

Cattle artificial insemination breeding success depends on the best heat detection system for your ranch or farm.

Over the years, many things have been tried. One was to put a caulk line on the tailhead of the cow and breed her when it was rubbed off. Spray painting a line on the tail instead of the caulk line is another method. The bull point marker used with a gomer bull is a type of heat detection system but this can be a very costly way to go. The costs to keep a gomer bull that cannot breed and to buy a gallon of ink is about fifty dollars. The Kamar® heat detector patch that is glued on the tail head works very well. It is very visible and will give you a good idea as to the time that the cow came into standing heat. Another option is the EstroTECT™ heat detector that is self-sticking and uses the same principle as a scratch off lottery ticket.

This year I tried a different heat detector called a TattleTale™. It has a plastic holder that is glued on the cow's tail head. The holder contains an electronic device which is really a linear stopwatch that uses led lights instead of numbers. If the cow stands to be mounted for longer than 4 seconds it starts a sequence of lights flashing. The short flashes are the number of times she was mounted in any hour. The long flashes are the hours up to 12 hours. For example, if you go out at 6:45 am and there are 7 long lights flashing you can figure out that she came in standing heat at around 11:00 pm. You can stand and watch until the next long light #8 starts and then look at your watch and that will tell you to the minute when she was first mounted. Let's say at 6:52 am the 8th light started, now you have her start time of 11:52 pm. That is the time she came into standing heat. The TattleTale™ runs about forty dollars and can be reused with a new three dollar plastic holder each time. It is not very costly when you consider the cost of missing a heat or getting the time wrong and not getting the cow pregnant.

There is a system that has radios mounted on the cows that will send a signal back to your computer. This is probably the most accurate but the most costly, without a doubt. Another costly option is an ovascan ovulation monitor which measures the time of ovulation, not the time of standing heat, but you can use this time to breed with great results.

You should be checking the cow herd for about an hour in the morning and about twelve hours later for another hour to see any mounting activity, heat detector readings, or indications of standing heat. Then use the old standard am/pm rule to breed by. If in standing heat in the morning breed that night. If in heat at night, breed the next morning. If in doubt breed early. And with any heat detector system always look for secondary signs of heat as a backup. The best is a clear sticky vaginal fluid that will be on the tail or side of the rump. Remember this; a person's judgment is only as good as his or her information in any given situation. If you know of another system please let me know about it. Thank you very much and good luck for successful breeding.

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