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Grandma has a calf



JOHN BURGESS/THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

A 28 year-old cow called Grandma walks across her Stony Point Road pasture with her latest calf , born two days ago in Santa Rosa.

BY JULIE JOHNSON
THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

Published: Thursday, February 25, 2010 at 3:32 p.m.

Last Modified: Thursday, February 25, 2010 at 3:32 p.m.

The matriarch cow of a family farm off Stony Point Road in west Santa Rosa gave birth to a calf before dawn Tuesday morning.

Nothing new about a cow giving birth, except that Grandma, as they call her, is about 28 years old, far older than the average life span of a cow and even older than the average birthing age of a cow.

"I thought she was just having a good winter, gaining weight from the hay," said Thomas Kampmann, 80, Grandma's keeper. "It didn't even enter my mind she was having a calf."

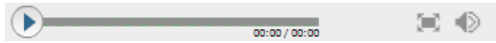
The average life expectancy of a cow is between 10 and 12 years old, said Dr. Gene Harlan, who's worked as a veterinarian with the Cotati Large Animal Hospital since 1974. A 20-year-old is the oldest cow Harlan's ever seen give birth during his career, he said.



"When you think about a 28-year-old cow, that would be more like an 80-year-old woman having a baby," Harlan said.

Grandma, Angus-Holstein cross, kept bellowing early Tuesday, causing Kampmann's neighbor Brandi Malarich, 32, to step out of her home office and peer into the pasture.

She saw Grandma licking clean a brand new heifer.



"I think Grandma had a calf," Malarich said over the phone to Kampmann.

The newborn heifer, silky brown with a white-tipped tail, paused in its chase after its mother Thursday morning, nervous about passing through an opening in a fence.

"You can do it," coaxed Kampmann's son, Luke Kampmann, 47, who helps his father watch over the animals.

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