



Genetics and the Behavior of Domestic Animals: Chapter 5. Reproductive and Maternal Behavior of Livestock

Peter J. Chenoweth, Antonio J. Landaeta-Hernández, Cornelia Flöercke

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This chapter describes the reproductive and maternal behaviors of different livestock species (cattle, horses, pigs, goats, and water buffalo) with an emphasis on those traits which are genetically conserved. All of the species discussed are polygynous and promiscuous, and females undergo estrous cycles in which males are mainly attracted by movement and posture cues. Major differences in both reproductive and maternal behaviors are observed between “prey” and “predator” type species. Genetic variation also occurs within species, with breed and line differences being observed in all of the behaviors discussed, allowing selection for optimal reproductive and maternal behaviors. However, modern livestock systems, which emphasize production traits, can diminish reproductive and maternal traits and increase detrimental behaviors, such as piglet crushing and savaging in sows. With modern selection tools, greater emphasis on positive reproductive and maternal traits is achievable within the context of profitable production.

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