

Livestock and Natural Resources

Perception is one of those words, that I don't think you truly understand until you have a few gray hairs. As farmers and ranchers, we are learning more about consumer's perceptions. There I go, a year ago I would have written "producers are learning.....". We are no longer supposed to call ourselves "producers", because the consumer's perception of a producer, is someone that is on a production line, which leads them down the road to a factory farm.

It doesn't matter if sows that farrow in crates or oops, supposed to call those stalls now, are kept from eating their young, or laying on their young or other such things like stomping them in the dirt. Consumer's perception of farrowing "stalls" is that they are inhumane.

I joined a group online called Women in Agriculture. I've decided it should be called "women new to agriculture". There was a huge discussion on what is a factory farm?

I don't know any "factory workers" that would put up working in these weather conditions!

Most cattle producers in Kansas market calves at weaning time. Weaning weights are almost always negatively affected during a drought situation. Producers can choose to sell calves at younger ages, wean and feed calves separately from cows or supplement the cow herd with stored or purchased feeds. Dry cows in early to mid-pregnancy are at their lowest in terms of nutritional requirements. These cows can be maintained on poor-quality forages with little or no supplemental feed.

A dry cow will require about 30 to 40 percent less energy protein feed than a lactating cow. Cows that you plan to cull after calves are weaned can be culled now. This will reduce the amount of feed needed. The normal culling rate is approximately 15 to 20 percent each year. Culling combined with early weaning will cut the feed needed for cows by at least half.

Low-producing dry pastures may be enough to maintain cows that have had their calves weaned. Maintaining cow and calf pairs on dry pasture will result in very low calf growth rates as well as lowered body condition scores and conception rates in cows.

Early weaning the calf at 120 days of age or less has been shown to greatly improve conception rates when grazing the same forage as cows that continue to nurse their calves. In addition, cow body condition is improved when calves are early weaned, and cows will require less supplemental feed in the fall and winter to regain body condition. Calves can be fed higher quality supplemental feeds without decreasing their weight at seven months of age, which is the time calves would normally be weaned. Early-weaned calves are extremely efficient, often requiring 4 to 5 pounds of feed per pound of gain when fed a high-quality diet