

Embryo Transfer...who's your mommy??

March Newsletter

Northwest Veterinary Associates

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One of the services Northwest Vets provides is embryo transfer work. It happens to be one of my personal interests, and something that I have been doing more frequently over the past few months. Lately I have had many questions from clients, so I thought I would give an overview of the process and how it can be done on your farm to increase the genetic potential of your herd.

What does the procedure involve? When a cow that you want to flush is roughly 80-90 days in milk comes into heat, I will create a flush schedule based on the heat. You are given a schedule to follow which includes giving hormone shots twice a day for several days. This hormone causes the ovaries to superovulate, producing many follicles/eggs at once. Then the cow comes into heat and is bred several times, hopefully creating many fertile embryos. Seven days later, the cow is flushed using gravity flow and the embryos are collected in a filter. The embryos are viewed under a microscope and graded. The good quality ones are then either implanted into a surrogate mother or frozen in liquid nitrogen for future use.

What cow should you flush? People flush cows for different reasons, some want to make show calves, and some want to flush their high producing cows, trying to increase the number of calves they can have in one lactation from a certain cow. Now that there is a genomics test, some clients want to flush from their cows with higher genomic numbers.

Which animals should you use as the surrogate mothers (recipients)? Virgin heifers tend to be the best, but they need to be in good body condition, of adequate size, and well vaccinated. First calf heifers can be used as well if they don't have history of being a hard breeder, and did not have any calving difficulties. These recipients have to be synchronized so that they were in heat on the same day as the donor cow was bred. They are always checked prior to transfer to be sure they are on day 7 of their cycle and are not cystic.

Please feel free to contact the office and leave me a message if you have any further questions about this process, I would be glad to work with you to improve the genetics within your herd!