

# What Producers Should Be Thinking About In October

Beef Cowherd Tips by Twig Marston, K-State Beef Extension Specialist, Cow/Calf

## Cowherd Management

Pregnancy Check.

Cull cows because of:

Open.

Late vs. Early calving.

Soundness - udder, feet/legs, eyes, teeth, disposition.

Productivity - Most Probable Producing Ability (from herd performance records).

Disposition

Body Condition Score

Provide thin cows (body condition score 3's and 4's) extra feed now.

Take advantage of weather, stage of pregnancy, lower nutrient requirements, and quality feedstuffs.

In late October you may want start feeding supplement to mature cows using these guidelines:

Dry grass 1 1/2 - 2 lb supplement/day of a 40% CP supplement

Dry grass 3 - 4 lb supplement/day of a 20% supplement

Dry grass + 10 lb good nonlegume hay, no supplement needed (heifers may need more supplement than older cows)

Supplement nutrients that are most deficient.

Compare supplements on a cost per pound of nutrient basis.

KSU research has reported early winter supplementation is not necessary if grazing forage supplies are adequate. Third trimester cows have had the ability to achieve their target calving weights with

supplementation.

Check individual identification of cows. Replace lost tags or redo brands.

Utilize crop residues. Grazing crop aftermath can reduce daily cow costs by 50¢ or more.

Strip graze or rotate fields to improve grazing efficiency.

Average body condition cows can be grazed at 1 to 2 acres/cow for 30 days assuming normal weather.

Consider feeding cull cows to increase value, body weight, and utilize cheap feedstuffs. Seasonal price trends have allowed producers to take advantage of maximum profit opportunities with cull cow feeding programs. Healthy cows can gain extremely well on well balanced diets.

## Calf Management

Wean calves:

Reduce stress. Provide a clean, dust-free, comfortable environment.

Provide balanced nutritional program to promote weight gain and health.

Observe feed and water intake.

Healthy, problem free calves have large appetites.

Observe calves frequently, early detection of sickness reduces medical costs and lost performance.

Vaccinate calves and control internal/external parasites through veterinary consultation (ideally done prior to weaning).

Vaccinate all replacement heifer

candidates for brucellosis if within 4-10 months of age.

Use implants and feed additives to improve efficient animal performance.

Weigh all calves individually.

Allows for correct sorting, herd culling, growing programs, replacement heifer selection, and marketing plans.

Participate in Whole Herd Rewards, Performance Plus, and(or) other ranch record/performance systems.

Finalize plans to merchandise calves or to background through yearling or finishing programs. Consider feedstuff availability. Limit feeding high concentrate diets may be a profitable feeding program.

Select replacement heifers which are:

Born early in the calving season.

This should increase the number of yearling heifers bred during the early days of the subsequent breeding season.

Daughters of above average producing cows. Performance traits are moderately heritable trait.

Of the proper frame size to complement desired mature size and weight.

Structurally correct. Avoid breeding udder, feet and leg problems into the herd.

Vaccinate replacement heifers with first round of viral vaccines.

Plan replacement heifer nutrition program so that heifers will be at their "target weight" (65% of their mature weight) by the start of the breeding season.

### **Forage/Pasture Management**

Observe pasture weed problems to aid in planning control methods needed next spring.

Monitor grazing conditions and rotate pastures if possible and(or) practical.

Plan winter nutritional program through pasture and forage management.

For stocker cattle and replacement heifers, supplement maturing grasses with an acceptable degradable intake protein/ionophore(feed additive) type supplement.

### **General Management**

Avoid unnecessary stress - Handle cows and calves to reduce shrink, sustain good health, and minimize sickness.

Forage analyze for nitrate and nutrient content. Use these to develop winter feeding programs.

Repair, replace and improve facilities.

Plan your marketing program, including private treaty, consignment sales, test stations, production sales, etc.

A penny saved is a penny earned - price byproducts, grains and other feedstuffs on a per nutrient basis.  
*Excerpts from News from KSU Animal Sciences*