Lecture 2

MATING IN BEEF HERD

Mating: It is the physical meeting of the male and female animal for the purpose of parturition or giving birth. Before mating can occur, the female animal must be on heat. She must be willing for the male animal to mount her. Mating is the precursor to sexual reproduction in farm animals.
There are two major types of mating
1. Natural
2. Artificial

Natural mating: This is the process of allowing male to mount or climb on female animal on heat without any assistance e.g. hand and pasture mating.

Artificial mating: This does not require the physical mating of the male and female animal e.g. artificial insemination. It is the method of introducing sperm into the vagina of the female animal by artificial means.

METHOD OF MATING

There are three methods of mating in cattle

1. **Hand-mating:**

It involves secluding the bull from the female and allowing him to serve the animal only at owner's discretion. When a cow is found to be on heat she is brought to the bull and service. This method is practiced by pure bred breeders who want to be sure of calf parentage of each calf. It also ensures that heifers are not mated prematurely and that cows may be held back if required for one or more heat after calving.

Advantages
It uses a bull on more female.
It also helps in keeping accurate record.

Disadvantage
It is labour intensive and expensive.

2. Pasture mating:
It is a traditional method that is common throughout the world. The bulls are allowed to run with female to be mated. The numbers of cows a bull can service depend greatly on the types of pasture. Bulls can serve 10-25 cows under range condition whereas a bull can serve 40 cows on improved pasture where there are no physical obstruction like mountains and trees. And where forage extremely sparse forage, a bull can serve 15 cows. The bull must be above 3 years.

Advantage

There is reduction in required labour and the cost of keeping a male is low.

Disadvantage

It leads to transfer of infectious disease and heifer may be mated immaturely. Also, a female may be mated by more than one male, hence paternity becomes difficult to determine.

3. Artificial insemination

This is the method of introducing sperms into the vagina of the female animal by artificial means. It means that female has no contact with the male. It is rather less efficient with heifers than with cows because heifers rarely show estrous so clearly.

Advantages

It gives operator or the breeder access to bulls of genetic worth that he could never afford to purchase.
It facilitates crossbreeding program.
It eliminates disease spread by venereal contact.
Many offspring can be produced by a particular male in a given period.

Disadvantage

It requires more labour and experienced personnel and management.