

# Steps to A Successful Synchronization and A.I. Program

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Synchronization and artificial insemination are effective tools to build a better cowherd. However they are only as effective as the planning and implementation put into both of those programs. This article will cover some areas that should be given consideration to give your operation the highest probability of advancing the genetics and reproduction success of your cowherd. This will make the project a less stressful experience for your cows and those who help you carry out the program and hopefully provide an economic return for the investment and effort you put into the program.

## The first step is research and education.

Understanding synchronization and artificial insemination systems and processes will be critical in how you employ your program and carry out your project. All of the A.I. stud media offer information on various protocols you can use. Study and review this information and then visit with your representative about the pros and cons of each protocol as it relates to your operation.

## Determine your goals.

Do not make a protocol or system selection based on cost alone. Extend your thought process to labor, equipment and time availability to you and those who are working with you. And do not measure success on pregnancy rate alone. Holistic success includes time management, ease of handling and stress reduction on cattle handled, cost, efficiency and happy help. Reproduction is a trait that is influenced by many factors thus it would be logical that a successful program would identify a broad base of goals under the umbrella of the main goal for your program.

## Stick with your program.

Once you have decided on your synchronization and A.I. program, stick with it. Keep in mind that no protocol is 100% effective. However, if you do not carry out a program to the end, you may not be able to identify the source for results that were less than expected and have a basis to make the necessary changes for future projects.

## Control.

Controllable factors for your project are organization, equipment, cleanliness, and recognizing your resources and limitations. Get organized by writing your shot schedule out on a calendar. Make sure you also include the timing of herd health programs. It is not recommended to give your cows shots when you are administering synchronization shots. This includes other herd management practices such as branding, dehorning, freeze branding, etc. It is really easy to talk yourself into doing this to avoid another trip through the chute but will open

the door to poor results. You are making an investment in time, resources and labor that may be lost by cutting corners.

### Organize and stay clean.

Organize, gather and clean your breeding equipment ahead of the project. Your breeding box should include a thermometer to check your water bath temp, a timer, pencil, note pad, A.I. guns, sheaths, sheath protectors, scissors or cito cutters, paper towels, gloves and a spray bottle of isopropyl alcohol to clean equipment. Go through and clean your A.I. guns and cito thaw, scissors and work area periodically. Keeping your equipment clean will reduce semen contamination and ultimately uterine infections.

### Handling facilities.

Go out and look at your working corrals and handling facilities. Recall what bottlenecks are in the system what can make this year's project work better for you, your help and the cattle. It is amazing how much efficiency and stress reduction can be gained from fixing the chute or repairing the working alley, not to mention making enhancements to control light and wind. Anticipate how your set up will work in all kinds of weather.

### Respect.

If you have someone hired to help you A.I. and/or synchronize, be respectful and courteous of their time and talents. Being prompt, having adequate working facilities and being organized will go along way in developing and maintaining a positive and successful working relationship with those you employ to help you. Your success is contingent on their being able to do what they do best. These steps will hopefully provide a basis for making your next synchronization and A.I. program successful, efficient and economical. Good Luck!

*Annette Steffan and her husband Chuck own Heart River Genetics LLC in Belfield, ND. They operate an embryo transfer and donor housing facility. Services that they offer include: donor super ovulation, bovine embryo transfer, artificial insemination services, embryo exports, embryo recipient herd setup and management. They specialize in advanced bovine reproduction.*