

Fertile cows give more milk

INTRODUCTION

A healthy fertile cow gives:

- One healthy calf per year
- More milk and calves during lifetime

Heifers that give much milk can replace cows that give little milk. Surplus heifers, male calves and milk are sold for profit.

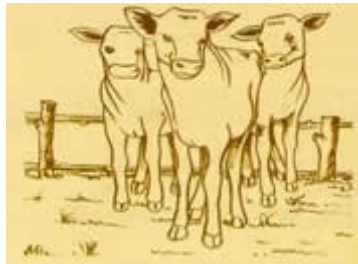
HOW TO GET A FERTILE COW

Poorly fed cows take long to conceive. Thus cows should be given different good quality feeds that they require. These should include:

- **Bulk:** Napier grass, maize stover, what straw.
- **Protein:** Sweet potato vines, lucerne, fodder tree leaves.
- **Minerals:** Dairy lick, Maclick super, Unga high phosphorus.
- **Concentrates:** Maize germ meal, cotton seed cake and dairy meal.
- **Water:** At least 2 buckets of water per cow per day.

A well-fed cow served between 45 and 90 days after calving will give a calf every year.

- Cows lose weight after calving. Good feeding of the cow can reduce this weight loss, which you can check by measuring regularly the chest girth.



WHEN SHOULD A COW BE SERVED?

Serve the cow when she is on heat.

These are the signs of a cow on heat:

General:

- She looks for the company of other cows or bulls
- She attempts to mount them
- She sniffs at other cows
- She is restless and noisy

Specific

(i) Early heat period

SHE MOVES WHEN BEING MOUNTED

* She has a wet and slightly swollen vulva.

(i) Standing heat period

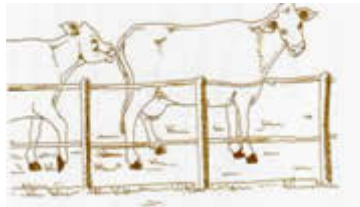
SHE STANDS WHEN MOUNTED

- Her vulva is red and swollen and shows clear mucus.
- She has a roughed tailhead due to being mounted frequently.
- She is eating little so production drops.
- She is very restless, noisy, does not want to let the milk down, and gives little milk.

(iii) Late heat period

SHE WALKS AWAY WHEN MOUNTED

* She has dried mucus on the tail.



1. She moves when being mounted
2. She stands when mounted

The clearest sign of heat is "**she stands when being mounted**". This means that the cow can be inseminated or served by the bull. If after two days you notice bloody, mucus discharge from vulva, this is a confirmation that the cow was on heat. The next heat period will occur after about 3 weeks (18-25 days). Look out for signs of heat during these days. If you see them, put the cow back to the bull to ensure conception.

REGULAR

To see the heat signs, watch the cow carefully three times a day:

- In the morning before and after milking.
- In the afternoon before and after milking.
- In the evening around 10 o'clock.

OBSERVATION

Spend at least 20 minutes each time. The more times you observe the better.



She has dried mucus on the tail.

HOW IS THE COW SERVED?

You can arrange for artificial insemination or service by a bull.

Insemination

Best results are obtained when insemination is done at the end of the heat period or at the start of the late heat period.

- Cows that are in standing heat early in the morning should be inseminated in the afternoon of the same day.
- Those that are on heat in the afternoon or evening should be inseminated the next day in the morning.

Bull service

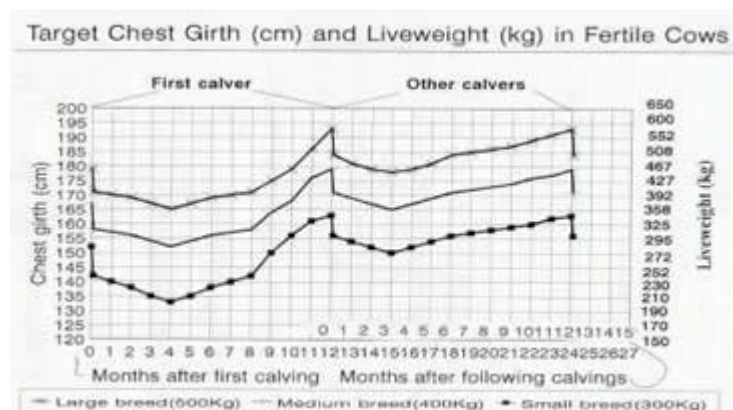
In case a bull has to be used for service, then the cow should be brought to the bull when the heat is observed.

WATCHING FOR REPEATS

- Not all inseminations are successful. At times, a cow does not conceive at all even after repeated inseminations.
- It can also happen that cows conceive, but the embryo of the foetus dies. This is most frustrating. In case this happens, call a veterinarian to investigate and advise accordingly.

REMEMBER TO MEASURE YOUR COW!

For large, medium and small breeds, a target chart in cm (and the weight in kg) is given for first and subsequent Calvin's.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Compiled by I Lokwaleput and R de jong
KARI/NAIVASHA PO BOX 25 NAIVASHA