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WORMING AIDS COW PRODUCTION

by F.M. PATE
University of Florida
IFAS, AREC-Ona

For questions or comments regarding this publication contact



[Findlay Pate](#)

IFAS researchers recently completed three studies to measure the benefits of worming brood cows in the fall and the worming of calves when they were worked in the spring. Trials were conducted at Belle Glade, on organic soil, and at Deseret Ranch and the Ona AREC, on sand soil. Cows were wormed 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 Ona. The anthelmintic used was Safeguard (R; The use of a specific anthelmintic in this study is not an endorsement by IFAS. Nor does it indicate that it is superior to other products equally effective in controlling internal parasites in cattle).

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

Benefits from worming nursing calves in the spring were more difficult to analyze because in two of the studies both cows and calves were wormed in all treatments. In comparison to the non-wormed controls, calves in treatments in which both cows and calves were wormed had weaning weights that were five pounds heavier at Belle Glade, 42 pounds heavier at Deseret Ranch and 18 pounds heavier at Ona. However the Ona study had a treatment in which cows were wormed but the calves were not wormed, and

the weaning weight of these calves was as heavy as calves in treatments in which both cows and calves were wormed. This result suggests that much of the benefits obtained in calf weaning weight may come from worming the cow. More research needs to be conducted to better define the benefits from worming nursing calves in the spring.

In summary, the results of these Florida studies give strong evidence that worming 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 worming the cow herd makes this production practice very worth while in terms of profit to the producer.