UNIVERSITY OF
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Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences

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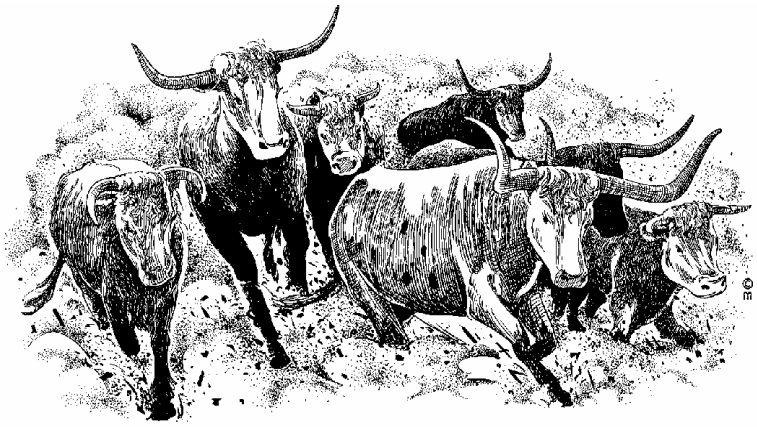

MARION COUNTY LIVESTOCK NEWS

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HorseQuest.info
Southern Region Equine Knowledge Base
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

information provided by: Southern Region EQUINE Extension Specialist

www.HorseQuest.info is an interactive site established to provide clientele and other Internet visitors a source of reliable and up to date horse information through a knowledge base of commonly asked questions that have science-based, peer reviewed answers. HorseQuest.info allows you to ask questions or search for questions and answers asked by other horse people.

HorseQuest.info contains answers to questions in the subject areas of nutrition/feeding, health, breeding, parasites, training, marketing, diseases, facilities, horsemanship and managements just to name a few. HorseQuest.info is an ever expanding knowledge base that grows with the addition of every user.

The Ask the Horse Expert site provides answers to horse questions asked by clients/consumers. These answers are provided by Equine Extension Specialists from the Southern Region Land-Grant Universities and are based on the most current, research- or science-based information available at the time of posting.

As the progressing sciences associated with horses develop, new or additional information impact horse science, the questions and answers at www.horsequest.info will be revised accordingly. If you ask a question of the experts, you are encouraged to visit the site periodically to obtain any possible updates.

We provide educational information only, and we are not responsible for any consequences that may result from the choices you make based upon the information provided and are to be held harmless. We reserve the right to choose which questions to answer and which ones to include in our public database.

Some of the information provided may be specific to your geographical area. Please consult your state's Equine Extension Specialist for more specific local information. The information provided is not designed to serve as a substitute for legal advice, nor is it intended to be a comprehensive statement of the law. If you need legal services, please consult an attorney.

HorseQuest.info is accomplished by coordinating the resources of the Southern Region Equine Extension Specialists located at the 13 Southern Region Land Grant Universities and the Cooperative Extension Service currently providing answers to horse questions.

Elizabeth Buist - Clemson
Dr. Robert Coleman - University of Kentucky
Dr. Clint Depew - Louisiana State University
Dr. David Freeman - Oklahoma State University
Ashley Griffin – University of Kentucky
Dr. Gary Heusner - University of Georgia
Kristen Janicki - University of Kentucky
Dr. Steve Jones - University of Arkansas
Dr. Ed Johnson - University of Florida
Dr. Doyle Meadows - University of Tennessee
Dr. Cindy McCall - Auburn University
Dr. Robert Mowrey - N. Carolina State University
Dr. Brett Scott - Texas A&M University
Gale Chrestman - Mississippi State University
Dr. Craig H. Wood - University of Kentucky

Preparing for the Equine Breeding Season

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The natural breeding season for horses begins around April 1st with the imposed season beginning around February 15th. Correspondingly, foaling season begins between January and March. Planning and preparation for the breeding and foaling season begin early in the fall. Considerations and decisions will vary based on breed association rules, breeding technologies to be employed (natural, AI - fresh, shipped cooled or frozen, embryo transfer) and whether or not you are dealing with maiden, open, barren or foaling mares, or stallions. Early on, you should carefully consider an even more fundamental question of whether or not to produce a foal.

Appropriate selection of mare and stallion is crucial to meeting production goals. The simple principle of breeding the best to the best is not as easy as it sounds. Accurate determination of what is best is a challenge in and of itself. Accessibility, costs and genetic factors such as blood incompatibilities, HYPP, CID, and color lethals such as roan, white, and overo should be considered in the decision making process. If you do not own your own stallion, booking should be done as early as possible in the fall. A well-written contract that defines fee schedules, guarantees, and conditions often prevents misunderstandings.

The breeding and foaling season is the most labor intensive time of year. An adequate number of properly trained employees will make the job less daunting. Personnel management may be the single largest challenge of the breeding operation.

Preparations for Maiden, Open and Barren Mares

Extend day length by 2 to 3 hours at dusk beginning no later than December 1st. Exposing mares to additional light in winter will cause them to go through transition earlier than normal and hasten the date of first ovulation. If the mares leave the farm for breeding, be certain the stallion owners continue the light treatment. Record.

Assess Body Condition Scores using a common system such as the one described in these proceedings. Thin mares are more difficult to settle and should be fed to gain weight prior to the breeding season. Record.

Perform breeding soundness exams and review breeding history. Knowing what to expect from a given mare will be an aid to those handling the teasing program and will help avoid missed ovulations. Problem mares require special treatment. Record.

Vaccinate and deworm with the approaching breeding season in mind. Disease challenge goes up and resistance goes down when horses leave home and are exposed to a new environment. Work you're your veterinarian to plan the vaccination and deworming program appropriate for your area. Record.

