



## **Reductions in Calving Problems and Associated Costs When Calving Ease Sires are Mated to Beef Replacement Heifers**

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### **Summary:**

Calving problems in replacement heifers result in high costs due to the need for professional assistance at the time of delivery, follow up therapies, reduced conception rate in heifers that experience calving problems and potential death loss in the dam and offspring. Additionally, calves that survive a difficult birth are more likely to become ill prior to weaning than are calves born without assistance. Research has shown costs of \$55 to \$65 dollars per heifer retained in herds where 25 % to 33 % of the heifers actually experience calving problems.

The causes of calving problems are varied, but over 50 % of all problems are directly caused by heavy birth weight in the calf. Since birth weight is genetically affected, calving problems in replacement heifers can be reduced by mating "calving ease" sires to properly developed heifers. These are sires that have a genetic background for low birth weight in their offspring. In some cases, such bulls can eliminate calving problems in heifers.

### **Objective:**

To evaluate the effects of sire selection in reducing the incidence of dystocia in replacement heifers.

### **Materials and Methods:**

Four calving ease sires were used during a 2001 breeding season. Matings occurred in late May and June which resulted in calves being born during March and April of 2002. One of the four sires was a highly proven calving ease sire with over 3,500 offspring born in 466 herds. The other three sires had not been highly tested, but their pedigrees indicated that they all had originated from multiple lines of calving ease sires.

Records on the incidence and severity of calving problems and associated costs were

maintained to compare information on calves from all four sires. The information was used to assess the economic impact of reduced calving problems in replacement heifers.

### **Results and Discussion:**

Matings to these four calving ease sires resulted in 34 births during 2002, and none of the calves required assistance at birth. The total lack of calving problems compares well with other Texas trials which also showed no calving problems during 244 births over 4 different herds of replacement heifers mated to 6 different calving ease sires. Since no calving problems occurred, no costs resulted. The amount of money saved due to the lack of calving problems could be variable but would be as high as \$55 per heifer retained in a herd where 25 % of the animals might have had calving problems and required assistance.

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