouped up, more uniform calf size, because usually our first calf heifers, those calves aren't growing quite as fast as our mature cows. So if we look at that coming in and you are calving heifers, you can get those calves a few extra days to put on a few more pounds and be more uniform into that group of chaos that you have coming in there.

00;17;33;28 - 00;17;57;09
Unknown
I think it does give you time to pay a little extra attention. And maybe we know calving first calf heifers usually requires a little more time and labor than a mature cowherd, so you're also focusing that time and effort on a fewer number of cattle in your herd. So there's some significant advantages to starting those heifers 30 days early and ahead of your cows.

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Right. And another thing, no matter whether it's heifers or cows that we we really need to look at, and we touched on this in our last podcast, was that gestational length. You know, you can plan for the when our first calving day is going to be. But a lot of times it sneaks up on you. I had one that snuck up on me.

00;18;15;01 - 00;18;32;14
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We were planning on moving cows. We had a little snowstorm. We got delayed a week and well, we'll be okay. We'll get. These girls are just moving ten miles down the road, and sure enough, we go out there to load it. And I've got a bunch of bread cows and one calf. Absolutely. They got here a little bit early.

00;18;32;14 - 00;18;56;22
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So again, our from our last podcast, we're seeing some new research coming out that that gestational length, the old two 85th May be a little long. 283 it might be great for the overall United States cowherd, but some folks are finding 280 is more the correct number for them to use. And then plus or minus ten days on either side of that.

00;18;56;22 - 00;19;26;13
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So 270 to 290 before those guys really start hitting the ground. So look at your data, especially if you're using AI, especially if you're using ester synchronization and turning bulls out, come up with an estimated gestational length for your herd. If you're an AI herd and you control a lot of that stuff, and you know exactly when those AI babies are born, you can see from AI date to birth date exactly taking that average.

00;19;26;13 - 00;19;56;11
Unknown
And yeah, maybe you're 281, maybe you're 282, maybe you're 279. If you're using bulls and you're just kind of turning things out and you've just got to kind of a window there of, hey, I've had a calving window of 60

days, so I'm still good. But no, you know, the past couple of days or a couple of years, we're getting extra days in there and we're we're expecting 60 days, but I've got a range anywhere from 65 to 75 days, depending on, you know, the year and the conditions.

00;19;56;11 - 00;20;34;00
Unknown
So using your own data from your curds on your calving dates back to your breeding dates, and coming up with a herd gestational average is probably going to do you as much good as anything just using the random iron book, you know, 280 to 5 to 283 days may not suit you. Yeah. I'm going to give a shout out to one of my former colleagues, John, who after our last podcast and inspired him to go look at his AI dates and those gestation periods on his cattle that were aged and on their cows.

00;20;34;03 - 00;20;59;04
Unknown
It was 279 days that he found from the AI date when he knew they were bred, that they carved with those. So I think it's something that we're investigating need to look at. But that data was suggest that we have shortened that gestation period. So don't get caught in that snowstorm out behind the barn, not having them close enough to where you need them when it comes time.

00;20;59;04 - 00;21;35;29
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So yeah, I mean, we all love to see us know storm right about now, wouldn't we? But yeah, let's not be planning our calving to be unexpected. Let's plan our calving to be as expected as it can be. And so looking at those three things as setting your calving dates and planning your calving based on when do you want to carve, how long have a season you want to have, and doing some things to help make sure that our heifers calve on time and can breed back in a timely manner so that as they become mature cows in our heart, that they're going to fit right into our calving plans in the future is going

00;21;35;29 - 00;22;01;07
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to be real important. Yeah. And I think you hit on it earlier, The Economist and you brought out that it really does lend to our marketing plan as we go forward. So. Well, I think that wraps up this episode of the Pasture to Profit podcast. If you listeners have a topic that you'd like to see on here or something that you would like us to visit about, please feel free to contact me again.

00;22;01;07 - 00;22;29;04
Unknown
I'm at the Yuma County office at (970)332-4151, or you can email Travis.Taylor@colostate.edu and Scott, if they'd like to follow up with you on this topic, how do we catch up with you? Well, I'm here in the Burlington, Colorado office for Kit Carson County. You can call me here at (719)346-5571 or my email is Scott.Stinnett@colostate.edu

00;22;29;04 - 00;22;42;14

Unknown
That's STINNETT at ColoState.edu. Well, thank you all for tuning in. And we hope to see you back here on our next Pasture to Profit podcast.

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