ANGUS ADVISOR

Our team of Angus advisors offer regional tips for herd management for the month of January.

Southern Great Plains

by David Lalman
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Spring-calving herds

- A 1,200-lb. Angus cow in good body condition requires a minimum of about 12.9 lb. of TDN and 1.9 lb. of protein per day during late gestation.

- A 1,500-lb. Angus cow requires approximately 15.3 lb. of TDN and 2.2 lb. of protein.

- The forage source should contain a minimum of 54% TDN and 8% protein during this period to meet requirements for maintenance prior to calving.

- If forage quality is lower than 54% TDN and 8% protein, supplementation will be required to avoid loss of cow body condition prior to calving.

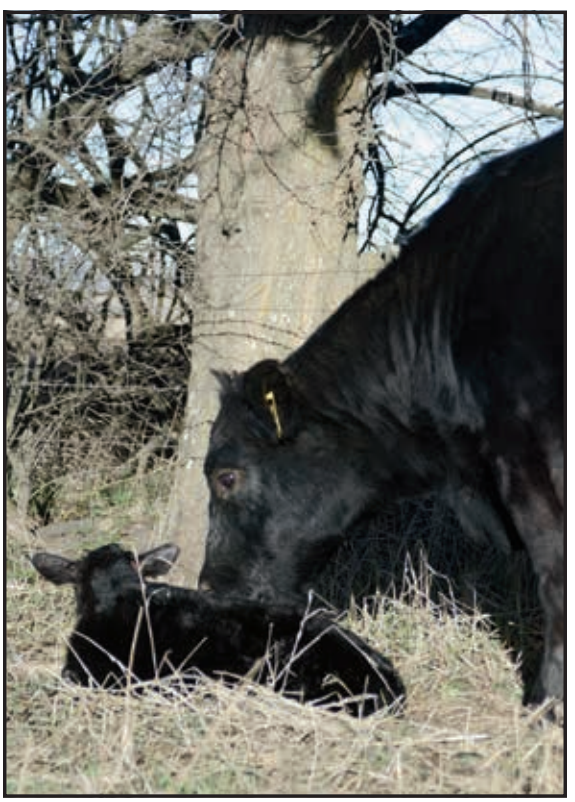
- Prepare calving facilities and equipment. Purchase and organize calving supplies such as tags, navel dip, tattoo equipment and ink, calf scales, etc.

- Visit with your veterinarian to develop a written protocol before the calving season starts. This protocol should include what to do, when to do it, who to call (if someone besides your veterinarian is to be called), phone numbers, how to know when the veterinarian should be called, etc.

- Feed during evening hours to encourage daytime calving.

Fall-calving herds

- Remove bulls toward the end of January or early February to maintain a controlled breeding season of 60-70 days.



- Small-grain winter pasture is an excellent protein and energy supplement for fall-calving cows. About 9 to 12 hours per week of access to small-grain pasture (3 to 4 hours per day, 3 days per week) should meet supplemental protein and energy needs in most situations.

- Calves can be given free-choice access to the small-grain winter pasture.

A mineral supplement with elevated concentrations of calcium and magnesium should be provided to lactating cows and their calves grazing small-grain forage.

General recommendations

- Distribute hay feeding as much as possible to minimize perennial grass stand damage and to evenly distribute nutrients from manure and wasted hay.

- Remove and discard plastic net wrap and twine from hay prior to feeding.

- Test soil to determine phosphorus, potassium and lime needs for spring legumes, such as lespedeza, sweet clover, red clover and white clover.

Plan the financial management program for the year, including cash flow, deadlines for payment of interest and quarterly tax payments.

Midwest Region

by Eric Bailey
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General comments

Winter is upon us, and cold stress should be on producers' minds. Winter-calving beef operations must think about cold stress for both the cow and calf. Unfortunately, I've yet to see a calf birthed with a heavy winter coat, so they are the most at-risk group on the ranch. The thermoneutral zone is a range of environmental temperatures where cattle (all warm-blooded animals) do not have to expend extra energy to maintain body temperature.

Additionally, the 50-gallon fermentation vat (rumen) strapped to a cow's midsection produces substantial heat to help keep cows warm. Keeping forage in front of cows will go a long way toward keeping cows warm.

