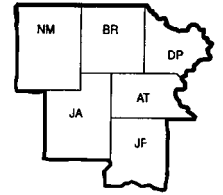




# CATTLE CLIPPINGS



by K-State Research and Extension



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## Conservation Security Program

The new Conservation Security program is designed to reward the good stewards of the land. Former Ag Secretary Ann Venneman said the program is designed to “reward the best and motivate the rest”.

Sounds intriguing and worth looking into! All hay, pasture and cropland in the Delaware Watershed area is eligible.

[www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/2005.html](http://www.ks.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/2005.html)

**Sign up will start March 28<sup>th</sup> and run for 2 months.**

## Three keys to planning the spring breeding season

Three key management concepts can help commercial cow calf operations improve the productivity of their cow herds. However, planning and preparation must take place well in advance of the spring breeding season. The three key areas to consider include:

### **Bull power:**

Do you have enough bulls to meet the needs of the cow herd? Very young 12 month to 15 month old bulls should be placed with 10 — 15 females. Two year-old bulls can be placed with 18 — 24 females and experienced bulls should be able to breed 25 females or even a few more if in small breeding pastures. Have the bulls recently passed a breeding soundness examination? Arrange with your veterinarian a time to check the bulls for breeding soundness.

Research has indicated that one of every six bulls will be questionable or unsatisfactory upon examination. It is important to find sub-fertile bulls in plenty of time to allow for the replacement bulls

to be located and purchased for the upcoming breeding season. New bulls should be brought to their new environment about a month prior to breeding. This gives them an opportunity to become adapted to their new environment before the critical start of a breeding season.

### **Immunize the heifers:**

Replacement heifers should be immunized for respiratory diseases such as IBR and BVD. Give the heifers a modified live vaccine for longer lasting protection against these viruses. The heifers should receive this vaccination at least one month before the start of the breeding season. This would also be a good time to include other reproductive disease protection that may be recommended by your veterinarian. Examples of other immunizations that should be considered include leptospirosis and vibriosis.

### **Breed the heifers ahead of the mature cows:**

Yearling replacement heifers should be mated with bulls or bred artificially about a month before the start of the breeding season for the mature cows. Breeding the heifers early is important for two reasons. Two-year old first calf cows normally take longer to return to heat cycles after calving than do older cows. Therefore if they calve early, then when they rebreed, they are in synchrony with the rest of the cows in the herd as they deliver their second calf. In addition, the manager can watch the heifers more closely early in the calving season and give them additional attention. They are the females most likely to need assistance at calving time.

Naturally there are other health, nutritional, and management chores that must be attended to during the time prior to calving, but using these three concepts would aid greatly in improving the productivity of many Kansas commercial cow calf herds.

## **Pasture Turnout Timing**

Proper pasture and range management begins early in the spring. A major decision to be made is: When to start grazing? Starting grazing too early reduces plant leaf area for photosynthesis that is needed to replace carbohydrates depleted over winter and during greenup. Plant vigor is reduced, stands are thinned, total forage production is lowered, and disease, insect, and weed infestations are increased. Pastures and range damaged by grazing too early may take several years of rest before the stand regains productivity. On the other hand, starting grazing too late increases forage loss and waste through trampling or reduced palatability.

Pasture and range managers generally base grazing readiness or time to begin grazing on calendar date. This may be the right decision some years, but each year is different with respect to earliness or lateness of spring; the calendar date method may not always coincide with the best time to graze. It is recommended, that grazing readiness be based on the development stage of the most common or key grass species in the pasture or range. The recommended plant development stage for beginning spring grazing of both native and tame grass species is when the plants have three to four leaves.

Grass plants develop in an orderly and consistent manner. Leaves are the major plant organ of interest for grazing. A new leaf becomes visible on a plant after the one preceding it is almost fully developed. The calendar time at which the first leaf appears and the rate at which each leaf develops is determined by the amount of thermal (heat) energy available for biological activity. The air temperature on any spring day differs from year to year, so the amount of heat energy available for plant development for any calendar date, hence development stage, will also vary from year to year.

The bottom line is- cool season pastures will likely be ready when the calendar says turn out.

Unfortunately, this cooler weather will delay turnout on warm season pastures.

*K-State Research and Extension newsletter provided by the following counties:*

Ray Ladd  
Atchison County  
913-833-5450  
[cladd@oznet.ksu.edu](mailto:cladd@oznet.ksu.edu)

Brown County  
Doniphan County  
785-985-3623

Jody Holthaus  
Jackson County  
785-364-4125  
[jholthau@oznet.ksu.edu](mailto:jholthau@oznet.ksu.edu)

David Hallauer  
Jefferson County  
785-863-2212  
[dhallaue@oznet.ksu.edu](mailto:dhallaue@oznet.ksu.edu)

David Key  
Nemaha County  
(785) 336-2184  
[dkey@oznet.ksu.edu](mailto:dkey@oznet.ksu.edu)

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