



BARRETTE

ET FRÈRE s.e.n.c.

GUILLAUME·ETIENNE·YVES

Producteur Vache-Veau



Guillaume



Étienne





Discussion panel on calving periods

Barrette & Frère S.E.N.C.

Guillaume et Étienne Barrette

Saint-Edmond-les-Plaines

Farm profile (Guillaume)

- Started in 2003, it was the dream of three city dwellers
- Commerical cow-calf operation with 260 cows SM-AN
- Approximately 1,100 cultivated acres and almost all owned (100 % in forages or pasture)
- FTU (work) : 2 owner-operators & 1 summer employee
- Replacement by the purchase of heifers

Existing barn, used as corral



Good handling facility = a tool for great results



Farm profile (continued)

- Calvings in May-June (heifers start in mid-April)
- Calves are backgrounded at the farm until 750-800 lbs then sold; primarily to a feedlot
- Cows are kept outside year-round in minimal shelters with windbreaks
- Importance of intensive pasture management with rotational or intensive grazing

Farm profile (continued)

- Round bale harvesting of certain pasture paddocks at the beginning of the season
- Trying to intensify the resources of the operation
- Lots of investments were made recently on soil improvements (drainage, mechanical ground work, and fertilization)
- What we are doing currently will continue to be our focus in the mid- and long- term

Farm profile (continued)

- Management involvement (Agricultural advisory group)
- Keys to success: education/update (Cattleman & others), visits
- Our best tool: a calculator
- You always have to question yourself

What is/are your period(s) of calving?

- Only one calving period/timeframe ... the shortest possible!
- Heifers calve mid-April
- Cows calve starting at the beginning of May

Why did you choose this calving period?

**Factors, reasons that guided your choice?
Which were the most important?**

**The primary, and good, reason:
to no longer work in the mud during the spring thaw!**

Types of cattle



Our 2017 results from 260 calvings

Criteria	Results
Cows that calved	99.6%
Still-borns	5%
Birth weight	85 lb
Mortality prior to sale	0.4%
Bull breed: targeting growth	AN et SM
Purchased cross-bred heifers	English
ADG birth-to-weaning	2.80 lb/day
ADG weaning-to-sale	2.25 lb/day

Have you already tried other calving periods?

If yes, why did you change?

- **We quickly adapted to spring calving as the necessary installations for this type of calving are minimal**
- **As a young business, this was an investment choice**

Backgrounding installations



What do you do to prepare your cows for calving?

- We focus on keeping good body condition during the winter
- Veterinary-recommended vaccinations against scours
- Use of minerals adapted for dry cows
- Feeding of cows: 11 round 300 kg bales (4 feet x 4 ½ feet) per cow for 190 wintering days

What are the treatments performed on your calves at birth & shortly after?

- We watch to make sure they have drank colostrum as soon as possible
- Tag the calves with ID and castration with a rubber band
- Write down any data about the mother (calving difficulty and any other)
- Move the mother and calf to the right group of calved cows or heifers
- Heifers & skinnier cows are kept together for an earlier weaning
- Intensive use of ATV and sled for the calves







What are the performance data you measure?

- Use DSA software to keep track of the entire herd
- Weighting at birth, weaning, and at sale of backgrounded steers
- Any calving difficulties with the cow and any other observations
- The physical shape of the mothers including udders and teats, limbs and feet, and body condition

A cow of average weight & well-proportioned



What types of buildings do you use during calving?

- Calving on pasture with bale grazing
- 2 barns can be used as « hospitals » in problematic cases
- Heifers enjoy a small cold shelter to separate them from competition with older cows

Spring calving on pasture



Cold shelter for the calving heifers



What do you do to prepare your bulls for breeding season?

- Trim hooves in April
- Live-attenuated vaccination
- Deworming and fly-tags



What is your length of exposure to bulls?

- **Maximum exposure of 55 days starting the 27th of July**
- **Simmental and Angus bulls are spread out randomly among the groups**
- **2 bulls per group of 50-60 cows gives approximately 1 bull for every 25-30 cows**
- **2-3 extra bulls in case of injury**

Do you pregnancy check?

- **A given to us, performed at the end of November**
- **We don't want any free-loaders**
- **Automatic sale of non-fertile cows**
- **The younger ones are sold for breeding while the olders are culled for meat**

Do you use artificial insemination or oestrus synchronization? For cows? For heifers? Do you plan to use it/see a use for it?

- **No**
- **For us the timing isn't right, it becomes a conflict with other work such as harvesting of forages**
- **The groups have to be handled multiple times**

What could you do to improve your calving season?

- Continue to work on the quality of our reproductive females
- Wrong cow + calving on pasture = problems
- Mechanical lasso to catch cows out on pasture



Thank you!
Questions ???

