Midwest Region
by Patrick Gunn, Iowa State University, pgunn@iastate.edu

Water
For producers in the Midwest, August can be one of the most stressful months on the cow herd. Extreme heat has already been experienced by most of the United States this summer. More heat on the way reinforces the need to constantly monitor water sources to make sure they are both clean and cool.

In the summer months, cattle will consume approximately 2 gallons (gal.) of water per 100 lb. of body weight. Heat waves may increase this intake by 50% or more. If water has to be delivered, be cognizant of this increased intake. If using a pond as a water source, be careful of blue-green algae blooms to avoid cyanobacteria poisoning. These blooms are most prevalent in late summer and early fall when water becomes hot and stagnant.

In addition to having a clean and cool source of water, the location of that water is extremely important. Research from the universities of Missouri and Wyoming has shown that grazing uniformity and grazing efficiency exponentially decrease as distance from a water source increases. Researchers have reported increased visits between cow and calf gradually declines. Researchers have reported increased weight gains and reduced vocalization during the weaning period in calves weaned in the fenceline system when compared with traditional separation methods.

Calving
Many fall-calving herds may have a few calves on the ground already. Increased heat stress coupled with shortened gestation lengths associated with calving-ease genetics often equate to calves hitting the ground as early as two or three weeks ahead of their scheduled due date. Be prepared!

Excessive heat can lead to lethargic calves at birth. Be sure to have colostrum replacers, supplements and electrolytes on hand and ready to use. Provide shade if possible to give calves a chance to recover from the birthing process.

As always, consult with the team of experts you have assembled, including your beef extension specialist, nutritionist and herd health veterinarian.

Southern Great Plains
by David Lalman, Oklahoma State University, david.lalman@okstate.edu

Spring-calving herds
1. Prepare for weaning by purchasing health program supplies, ensuring that working and weaning facilities are in good

Guide to abbreviations and acronyms

$Values dollar value indexes
ADG average daily gain
AI artificial insemination
AIMS Angus Information Management Software
BCS body condition score
BLV bovine leukemia virus
BMP best management practices
BQA beef quality assurance
BRD bovine respiratory disease
BRSV bovine respiratory syncitial virus
brucellosis Bang’s disease
BSE bovine spongiform encephalopathy
BVD bovine viral diarrhea
Ca calcium
CHAPS Cow Herd Analysis and Performance System
CP crude protein
cwt. hundredweight
DM dry matter
EPD expected progeny difference
ET embryo transfer
FMD foot-and-mouth disease
GnRH gonadotropin-releasing hormone
IBR infectious bovine rhinotracheitis
ID identification
IM intramuscular
in. inch
lb. pound
LCT lower critical temperature
lepto leptospirosis
Mg magnesium
MIG management-intensive grazing
MLV modified-live virus
N nitrogen
P phosphorus
PI persistent infection
PI3 parainfluenza-3 virus
preg-check pregnancy-check
Se selenium
sq. ft. square feet
SPA Standardized Performance Analysis
TB bovine tuberculosis
TDN total digestible nutrients
THI temperature-humidity index
trich trichomoniasis
Zn zinc

To make the “Angus Advisor” more concise and consistent, we have used the following abbreviations or expressions:

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Spring-calving herds
1. Prepare for weaning by purchasing health program supplies, ensuring that working and weaning facilities are in good
condition, and planning a nutrition program for weaned calves. This should include planning and managing for availability of high-quality pasture for the freshly weaned calves, assuming adequate precipitation.

2. If the cow herd can be gathered once before weaning, an effective strategy is to vaccinate calves two to six weeks prior to weaning and again at weaning. In fact, many value-added health programs recommend this protocol to maximize immune response in weaned calves.

3. Remove insecticide ear tags as soon as possible or practical once they begin to lose their effectiveness. This helps to minimize resistance buildup over time.

Fall-calving herds

1. Yearling replacement heifers grazing native pastures may benefit from a small package (around 1 lb. per day) of high-protein supplement in order to ensure adequate growth and development prior to breeding in November.

2. Calves that were first vaccinated at weaning require booster vaccinations within two to four weeks.

3. Calving season begins in mid- to late August for most fall-calving herds. Purchase calving supplies and prepare ID tags. The incidence of dystocia due to heavy birth weight is lower in fall-calving systems. However, producers should still be prepared to deal with occasional dystocia cases associated with abnormal presentations.

General recommendations

1. Monitor herd health for the possibility of a pinkeye (infectious bovine keratoconjunctivitis) outbreak. Once started, the spread of this disease can be very difficult to control, so it is better to treat animals early and address preventive management steps. One of the primary culprits in spreading the disease is thought to be horn flies and face flies. Another agitant thought to facilitate this disease is intense ultraviolet radiation. Therefore, shade is important for all animals, and eye patches can be used on infected animals to minimize both sunlight and exposure to flies. When treating cattle for pinkeye, wear gloves and protective clothing and discard or disinfect clothing and equipment used before moving on to treat or handle another animal.

2. At the time of this writing, pasture conditions are improved across much of the Southern Great Plains due to early summer rainfall. With abundant moisture, invasive plant species are thriving. While
many woody plant (brush) species should ideally be sprayed earlier in the summer, some aggressive invasive species can be controlled with herbicide through the month of August. Sericea lespedeza is a good example, as it begins to flower and produce seed in late August and September.

3. Hay supplies this coming winter will be abundant, although likely low in quality due to delayed harvest and rain damage. Much of the cool-season annual (wheat) hay crop was not harvested at all due to rain delays or harvested after substantial rain damage. Be sure to have warm-season annual forage tested for the potential of high nitrate content. Of course, this risk is much greater if drier conditions return. If you will need to purchase hay to winter your cattle this year, now is the time to begin identifying a source.