The newborn calf is a different story, though. They come into the world wet, with a summer coat, and lack a developed rumen that will generate significant quantities of heat. The best deal for these calves would be to calve in a warmer part of the year, but production decisions may dictate otherwise. Wet hair coats lose the ability to insulate and, coupled with wind, can induce hypothermia rapidly in poor conditions. Multiparous cows are wise to this and will clean calves off quickly. If you can provide shelter and assistance to only one group, focus on first-calf heifers. They are inexperienced at this process and may be slow to claim their calves.

Management calendar for January

My assumptions: Feb. 1 is the beginning of calving for spring-calving herd; Sept. 1 is the beginning of calving for the fall-calving herd.

Spring-calving herds

- Prepare for calving.
  - Check the calf puller.
  - Prep your calving box.
  - Clean your calving barn.
  - Ensure colostrum quality.
  - Do not overgraze. See bullet point below.
  - Feed quality hay (>9% CP and 55% TDN) and/or supplement.
  - Limit cereal grains to less than 0.5% of body weight per day.

Fall-calving herds

- Forage stubble below 4 in. will limit intake and reduce body condition, even if the forage appears to be green and lush.

- Does it make sense to feed hay to pairs?
  - A calf born weighing 80 lb. needs to gain 2.05 lb. per day to reach 500 lb. at traditional weaning age (205 days).
  - Hay priced at $50 per ton costs $0.025 per lb. A 1,400-lb. cow eating average-quality hay (~55% TDN) will consume about 2.3% of her body weight per day (dry-matter basis) or 32.2 lb. Factor waste of 20% in and this number increases to 38.6 lb. In this scenario, it costs 97¢ per cow per day to feed a pair. Factor in your local hay cost and the quality of the forage when evaluating cost/benefit of feeding hay.

- Any cow that has not conceived by 90 days postcalving will not

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maintain a 365-day calving window.

Western Region

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Fall-calving herds

Main focus — getting cows bred

1. If you are AI breeding on return heats, give a GnRH injection at the time of breeding as it has been proven to increase conception rates on repeat inseminations.

2. Personally, I like to switch bulls and not breed the cow back to the same AI sire that I used on the first service.

3. Bulls are probably already turned out or will be shortly. If females are in pastures where they are easily observed, record natural service dates and watch for return heats in cows that have been naturally covered by bulls. If a high percentage of the females that have been naturally covered by bulls are coming back into estrus, replace the bull if that is an option.

4. As discussed every month, mineral supplementation is important in achieving optimal reproductive performance. The breeding season is the most critical period to be certain that females are achieving adequate mineral consumption.

5. As discussed in previous columns, it is critical that both protein and energy requirements of females are being met during the breeding season. Females should be in a state of positive energy balance or gaining weight during the breeding season as energy balance has a significant influence on fertility or conception rate.

6. If not already done, calves should receive their first round of vaccinations. Producers should consult with their veterinarian in developing their vaccination protocol.

7. I recommend that calves are at least 45 to 60 days old before they receive their first round of vaccinations. This can cause a problem if you have some late calves sired by the clean-up bull. In these situations, I like to vaccinate the AI-sired calves about 30 days before the cleanup-sired calves. In many operations, this practice may not be practical.

8. Calves should be old enough by now to identify the bottom end of the bull calves. I recommend that producers look at bull calves with a critical eye and a sharp knife. In most herds I think the bottom 20% of the bull calves should be castrated. I personally believe that this should be determined based on phenotypic quality only.

9. Treatment protocols should be on hand for both scours and pneumonia in suckling calves. Treat problems promptly as young calves go "downhill" quickly.

Spring-calving herds

Main focus — the calving season

1. Supplies should be on hand and the proper equipment should be available to assist females with problems at calving. Be sure that your personnel are properly trained in the most current procedures recommended for assisting females that are experiencing calving difficulties.

2. For maximal absorption of maternal antibodies, calves should nurse within the first 6 hours after birth. A supply of frozen colostrum could be kept on hand, or a colostrum replacement or supplement could be used. Extra milk from a mature cow taken shortly after calving is the best source for frozen colostrum. AJ

Editor's Note: Photos by Shauna Rose Hermel.