

Deworming Cows Improves Calf Production

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We have completed a number of studies to measure the benefits of deworming brood cows in the fall and deworming calves when they were worked in the spring. Trials were conducted at Everglades REC at Belle Glade, on organic soil, and at Deseret Ranch and the Range Cattle REC at Ona, on sand soil. Cows were dewormed one month prior to a January 1 to March 10 breeding season at Belle Glade, and three months prior to a March 1 to June 1 breeding season at Deseret Ranch and at Ona. The anthelmintic used was Safeguard® drench. The use of this specific anthelmintic is not an endorsement by University of Florida/IFAS, nor does it indicate that it is superior to other products equally effective in controlling internal parasites in cattle.

At Belle Glade, cows dewormed on December 6 (after calving) had a 93 percent pregnancy rate vs. 85 percent for cows not dewormed. At Deseret Ranch, cows dewormed on December 2 (before calving) had a 94 percent rate vs. 82 percent for cows not dewormed. At Ona, cows dewormed on November 11 (before calving) had a 93 percent pregnancy rate vs. 86 percent for cows not dewormed. The positive response in pregnancy rate in all three studies indicates that the benefits from deworming are real. An improvement in pregnancy rate from the deworming of brood cows before the breeding season is also supported by a number of studies conducted in other states.

Benefits from deworming nursing calves in the spring were more difficult to analyze because in two studies both cows and calves were dewormed in treatments where anthelmintic was given. In comparison to the controls, calves in treatments in which both cows and calves were dewormed had weaning weights five pounds heavier at Belle Glade, 42 pounds heavier at Deseret Ranch and 18 pounds heavier at Ona. The Ona study did have a treatment in which cows were dewormed but the calves were not dewormed, and the weaning weight of these calves was as heavy as calves in treatments in which both cows and calves were dewormed. This result suggests that much of the benefits obtained in calf weaning weight may come from deworming the cow. More research needs to be conducted to better define the benefits from deworming nursing calves in the spring.

In summary, the results of these Florida studies give strong evidence that deworming brood cows in the fall and their calves in the spring will improve both cow reproduction

and calf weaning weight. The rate of return on the relatively low investment in deworming the cow herd makes this production practice very profitable to the producer.

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