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TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION
SERVICE-**

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Strategies for Culling Cows

Well fall is here so it's that time of year when we not only wean our calves but palpate, age and cull cows! It's a hard decision for some folks because cows are sometimes difficult and often expensive to replace, but it's a part of playing the game. There is no use feeding a cow through the winter that is open, a poor doer, has a bad udder, no milk, raises a sorry calf, or has few to no teeth. I always hating culling that old cow that raised a good calf every year but has become what we call a gummer (no teeth). I have been known to keep those really short, broken mouth or solid mouth cows a little too long, but it's hard to let them go when they continue to breed back and raise a decent calf. I sold a couple truckloads of supper short solid mouth cows with baby calves on them for a little over \$2000 a pair back in 2014. I have to say it didn't bother me at all to cull those. But rarely do they bring anywhere close to that dollar amount when they are worn out. So when it comes to mousing one, either let someone else do it that is not sentimental or will think she can make it one more year, but by all means get someone that knows what they are doing. Or if you must do it yourself then be disciplined enough to know when the old mama needs to go. Of course if you're in rocky or sandy country, you're going to be culling a cow with a bad mouth sooner than you would if you were on better ground. So the cows will be younger than you would like when they run out of teeth. On the other hand I have had cows that were 16-17 years old and still had short, but decent teeth. It just depends on your geographic location. <When it comes to open cows it should be a little easier decision to cull that old cow, the hard part is culling the open cows that are young. Open cows mean no calf to sell the next year, so she is going to be a free grazer for an entire year. The only way I found to justify keeping her is to put her in the fall calving group, that is if you have one. I have always had both a spring and fall group and mainly for this very reason. I do like a fall calving herd in the right country, with not too harsh of a winter, and with some good winter pasture or stockpiled grazing. Fall calvers don't work for everyone and can be a little on the expensive side if you're having to hand feed them all winter. Especially if hay, cubes and other inputs are high like they have been in recent years. Put the pencil to it and see if it pays. <Now culling the open cow gets a little more complicated if you leave your bulls out year round. I always seasoned my bulls for a set number of days. I leave them in for 60 days on the fall group and 90 days on the spring group. Whatever works for you but at least have a contained breeding season. It will pay dividends in more ways than you know. Especially, when you market those uniform calves. Everyone knows to cull a poor doing cow, it's just too expensive to keep her. One that has no milk and raises a sorry calf is a no brainer too. If a cow gets mastitis in her udder, comes down with bad case of BVD or Pneumonia, get rid of her, usually she's not worth the medicine bill, and you ain't got time for that! There is no excuse for keeping one that has a bad disposition either, somebody could get hurt. <If you cull the right cows, your herd will rapidly be rid of most of the problems that take your time and cost you money. It will slowly improve your income-generating traits. If you can hold your cull cows until February they seem to bring a much better price than during the Fall rush when everyone's dumping them on the market. Culling Heifers is a different ball game! Pay attention! You're the boss