



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION**

Colorado State University Extension
Golden Plains Area
Contact: Scott Stinnett
Title: Area Extension Agent
Phone: 719-346-5571
Email: scott.stinnett@colostate.edu

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Prepare for Calving Season

Preparing for calving season usually comes during an already busy time of the year. No matter if you calve in winter, spring or fall, gathering all the items needed for a successful calving season is a bit daunting. Here are some things to keep in mind as you prepare for calving season.

Contact your veterinarian. Review with them your herd health plan for the calving season and let them know when your calving season should start and how long it may last. Work with them to determine any pre-calving vaccinations of bred females and ordering any medications to have on hand for calving season. Be sure and get an afterhours contact number for your veterinarian or their clinic in case you have an emergency during calving.

Arranging calving season labor can often be a last-minute task. If your operation is large and you have several employees, or it is a family operation encompassing multiple households, it is a good idea to start working out the cow checking schedule. A common rule of thumb is a check every 3 hours. Make sure contact numbers are known by everyone in case of emergency including your veterinarian's number. Also educate anyone who is new to working calving season on the stages of calving and signs of dystocia.

Cow calf operations vary widely in the types of calving facilities that are used. Some use calving pastures close to home or ranch headquarters while others have specific calving lots or paddocks and

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utilize sheds and calving pens. No matter the facilities, all need some attention to certain things. Removing trash and hazards from the calving areas to prevent injuries to cows and calves. Repairing fences and facilities to good working order. Ensuring proper drainage around buildings, wind breaks and calving areas. Checking all head catches, working alley and chute gates are in working order. Checking all lighting both inside and outside of calving facilities. Testing warming boxes, huts or rooms to make sure they will work when needed. Have on hand an extra supply of supplemental feed and bedding in case of inclement weather.

Calving supplies should be gathered in a central location to make them easy to find for anyone during a calving emergency. Calving supplies may include: OB sleeves, OB lube, OB chains or straps, calf puller, sanitizing solution (ex. chlorhexidine), navel dip, esophageal feeder, colostrum or colostrum replacer, calf bottles, milk replacer, flashlights with fresh batteries or spotlights with good charging or power cords, ropes and halters, calf sled or calf carrier of some type, ear tagger and tags, and straw or other bedding on hand.

Record keeping is an important part of calving season. Be sure to have those record keeping items gathered whether it be a classic “red book” or notebook with pens. Some operations are using tablets and smart phones with record keeping applications loaded on them to keep an electronic record.

Being prepared for calving season just make sense. It makes handling those typical calving season problems easier and may help prevent some others. For more information on this subject or any other livestock questions, contact your local Colorado State University Extension office.

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