

REPRODUCTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE
OF HEREFORD HEIFERS CALVING AT 24 AND 30
MONTHS OF AGE

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The two major problems associated with calving heifers at 24 months of age are the large number of heifers requiring assistance at calving and poor rebreeding performance. Research has shown that these problems can be greatly reduced by delaying calving until the heifers are 36 months of age. However, from an economic standpoint, it is difficult to justify delaying the onset of a heifer's productive life by a year. It is possible that calving at 30 months of age will reduce the problems associated with earlier calving as well as being economically feasible, but there has been very little research concerned with calving at this age.

This study was conducted at the Southwestern Livestock and Forage Research Station, El Reno (Fort Reno) with the objectives of: 1) comparing the reproductive performance of heifers fed at a low and moderate level of winter supplemental feeding and calving in the spring at 30 months of age with heifers fed at a high level of winter supplemental feeding and calving at 24 months of age; and 2) determining the effects of a low and moderate level of winter supplemental feeding on the growth, development and reproductive performance of heifers calving in the spring at 30 months of age. Reproductive performance traits being measured include breeding performance as heifers, incidence and magnitude of calving difficulties and rebreeding performance following their first calving.

The heifers utilized in this study were produced in experimental cow herds at the Lake Carl Blackwell Range Area. The total number of heifers that was available to be placed on experiment in a given year was limited. Therefore, in order to obtain sufficient numbers of heifers for the results to be meaningful, the study consisted of three replications. Three groups of weaner and yearling heifers were obtained in the falls of 1979, 1980, and 1981. They remained in the study until they weaned their first calf. The third, and final, replicate was completed in October, 1983 when the calves were weaned. The results for all three replicates have been combined for analysis and will be published sometime in 1984.

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