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Estrus Detection Made Easy With Breeding Indicator Patches [PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT]

Posted by Farm And Livestock Staff | Nov 10, 2021 |

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Knowing when cattle are in estrus is the first step to reproductive success. Effective reproductive programs keep cows on schedule for breeding while efficiently developing heifers.

“Visual estrus detection using an aid, as a breeding indicator patch, has real value to detect cows that come into estrus early or anticipate breeding for timed artificial insemination (AI) protocols,” says Jeffrey Stevenson, bovine reproductive physiology specialist for Kansas State University.

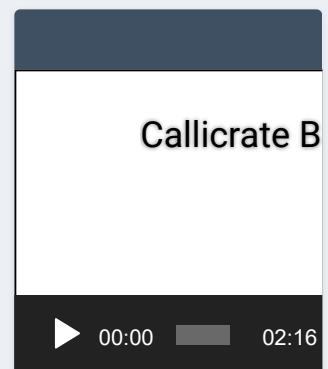
When estrus isn’t detected promptly, it can result in poorer first service conception rates, longer intervals between inseminations, and a reduction in overall profitability.

In research studies, breeding indicator patches have shown to be as effective as activity monitoring systems to determine estrus. A study conducted by Kansas State University showed patches detected estrus 74.7% of the time compared to 72.2% for activity monitors in cows whose estrus was synchronized.

Here are four ways breeding indicator patches can help improve your reproductive program:

Make breeding decisions easier

Not only is breeding on estrus intensity a good way to manage the value of genetics, but you can also use it to make reproductive



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decisions. Breeding indicator patches help better show when cattle are in a higher estrus intensity. As mounting activity occurs, the patch surface ink rubs off to expose a bright indicator color.

“Herds using sexed semen can inseminate cows expressing more intense estrus by patch scoring, while the less intense estrus cows can be bred to beef semen,” says Stevenson.

Should a patch have less than 50% of surface ink rubbed off, you can decide to use cheaper straws of semen because there is a reduced likelihood of pregnancy. If 50% or more surface ink is rubbed off, then more valuable genetics can be used.

Visual estrus detection made easy

Visual heat detection aids like breeding indicator patches, tail paint, and chalk are simple, affordable options to monitor estrus, especially in large groups of cattle. Although cows and heifers don't need to be watched 24/7 when using visual aids, they still need to be observed at least once a day if you are only AI breeding once daily.

With breeding indicator patches, you can easily monitor estrus activity by quickly observing the patch to determine when cattle are coming to estrus before the scheduled timed AI.

Open cows? No problem

If you're currently using tail paint or chalk to visually identify estrus, applying breeding indicator patches following routine pregnancy checks can help you pinpoint problem cows and improve breeding efficiency.

Breeding technicians can walk the pens as they normally do to read paint or chalk rubs for the first breeding cycle. Then, after pregnancy checks have determined which cows are open, apply breeding indicator patches to open cows to detect estrus more accurately in the next cycle.

“When cows are open on pregnancy check day, putting patches on those cows is a great way to make sure they are bred as soon as possible,” says Stevenson. “There will be fewer of these open cows

that are typically difficult to get bred. If you want to get her bred in a 365-day breeding season, you need to use all the tools available.”

Pinpoint when heifers cycle

When breeding heifers in an open lot or pasture, it can take a few cycles of observing estrus before a whole group will be bred. Some heifers will show heat more readily, while others might take longer to become pubertal.

“The most common heifer breeding protocol I see in herds with open lots is to administer prostaglandin and then breed when a heifer shows estrus,” says Stevenson. “Heifers are then estrus detected visually for heat, and when not inseminated, they receive prostaglandin two weeks after the first prostaglandin dose followed by heat detection.”

Stevenson says a breeding indicator patch would be ideal when breeding heifers because those heifers with less intense or more subtle estrus activity (fewer standing to be mounted events) may be detected using the patch.

Breeding indicator patches are a simple, affordable way for you to detect estrus better and improve breeding success in your herd.

For more information on breeding indicator patches, visit [ESTROTECT.com](https://www.estrotect.com).

ABOVE: A farmer applies a breeding indicator, a self-adhesive sticker, between a cow's hip and tailhead. The indicator's surface ink is rubbed off by friction during mounting and reveals an indicator color. When enough color is exposed, the animal is considered ready to breed.

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