Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM26 – Managing calving to coincide with forage availability

Enhancement Description
This enhancement uses a controlled breeding season to match livestock nutrient requirements to available pasture forage and reduce supplemental feeding. This enhancement is applicable to all grazing livestock.

Land Use Applicability
Pastureland and rangeland

Benefits
Managing calving to coincide with the production of palatable, high quality pasture matches forage availability to the peak nutrient needs of beef cows and allows nursing calves to use pasture for much of their growth. The result is improved animal health for lactation and reproduction, lower calf death losses and more efficient use of labor and resources. Matching livestock feed requirements to when forage is most abundant and of the highest quality reduces dependency on supplemental feed, and it saves energy associated with hay production and harvest.

Criteria
Based on forage type and season of growth, use Land Grant University and/or state developed recommendations for controlled breeding and calving seasons (single and/or split) to plan the start and end dates for calving that will match the operation's herd requirements with forage availability. This enhancement recognizes that time is needed to adjust the controlled breeding and calving season for the operation. The desired start and end dates for calving are based on:

1. Calving (within a herd) taking place within a 90-day or less time period
2. Calving occurring four to six weeks prior to initial availability of good quality pasture

Additionally,

3. Cow – calf pairs are on or are moved to pasture as soon as possible after birth, e.g., they are not left in dry lots or small calving pastures for extended time periods
4. 50% of breeding females are transitioned by the third year of the contract
5. 75% of breeding females are transitioned by the end of the contract period

Documentation Requirements
Document annually by herd the:

1. Percentage of breeding females with a projected calving date that falls within the established calving period
2. Number of calf births occurring between the desired start and end dates
3. Dominant forage type grazed
4. Acres of available pasture