

VET'S VIEW

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Early pregnancy diagnosis could impact feeding decisions

Iowa cow-calf farmers will be facing a challenging winter. Drought conditions have increased the price of corn and hay; and in some cases, additional forage is impossible to find. Producers will probably only have two or three options to deal with the drought at this time: 1) either pay more for feed, 2) reduce cow herd substantially, or 3) in some situations be creative at finding alternative feedstuffs.

Waiting to pregnancy test and cull will result in increased feed costs and decreased cull values.

Some early planning can help cow-calf producers make appropriate management decisions now before options become limited. An easy place to start is early pregnancy diagnosis.

The use of ultrasound to diagnose pregnancy is widely available across the state and can provide an accurate reading, even at the early stages of pregnancy.

Hay costs of \$150 per ton will equate to approximately \$2 per head per day to feed a cow. It will not take too many days of feeding an open cow to offset the cost of pregnancy testing the entire herd. Even if you have some pasture yet, you will be better off removing the open cows now and letting the pregnant cows increase their body condition after weaning the calves.

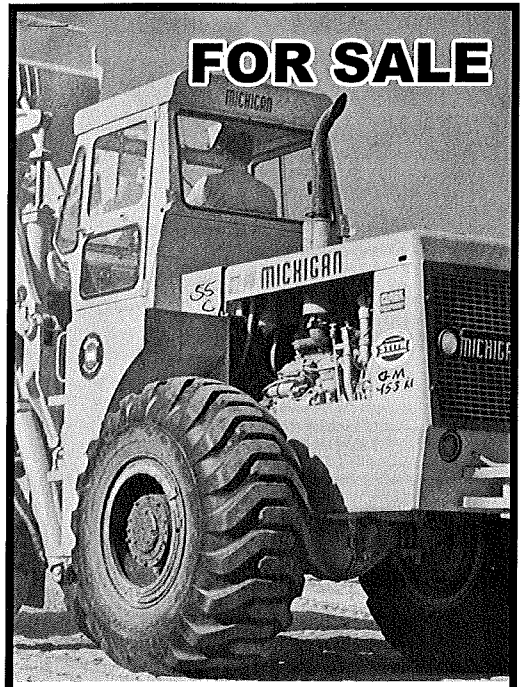
There is normally a seasonal price drop in cull cow values as the fall progresses and more producers make their culling decisions. The widespread drought this year has the potential to increase culling across the nation. Therefore, waiting to pregnancy test and cull will result in increased feed costs and decreased cull values.

Check with your veterinarian now to determine when is the best time for you to

pregnancy test your cows based on your breeding season.

Cull any open cows and critically evaluate the health status of the pregnant cows. A cow with potential issues such as bad eyes, feet, lump jaw or thin animals should probably be culled early this year as well.

Producers utilizing alternative feedstuffs should consult with their veterinarian, extension specialist or nutritionist to make sure that feed is appropriate, and how to handle special concerns such as nitrates or other toxicity problems.



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