4. Consider managing a portion of Bermuda grass and fescue pasture for late-summer fertilization and fall grazing. More information is available at www.beefextension.com.

5. Early to mid-August is about the latest a person can spray sericea lespedeza and expect to achieve reasonable reductions in the plant population the following year.

Western Region
by Randy Perry, California State University, Fresno, randyp@csufresno.edu

Fall-calving herds
The main focus is to prepare for the calving season.

Genetic management
Sire selection. The start of the breeding period is several months away; however, now is the time to start developing a list of potential AI sires. For most successful purebred producers, sire evaluation is a continual process that never ends. In my opinion, it is the most important management decision that is made each year in a purebred or seedstock operation of any species.

Reproductive management
Vaccinations. If any precalving vaccinations, such as a scour vaccine, are going to be administered, they should be given far enough in advance of the calving season to avoid handling cows that are extremely close to parturition.

Calving supplies and equipment. Be sure that equipment is in working order and supplies are on hand to assist females once calving starts. In addition, if injections such as selenium are going to be administered at birth, be sure that an adequate supply of those products is on hand.

Nutritional management
Mineral supplementation. It is important that minerals are supplemented on a year-round basis. Supplements should be formulated to meet deficiencies specific to your region or area.

Protein and energy supplementation. Most spring-calving cows in the West graze irrigated pastures. Typically, cows grazing irrigated pastures are receiving adequate levels of both protein and energy. Therefore, supplementation is not needed.

Health management
Pinkeye prevention. Midsummer is the time of year when problems with pinkeye can become quite prevalent and, thus, treatments can become time-consuming. The incidence of pinkeye can be reduced by clipping tall, mature grasses; controlling flies with dust bags, pour-ons and/or fly tags; and treating problems quickly and aggressively. Recommendations for treatment were included in last month’s column.

Mid-South Atlantic Region
by Kevin Shaffer, West Virginia University, Kevin.Shaffer@mail.wvu.edu

The Mid-South Atlantic region is characterized by small (<100 cows) to mid-sized (100-250 cows) cow-calf operations that, like all areas of cow-calf production, become more geographically dispersed as they increase in size; however, given the nature of our region’s topography, it can often be difficult to manage cows in groups of sufficient size to effect meaningful within-herd comparisons of animal performance.

From the perspective of the seedstock producer, this creates a challenging management environment in which to develop an effective genetic evaluation and selection program. As such, it is imperative that small- to mid-sized seedstock producers develop management systems that generate the most accurate and meaningful within-herd comparisons of genetic merit available within their environment.

When compared to large-scale seedstock producers, small- to mid-sized seedstock producers are at a numerical disadvantage, having fewer cows, more contemporary groups and fewer calves per contemporary group than their larger counterparts.

However, from an animal breeding perspective, we know there is strength in numbers.

First, larger numbers allow for greater selection intensity, which impacts genetic change per year. Second, larger numbers
allow for mistakes. Larger breeders can make riskier (low-accuracy) matings because they can more easily absorb the mistake. Smaller breeders don’t have that luxury because they simply don’t have that many animals from which to select. If they make a mistake, they often end up dealing with it for several years or even several generations, so how does a small-scale seedstock producer make the most of the numbers they have?

First, breeders must understand that the contemporary group is the foundation of within- and among-herd genetic evaluation programs and that contemporary group data must be reported accurately to generate meaningful results. (The Association’s Angus Education Center provides an excellent resource on contemporary-group management.)

When do you begin to define or designate contemporary groups? I believe most would say at birth. In my opinion it starts even earlier. I believe true contemporary group management begins at breeding, and specifically how and why you mate cows and to what bull you mate them.

Certainly, the primary goal of every mating is to create the best possible combination of genes to be the next generation of parents; however, we should also have the secondary goal of accurately and effectively evaluating the sires we have chosen to use both artificially and naturally. A breeder cannot accurately evaluate the usefulness of a sire in their breeding program by only generating a handful of calves in one year that will be split among sexes and contemporary groups.

Sire groups are like sub-contemporary groups, and like true contemporary groups, they need to be as large as possible to be most useful. Although it may seem risky to put all your eggs in just a couple of baskets, attempting to minimize the number of sires utilized will help you understand more quickly if a certain sire will work for you or not and also force you to do more homework prior to utilizing a bull.

Additionally, breeders should carefully consider age and sire of dam in addition to performance and phenotype when mating cows and be sure to distribute sires across these groups. Within-herd evaluation of a sire is much less meaningful if progeny are only represented in a certain age class or sire group of females.

In herds of 100 females or fewer, I recommend using no more than three AI sires and at least two of them must be proven, high-accuracy bulls. I try to mate the majority (approximately 80%-85%) of females to the high-accuracy sires and split the remaining females among a promising lower-accuracy AI sire and/or my natural-service bull(s). By doing so, I hope to generate an approximately equal number of progeny by each of the high-accuracy (reference) and natural-service sires. This maximizes the number of direct progeny comparisons between my natural-service bulls and reference sires, as well as creates ample-sized sire groups from which to select. Even with this method, it is easy to have five to seven sires represented across 100 progeny.

In effect, what I am trying to say is that even though you may have fewer cows, you need to think big. Think in terms of the population (your herd) and not in terms of the individual cow. They’re not all donor cows, and we shouldn’t try to make a rock-star mating with every cow. Rather, we should try to steadily move the population average toward our goal while simultaneously generating consistency and repeatability.

Consider the impressive consistency of cattle represented in many large breeders’ sales. I don’t want to take anything away from large breeders, but by the time we see them, they have already put a large sort on those cattle. As smaller breeders, we have to give ourselves the ability to sort, but we can’t afford a deep sort.