



\*\*This news release from K-State Research and Extension is available online <https://ksre-learn.com/calving-prep>

**Note to editors:** A photo to accompany this story is at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ksrecomm/54258727008>

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### **Cattle Chat: Preparing for calving season**

K-State beef cattle experts offer management tips to follow before calving

*[By Lisa Moser](#), K-State Research and Extension news service*

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Inventor Alexander Graham Bell once said, “Before anything else, preparation is the key to success.”

When it comes to having a successful calving season, Kansas State University Beef Cattle Institute experts say now is the time to make those preparations. This was the topic of a recent [Cattle Chat](#) podcast.

“The first step is to make sure the cows will be calving in a clean, dry environment,” K-State veterinarian Bob Larson said. “I prefer to calve on grass and out of the mud, which means the calving pastures are different than the winter feeding area.”

Because he likes to calve cows on pasture, Larson said he makes sure the fences are secure and there is water readily available.

Next, he makes sure his calving kit is ready in case a cow needs help in delivering her calf.

“Along with having a clean area to catch the cows that need assistance, I make sure I have calving chains or straps, lube, clean plastic sleeves, and the veterinarian’s phone number,” Larson said. “Oftentimes, the first group to calve is the heifers and they are the ones who are more likely to need help.”

Also in the third trimester, beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster recommends evaluating the body condition of the cows and offering supplements to underweight cows.

“At this production stage, we want cows to be at a body condition score of five or six because once they calve and are lactating it is difficult for them to add weight,” Lancaster said. “We don’t want them to be too thin going into the breeding season after calving, so it is important to get them in the right body condition before calving.”

Another planning tip relates to colostrum management.

“I prefer to use actual colostrum collected in the herd rather than a colostrum supplement,” K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers said. “If you can collect extra colostrum from one of the early calving cows and freeze it for future use, that is the best option.”

Larson agreed but acknowledged milking beef cows who have just calved can be challenging, and for that reason, he also recommends having powdered colostrum on hand.

“In a normal calving situation, colostrum supplementation is not needed; however, if the cow had a c-section or a difficult birth, we may need to provide that to the calf,” Larson said. “Don’t wait until you are in an emergency situation. It is better to have those products stockpiled and ready to use when needed.”

To hear the full discussion, listen to [Cattle Chat](#) on your preferred streaming platform.

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**FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS:** Links used in this story Beef Cattle Institute Cattle Chat podcast, <https://ksre-learn.com/cattle-chat-calving-prep>

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**Story by:**

Lisa Moser  
785-532-2010  
[lmoser@ksu.edu](mailto:lmoser@ksu.edu)

**More information:**

Phillip Lancaster  
785-532-6323  
[palancaster@vet.ksu.edu](mailto:palancaster@vet.ksu.edu)

Bob Larson  
785-532-4257  
[rlarson@vet.ksu.edu](mailto:rlarson@vet.ksu.edu)

Brian Lubbers  
785-532-4012  
[blubbers@vet.ksu.edu](mailto:blubbers@vet.ksu.edu)