

Angus Advisor

August Beef Cow Herd Management Tips

Upper Midwest Region

by Harlan Ritchie, Extension Beef Specialist
Michigan State University

- In many areas new forage seedings may be established in mid- to late summer after plowing and tillage in early summer to control weeds and grass regrowth. If tillage was not used, a herbicide can be applied, followed by sod seeding. However, sod seedings in summer are not as successful as spring seedings. Consult your area Extension office for details.
- Vaccinate replacement heifers for brucellosis (Bang's disease) if required. Requirements vary from state to state. Consult your veterinarian for details.
- Reimplant nonreplacement calves with growth stimulant if not done already.
- If calves are not doing as well as expected, consider deworming, especially if pastures are short.
- Be prepared to supplement the herd if pastures start to dry up. You can get more from pastures if you supplement early.
- If you are a seedstock producer who consigns spring-born bull calves to a central test, it's time to check entrance requirements to ensure all rules are met on schedule prior to delivery date.

Southern Region

by R.S. Sand, Extension Beef Specialist
University of Florida

- Cut corn silage.
- Cut hay.
- Apply lime for fall and winter crops.
- Harvest Bahiagrass seed.
- Check mineral feeders.
- Update market information and marketing plans.
- Check for army worms, spittlebugs and mole crickets. Treat if necessary.
- Check dust bags.
- Wean calves, and cull the cow herd.
- Watch for evidence of abortions.
- Observe animals regularly for signs of disease.

- If cattle grubs were found on cattle last winter or heel flies were observed in the pasture, treat cattle for grubs this month.
- Pregnancy test and cull open heifers from the replacement herd.

Rocky Mountain West Region

by Doug Hixon, Extension Beef Specialist
University of Wyoming

- If you know the cows you plan to salvage this fall, August and early September are good times to market them. The market is typically stronger than in October and November when it's flooded with open cows following pregnancy checks.
- Consider your calf marketing plan. Commercial producers might evaluate various marketing alternatives, including splitting and marketing various segments at different times in order to spread out risk. Of course, prices and costs associated with holding calves longer rather than selling at weaning must be evaluated before the decision is made.
- Review your weaning health program with your veterinarian. Purchase the needed vaccines so you will be ready to give your preconditioning vaccinations at the appropriate times prior to weaning.
- If grazing forages become limited, consider weaning calves early, particularly off the 2- and 3-year-old females. This will not only reduce nutrient demand on the land, but it also will reduce nutrient stress on these young females. Terminating lactation allows them to improve body condition prior to the onset of winter. In some circumstances, supplemental feed may be needed.
- If you are a seedstock producer who consigns spring-born bull calves to bull tests or either a seedstock or commercial producer who consigns steers to feedlot tests and carcass evaluation programs, check entrance requirements. Make sure you wean at an appropriate time, and administer the required health program. Good health does not ensure success in these programs, but you won't have success without healthy calves.

Midwest Region

by Twig Marston, Extension Beef Specialist
Kansas State University

August and September are months when forages are maturing, weaning time is approaching, and weather dictates several key management decisions.

Breeding season

- If heifers or cows are still showing signs of estrus, look for problems such as:
 - Inadequate bull power.
 - Nutritional stress.
 - Inadequate body condition.
 - Reproductive disorders, including IBR, vibrio, leptospirosis, cystic ovaries, uterine infections, etc.
- Cull cows that are not conceiving after three or four services by a fertile bull.
- Remove bulls after 90 days of service (preferably 60 days with cows, 45 days with heifers).

Cow herd nutrition

- Provide ample amounts of clean, fresh drinking water.
- Consider limited-intake creep-feeding if:
 - Drought develops and persists.
 - Range conditions limit milk production.
 - Creep or grain prices are relatively low.
 - Value of gain provides economic benefits.
- Tips for successful limited-intake creep-feeding:
 - Limit intake to less than 2 lb./head/day.
 - Use an ionophore or other feed additive to maximize efficiency.
 - Protein level should be at least 16%.
 - High salt levels may help limit intake, but they can be tough on feeders.
- Prepurchase bulk-rate winter supplementation prior to seasonal price increases.

Herd health

- If pinkeye is likely to be a problem, consider the following preventive and therapeutic measures.

Preventive:

 - Make sure herd is receiving adequate vitamins and trace minerals in their diet.
 - Consider using a medicated trace-mineral package.
 - Consider vaccination for pinkeye and IBR.
 - Control face flies.
 - Clip pastures with tall, coarse grasses that may irritate eyes.
 - Provide ample shade.

Therapeutic:

- Administer an intramuscular injection of long-acting oxytetracycline when symptoms are first noticed.
- Shut out irritating sunlight by patching eyes, providing shade, etc.
- Control flies.
- Consult your veterinarian.
- Consider revaccinating for respiratory diseases any animals that will be taken to livestock shows.
- Vaccinate suckling calves for IBR, BVD, PI₃, BRSV and possibly pasteurilla at least three weeks prior to weaning.
- Revaccinate all calves for blackleg.
- Vaccinate replacement heifers for brucellosis at 4-10 months of age.
- Monitor and treat foot rot.

Forage and pasture management

- Enhance grazing distribution with mineral mixture placement away from water sources.
- Observe pasture-weed problems to aid in planning control methods needed next spring.
- Monitor grazing conditions and rotate pastures if possible or practical.
- If pastures will run out in late summer, get ready to provide emergency feeds. Start supplemental feeding before pastures are gone to extend grazing.
- Harvest and store forages properly. Minimize waste by reducing spoilage.
- Sample harvested forages and have them analyzed for nitrate and nutrient composition.
- Plan winter nutritional program through pasture and forage management.
- For stocker cattle and replacement heifers, supplement maturing grasses with an acceptable degradable intake protein or ionophore (feed additive) supplement.

Reproductive management

- Remove bulls to consolidate calving season.
- Pregnancy check and age pregnancies 60 days after the end of the breeding season. Cull cows that are short-bred.

These methods contribute to a more uniform calf crop, make winter nutritional management easier and increase the success rate of next year's breeding season.

General management

- Avoid unnecessary heat stress. Don't

handle or transport cattle during the heat of the day.

- Repair, replace and improve facilities needed for fall processing.
- Order supplies, vaccines, tags and other products needed at weaning time.
- Consider earlier-than-normal weaning if:
 - Drought develops and persists.
 - Range conditions limit milk production.
 - Cows are losing body condition.
 - Facilities and management are available to handle lightweight calves.
 - First-calf heifers have the most to gain.

- Resist the temptation to feed the cows without weaning; feeding early-weaned calves is more efficient.
- Look for unsound cows that need to be culled from the herd.
- Prepare to have your calf crop weighed and analyzed through your state, regional or breed performance-testing program.
- Document cost of production by participating in Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) programs.
- Plan your marketing program, including private treaty, consignment sales, test stations, production sales, etc. 