Preparations for Foaling Mares

Calculate Expected Foaling Date (EFD) as all other preparations hinge on this time. Take last ovulation date (or last breeding date) and count back 25 days on the calendar. The average gestation length is 340 days so your mare will foal approximately one month earlier the following spring than when you bred her. Record.

Assess Body Condition and feed to a minimum score of 5.5 or 6 before foaling. While lactating, mares are in a negative energy balance and it is extremely difficult and costly to cause the mare to gain weight while milking. Record.

Open Caslick at least 30 days before EFD. Failure to open the mare's vulva can be catastrophic as the mare will most certainly tear during delivery. Check the vulva frequently after opening because it can heal closed again or become infected. Record.

Vaccinate 4 to 6 weeks prior to EFD in order to boost immunity during the time the mare is producing colostrum. Transfer of immunity through colostrum will provide the foal with protection for 4-5 months. Work with your veterinarian to plan the vaccination program appropriate for your area. EHV (Rhino) should be given during months 5, 7 and 9 of pregnancy. Record.

Deworm on the schedule you have worked out with your veterinarian throughout pregnancy and when the mare is showing signs of approaching delivery. Record.

Check inventory and order supplies that will be needed at foaling and during breeding. If critical need items like frozen colostrum, IgG kits, or tetanus antitoxin are not on hand, they should be readily obtainable.

Preparations for Stallions

Do not extend day length. Though this will improve sperm output early in the season, it is likely that semen quality will taper off during April and May when there are typically large numbers of mares to breed. It is also important to not maintain stallions under lights year round as this may cause shifts in sperm output that do not positively correspond to the breeding season.

Perform test matings if possible to insure the product you are selling. Even if a stallion has had a successful season the previous year, a breeding soundness exam would be in order. If semen is to be processed, pre and post cooling evaluations should be made. Record.

Train young stallions in advance of the breeding season. Early experience is crucial to the lifetime performance of a breeding stallion. Good manners as well as bad habits develop based on the first few visits to the breeding shed. Sometimes the overly aggressive stallion can be taught manners by an older, dominant mare. There are obvious risks in this method.

Assess body condition and feed the stallion to at least a score of 5 before the breeding season. Covering mares places high energy demands on stallions and they will typically lose weight during the breeding season. Record.

Vaccinate and deworm on a schedule that is appropriate for expected exposure. If the stallion is to be vaccinated for EVA, obtain a negative test before vaccinating. Allow a minimum of 28 days from vaccination to breeding and/or teasing mares. Record.

Summary

There is much to consider in preparing for the breeding season. All that is done should support production goals. By reviewing past records, mistakes will not likely be repeated. "Prior planning prevents poor performance" is an appropriate reminder. Once the plan is laid, execution requires communication and commitment. Help is available from many sources. Extension professionals, veterinarians specializing in equine reproduction, product representatives, trade publications and many on-line services are at your finger tips. Employ all of your resources.

John Mark Shuffitt
Livestock Agent II
Marion County Extension

Beef Cattle Management Tips

October

- Plant cool season legumes and small grain pastures
- Check for external parasites, treat if necessary
- Check for spittlebugs, grassloopers, etc. and treat
- Observe condition of cow herd and maintain adequate nutrition
- Isolate any additions to the herd for 30 to 60 days and watch for signs of disease
- Be sure you have adequate handling facilities, and they are in good working order.
- If you are raising bulls for the commercial market, October thru December is the main bull-buying season for cattlemen in south Florida and now is the time to have your promotion program fully activated.

November

- Observe cows daily to detect calving difficulty
- Use high magnesium mineral if grass tetany has been a problem in the past
- Check for external parasites and treat if needed
- Maintain adequate nutrient level for cow herd
- Calve in well-drained pastures
- Survey pastures for poisonous plants
- Start summarizing annual records, both production and financial-so you will have time to make adjustments for tax purposes.
- Re-evaluate winter feeding program.
- Get breeding soundness exams on bulls.
- Implement bull conditioning program.
- Check progress of developing replacement heifers - are they going to meet your target weight by the start of the breeding season?

December

- Check mineral feeder
- Begin grazing small grain pastures, if ready
- Check for external parasites and treat if necessary
- Deworm cows and heifers prior to winter feeding
- Check cows regularly for calving difficulties
- Rotate calving pasture to prevent diseases
- Observe calves for signs of scours
- Investigate health of bulls **before** you buy
- Complete review of management plan and update for next year. Check replacement heifers to be sure they will be ready to breed 3 - 4 weeks prior to the main cow herd.

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"The Last Word"

Visiting Kissimmee

A man and his wife were driving their RV across Florida and were nearing a town named Kissimmee. They noted the strange spelling and tried to figure how to pronounce it
KISS-a-me ?
kis-A-me ?
kis-a-ME ?

They grew more perplexed as they drove into the town. Since they were hungry, they pulled into a restaurant to get something to eat. At the counter, the man said to the waitress; "My wife and I can't seem to be able to figure out how to pronounce this place. Will you tell me where we are and say it very slowly so that I can understand?"

The woman looked at him and said; "Buuurrrgerrr Kiiiinnnng."

(Note: Floridians pronounce it: ka-SEM-ee)
Have you ever watched a rodeo?

Alligator Warnings

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is advising hikers, hunters, fishers, and golfers to take extra precautions and keep alert for alligators.

They advise people to wear noise-producing devices; such as, little bells on their clothing, to alert, but not startle, the alligators unexpectedly.

They also advise the carrying of pepper spray in case of an encounter with an alligator. It is also a good idea to watch for fresh signs of alligator activity.

People should recognize the difference between small young alligator and large adult alligator droppings.

Young alligator droppings are smaller and contain fish bones and possibly bird feathers.

Adult alligators droppings have little bells in them and smell like pepper spray.