



Improve your AI conception rates

by Joel Nkuna, AI technician: Taurus

Conception rate is the percentage of cows that have become pregnant through artificial insemination (AI) or natural mating. If I inseminate ten cows and I get six calves, then my conception rate will be 60%.

When you are artificially breeding your cattle, you must consider the following factors:

- Nutrition and semen-handling have a major effect on conception rates
- Low conception rates can also occur when inseminators use faulty insemination techniques.

Nutrition

Feeding is a very important factor. Cows in good body condition come on heat and get in calve quicker than cows in light condition. Remember not to overfeed cows.

Semen handling

Exposing the semen to sunlight and rough handling of semen straws, can reduce conception rates.

Insemination techniques

Rapid gun withdrawal may cause the semen to flow back. Passing the insemination gun too far forward or excessive movement of the pistolet in the uterus, may damage the lining of the uterus. Poor hygiene resulting in contamination of the pistolet, may introduce infection into the uterus.

Semen placement

Semen is often placed too deep up one uterine horn or not deep enough in the reproductive tract. The correct placement is in the uterus body.

Heat detection

Inseminating cows not on heat, inseminating the wrong cow or inseminating too early or too late, will seriously affect conception rates.

Other important factors that affect conception rates, are good management and good observation of your herd. **UM**