

## Shortening the Breeding Season

Beef producers should consider shortening the breeding season for their herd. A shorter breeding season can simplify management and improve returns.

Shortening the breeding season has several advantages. Having all calves born during a relatively short time increases the uniformity of the calf crop. With all calves similar in age it allows management practices to be performed all at one time rather than having to perform them two or more times during the year. Calves will also be more uniform in size, thus increasing marketing opportunities. With all calves being born during a specific calving season it is much easier to identify those cows that are slow or non breeders.

Two disadvantages that must be addressed include providing a bull lot and moving some cows to a new breeding season. It is advantageous to construct a bull lot to keep the bull. He does not need to be placed where he can get out and go back to the cows. Some cows will lose production time as they are moved to a new breeding season. This can be minimized with a planned program implemented over a three year period.

Several methods can be used to move cows to a shorter breeding season. The secret is to shorten the breeding season over a period of years rather than in one year. An example program for moving to a January to March calving season is presented below.

In year one the bull is pulled out of the pasture on August 15 and not put back with the cows until January 1. In year two the bull is removed from the cows on August 1 and put back in on February 1. The third year the bull is pulled on July 15 and kept out until March 1. Following this the breeding season runs from March 1 to July 1 each year.

This approach moves the cows slowly without losing a whole calf crop. Cows that do not fit into this program should be culled.

Moving to a shorter breeding season is not extremely difficult, however, it does take a major commitment. Producers must stay focused and keep reminding themselves of the benefits that they will receive when the plan is accomplished.

For additional information on shortening the breeding season or other topics related to beef production, contact the local Extension office.

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