

# LOW COST COW/CALF PRODUCTION

The Bulletin For Alumni Of The School

Volume 4

Number 8

## Primiparous Cow

She has had her first calf and is in lousy body condition. There's absolutely little chance of her getting bred in time to have her second calf at this time next year. What to do? We examine this problem in the School and ask the question, "Can you feed your way out of a problem?" The answer is - You cannot do it with modest levels of supplemental energy. Oklahoma State U. (36° 5'), Clemson U. (34° 41') and Louisiana State U. (30° 59') conducted studies at their respective research facilities to answer this very question<sup>1</sup>. From 30 to 44 bred heifers were selected each of two years (3 years at CU) and managed to be in BCS of 4, 5 or 6 at the time of calving. Calving occurred in late winter/early spring for 60 days. Immediately after calving, the first calf heifers were fed to gain either 1 or 2 lb daily to the start of the breeding season. *Now let's see. A lactating heifer gaining 1 or 2 lb per day? That requires some big-time energy supplementation.*

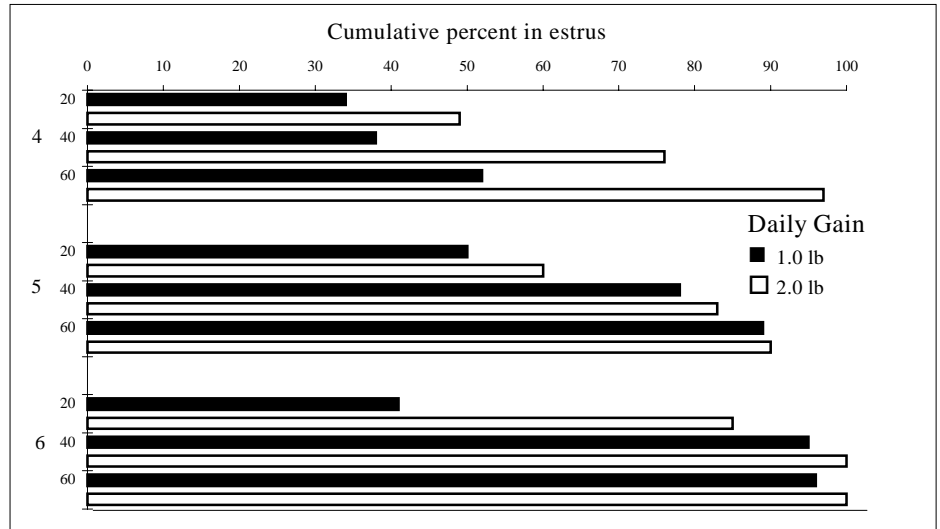
## Time of Delivery

BCS at the time of calving was reflected in the cow's body weight and the calf's birth weight. As shown in the following table, dystocia score was the same for all groups.

BCS	BW at Calving	Birth wt	Dystocia score
4	745	63.7	1.2
5	827	67.0	1.2
6	935	71.4	1.2

The BIF '96 dystocia score is as follows:  
 Score 1 No difficulty, no assistance.  
 Score 2 Minor difficulty, some assistance.  
 Score 3 Major difficulty, mechanical assist.  
 Score 4 Caesarean section.  
 Score 5 Abnormal presentation.  
 BCS at calving did not impact weaning weight, whereas postcalving gain did. Cows that gained 2 lb weaned calves that weighed 441 lb; calves from cows that

<sup>1</sup> Spitzer, J.C., D.G. Morrison, R.P. Wettemann and L.C. Faulkner. 1995. Reproductive responses and calf birth and weaning weights as affected by body condition at parturition and postpartum weight gain in primiparous beef cows. J. Anim. Sci. 73:1251.



gained 1 lb weighed 414 lb at weaning.

## Polyestrus

The chart above shows the percentage of cows cycling at 20, 40 and 60 days into the breeding season relative to BCS at calving and postcalving gain. Those cows in BCS 4 did benefit from a high rate of gain by the end of the 60-day breeding season. There was some benefit to the BCS 5 and 6 groups from a high rate of gain as well. It is obvious, however, that BCS at calving has a greater impact upon rebreeding than does postcalving energy supplementation. Using a few weeks of your highest-quality forage to achieve the proper BCS makes it much less expensive.

## The Bottom Line

The big question is, of course, how many of the heifers rebred in a timely fashion? The following table tells it all. Slightly

BCS	Cumulative percentage pregnant		
	Days of breeding season		
	20	40	60
4	27	43	56
5	35	65	80
6	47	90	96
Gain, lb			
1	27	56	70
2	46	76	84

more than half of the heifers in BCS 4 at calving got pregnant, regardless of 1 or 2 lb postpartum gain. Postpartum gain of 2 lb was 14% better than 1 lb gain. No amount of feeding, however, could bring

the BCS 4 and 5 cattle up to a satisfactory conception rate.

## Rumors

*"I will provide your Calif. rancher with small batches of your custom-formulated supplements in an effort to find a suitable carrier." Thank you, Terry Duethman, Kansas.*

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