

Would you like to?

- Improve rebreeding rates
- Reduce supplementation and mustering costs
- Decrease mortality rates
- Overall increase your profit margins.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR BREEDERS IN NORTHERN GULF CONTINUOUS MATING SYSTEMS

Year-round mating is common practice for northern Australian beef properties, due to the difficulty in managing the bulls across extensive areas. As a result, many calves are born during the dry season, when the nutritional quality of feed is low, and the nutritional demands of a lactating cow cannot be met. The consequences of this are poor reconception rates, high mortalities, and low rebreeding rates.

1

Set your heifers up for success!

The first step in setting your heifers up for success, is matching their calving window, with high pasture quality and quantity. This will increase the chances of them getting back in calf and decrease supplement requirements. First calf cows commonly miss their second conception due to poor body condition and the nutritional demands associated with rearing a calf. By keeping the first and second calf cows in separate groups to the main breeder herd, calving windows can be managed from the start, supplementation can be targeted when required and subsequent calves generally follow at peak pasture availability.

Key strategy

Matching heifer calving window with peak pasture quality and quantity sets the seasonal pattern for future calving

An example plan for managing your heifers

Process	Month	Management
Weaning	May	1. Segregate heifers into their own paddock
First mating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 years old • 300kg in weight 	January	1. Put bulls out
	July	1. Remove bulls 2. Pregnancy test (foetal age) to desired calving window 3. Cull empty heifers
Second mating	January	1. Put bulls out
	July	1. Remove bulls 2. Wean calves heavier than 120kg, especially if heifers are less than BCS 3 3. Pregnancy test (foetal age) to desired calving window 4. Transfer pregnant cows to main cow herd 5. Depending on overall herd numbers and main herd calving rates, empties can be either be culled or placed in a separate paddock until being put back with the bull the next January

The Farm Business Resilience Program is jointly funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Queensland Government's Drought and Climate Adaptation Program.

Segregation of the breeder herd

2

Segregating the breeder herd into different classes is a great strategy to reduce stock handling, tailor nutritional management, and reduce unnecessary supplementation costs. This can be done through either:

Segregating the breeder herd into wet and dry groups only

Further segregating the dry groups based on calving time by foetal aging

Pros

Cons

Pros

Cons

Less paddock infrastructure required and reduced labour costs

Less information available to target supplementation

Better targets nutrition management to calving time, reducing mustering costs as all calves will be a similar age, only need to bring the mob in once to brand, wean etc.

More paddock infrastructure is required and labour costs for skilled foetal aging professional

An example on how to segregate your breeders

Breeder segregation system	Muster Round	Management
Wet and dry only	May	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Draft into wet and dry groups and segregate in separate paddocks Wean calves heavier than 120kg Cull cows that have come into two consecutive musters dry or for age, identifying them by bang tailing or tagging – change tag colour each time
	September	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wean calves heavier than 120kg Cull cows that have come into two consecutive musters dry or for age, identifying them by bang tailing or tagging – change tag colour each time
Wet, dry and foetal aging	May	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Pregnancy test (foetal age) and segregate into several calving groups based on expected month of calving (Table 3 below) Wean calves heavier than 120kg Cull empty and aged dry cows
	September	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wean calves heavier than 120kg

An example on how to place breeders into calving groups following foetal aging

Below is an example of the division of calving groups following foetal aging, the predicted calving and weaning months, and likely supplementation and early weaning requirements for three foetal aged groups. The number of calving groups will be dependent on the number of paddocks available for segregation.

Characteristics	Calving Group		
	A	B	C
Expected calving date	May/Jun/Jul/Aug/Sep	Oct/Nov/Dec	Jan/Feb/Mar/April (next year)
Predicted weaning time (next year)	September round or May following year (early weaned)	May round	September round or early weaning in May
Supplementation and early weaning requirements	These cows are calving in the dry season. They require supplementation and calves will need to be weaned early to maintain cows body condition.	These cows will be calving in the late dry season/early wet season. They will require supplementation to maintain their body condition score until the wet season improved feed quality and quantity.	These cows are calving during the wet season and, if not weaned in May, will carry a calf through the dry season. They will require supplementation and calves will need to be weaned early to maintain cows body condition.

Read the full article here



For more information contact your local beef extension officer

