

Time to Prep: Cattle Breeding Season is Around the Corner

Hello Judith Basin County and Beyond,

As spring begins to settle into Judith Basin County and calving season starts to wind down, it's time to start thinking ahead to the upcoming breeding season. Whether you're running a large herd or managing a smaller operation, taking a few proactive steps now can set the stage for a productive and profitable calving season next year. In this brief update, we'll touch on key areas of preparation, from bull readiness and cow body condition to synchronization programs and artificial insemination (AI) planning.

Bull Breeding Soundness Exams

Before turning your bulls out into your cow herds, make sure to schedule a Breeding Soundness Exam (BSE) on all bulls. It is critical to complete this exam every year before the breeding season to make sure your bulls are physically capable of mounting and breeding your cows in addition to being fertile. Even a proven bull can come up short after a tough winter- it's better to find out now than during next year's calving season.

- Schedule your BSE at least 30 days before turnout.
- Check for lameness, testicle size, and semen quality.
- Keep an eye on younger bulls or new additions to ensure adequate libido is observed.
- Follow proper bull-to-cow ratios: 1:30 for mature bulls, 1:20 for yearling bulls.

Cow Body Condition Scores (BCS)

Days to first estrous after the postpartum period in cattle can be greatly affected by cow BCS. Cows should ideally have a BCS of 5 or 6 going into the breeding season as undernourished cows can take a longer time to start cycling after parturition, which leads to a delayed time in breeding and a later calving season.

- Consider supplemental feed if pasture growth is delayed.
- Provide additional energy to first-calf heifers as they go through their first lactation and second breeding season.
- See [Body Condition Scores - Extension Beef Cattle Program | Montana State University](#) for more information about BCS.

Synchronization and Artificial Insemination (AI)

If you are planning on artificially inseminating your herds this year, it's important to ensure you have all the materials and a proper estrous synchronization program that meets your operation's needs.

- Synchronization protocols can be labor intensive, ensuring you have enough help throughout the process.
- Plan your calendar. Many synchronization protocols are time sensitive, reach out to Sidney at the extension office if interested in covering the various protocols you can use!
- Buy your materials. Confirm semen availability and storage if using AI. For synchronization protocols, ensure you have CIDR's in addition to the proper hormone injections given throughout your protocol (Lutalyse, Factrel, etc.).

A little preparation this breeding season whether you're syncing your cows or going the traditional route can set your herd up for a tight, early calving season which can boost pounds at weaning and uniformity in your herds. If you have any questions regarding bull preparation, nutritional management, or synchronization protocols, don't hesitate to reach out:

Sidney Stratton – Judith Basin County Extension Agent

Phone: 406-566-2277 Ext. 7

Email: sidney.stratton@montana.edu

**Judith Basin County
Extension Office**

Montana State University,
U.S. Department of
Agriculture and Montana
Counties Cooperating.
MSU Extension is an
equal opportunity/
affirmative action provider
of educational outreach.

Courthouse
P.O. Box 427
Stanford, MT 59479-0427
www.msuxextension.org

Tel (406) 566-2277
ext. 104, 105
Fax (406) 566-2211
Email judithbasin@montana.edu