Hair-raising herd

Two usually hairless calves in Carencro are growing a third coat of hair now, and owner Edward Cormier is hoping this batch will last. Cormier was considering donating at least one of the calves to LSU for research but was waiting in June to see if a vitamin treatment would work on the coat. Meanwhile, the 6-month-old calves shaded themselves from sunburn in the mid-summer heat.

One pink and the other black, they were born to two different Hereford mothers in February with hair, but lost the coat soon afterwards, Cormier said.

"In the freezing weather, we brought them in. We couldn't cover them because the mom would take it off. They stay in the shade now. It's a good thing we've got plenty of shade out here," Cormier said.

"The black one kind of looked like a gorilla because he had all his hair but on his face. Dr. Martin tried shots and they got a good coat but his head was still bare, and instead of hair coming out in the front of his face they went bare again," Cormier said in June.

"But, he added, "calves normally shed this time of year." Cormier said.

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Martin said he has seen hairlessness in calves before, such as one he just treaty in Henry, La., which lost its coat because of a fungus from recent flooding.

"Sometimes when they're born premature they will be hairless, but it will grow when they become older," he said.

Cormier said the two calves weren't premature either.

Russell Guarino, local county extension agent, said the Carencro case of hairlessness is the first one he has heard of and he doesn't think the calves could be sold without hair.

However, Martin said the calves could be sold "as long as it isn't contagious. It's nothing to worry about."

Foil said she would like to study one of the calves, but that the LSU school couldn't afford to care for the animal during study so it would have to be killed and studied by autopsy.