

# Tips for Achieving Higher A.I. Conception

Contributed by:

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*Semen ordered by Tuesday can be in your tank the following Tuesday.*

During a recent White House press briefing about the coronavirus, a reporter asked President Trump what would be his acceptable percentage of death among Covid-19 patients. His answer, "None!" The same can be said as to the acceptable percentage of cows bred A.I. who fail to settle, "None!"

Through natural service, bulls are said to settle about 66% in first service. I have--and many others have also--settled above 95% with A.I. when heat is spotted under natural conditions. Unfortunately, when we began tinkering with Mother Nature and began inducing heat with MGA, prostaglandins, GnRH, and CIDR's, conception has dropped--in many cases--to levels that bulls achieve in the pasture.

A missed pregnancy is expensive. Not only is semen wasted, the drugs or CIDR's, the feed, the time and labor are also lost, totaling possibly \$50 or more. Most of all, the calf from the next service is younger, lighter, and less profitable ---\$55 is frequently quoted. This doesn't include the profits lost when a high quality heifer calf cannot be being returned to the herd as a cow.

A few simple things may help raise conception percentage:

1. Have the cows and heifers gaining weight prior to breeding.
2. Phosphorus mineral not only helps cows come into heat and settle, but phosphorus firms the reproductive tract and makes locating the cervical opening easier. Recommended 1:1 Calcium to phosphorus.
3. Water temperature needs to be 95F. Straws need to be thawed for 45 seconds and dried before placing the straw in the French gun. Water kills sperm. Thaw no more semen than what can be used in 5-10 minutes. Water temperature needs rechecked regularly, preferably with an accurate alcohol thermometer. If more than one straw is thawed at a time the straws need to be separated.
4. Gently clean the vulva with a paper towel to avoid transferring manure into the vagina.
5. Deposit the semen just inside the uterus—and no further!
6. After the cow is bred, massage the clitoris for 5 to 10 times. Cow conception respond better than heifers.
7. Fatigue can kill an arm and kill results. If many cows or heifers are being bred, it is well worthwhile to have a backup technician standing by. Don't be embarrassed to pull out and ask for help. This is my 50<sup>th</sup> year in A.I. and I am not embarrassed to ask others for help when I run into puzzling situations.
8. Use tweezers to remove straws from the canes from below the top of the tank.
9. *Most importantly, buy semen only from bulls with proven records of highly fertile semen.*

Some extra items tips that can raise conception:

1. Individually packaged sheaths. More expensive but the tip of the French gun isn't exposed until it is ready to enter the cervix; the gun is able to puncture the plastic sheath just prior to entering the cervix. My daughter-in-law uses covered sheaths exclusively with tremendous results. I will or Tiffany will gladly to demonstrate the simple technique on how to use these sheaths.
2. Feeding soybeans to your cow ration, preferably 21 days or more before breeding. Soybeans contain 33 to 44% crude protein and have 15 to 22% fat that contains estrogens absent in soybean meal. A printout from the University of Missouri is attached. Soybeans may be fed raw with grain or silage (Raw soybeans save processing costs but lose some bypass protein.) Our family's cattle receive 2 pounds of raw, unprocessed, soybeans per day with 4 pounds of cracked corn. Roasted soybeans are highly palatable, are more protein bypass efficient, trypsin free, but are more expensive. Colorado Soy roasts soybeans and is located north of Stratton at 26260 County Road 31; Area code (719) 348-5201. Colorado Soy also has dealers throughout Northeast Colorado.