

# Angus Advisor

## Beef Cow Herd Management Tips—Midwest Region

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### MARCH, APRIL & MAY

March, April and May are transition months for most spring-calving herds. Relief is spelled "g-r-e-e-n g-r-a-s-s."

#### Calving season

- Don't slack off or give up. Managing breeding-season length will control calving season. Every cow and calf is important.
- Keep calving area as clean and dry as possible. Give calves a dry, comfortable and clean environment.
- Get colostrum into the calf as soon as possible (first 12-24 hours).

#### Herd nutrition

- Supplement and feed cows to maintain or to improve body condition prior to the breeding season. Do not stop supplementing cows before grass is ready to handle their nutrient requirements.
- Sort thin and young cows (2- and 3-year-olds) into separate management herds. Increases in energy and protein intakes may be needed to compensate for greater nutrient demands.
- Mineral supplementation should include greater levels of magnesium (Mg; 15-30 grams/head/day or at least 11% of the mineral mix) to prevent grass tetany.
- Bulls should be in good body condition prior to the breeding season. Thin bulls will run out of stamina.

#### Herd health

A breeding soundness exam (BSE) is recommended for all bulls.

- Maintain top management concerning calf scours—sanitary conditions, early detection, and electrolyte or dehydration therapy.
- Vaccinate calves for clostridial diseases.
- If castration is planned, process these male calves prior to pasture turnout. Implant calves that will be sold at weaning.
- Administer pinkeye vaccine if necessary.
- Delay fly control until critical numbers are reached (100-200 horn flies/animal).
- If cows are not gathered in the fall, now is the time (three weeks prior to breeding season) to vaccinate for reproductive diseases (consult with your veterinarian).
- Deworm cows and bulls if needed.

#### Forage/pasture management

- Use prescribed burning to eradicate cedars and to improve forage quality.
- Fertilize cool-season pastures at locally recommended rate and according to soil tests.
- Plant sudan, sudan hybrids or other summer annuals for haying or grazing.
- Check and maintain summer water supplies.

#### Reproductive management

- Palpate and score replacement heifers' reproductive tracts. Cull heifers with infantile tracts.

- Yearling weights of replacement heifers can be used to determine nutrition needed to achieve target breeding weights.
- Consider breeding heifers three weeks prior to the mature cow herd to give them a better chance to rebreed.
- Consider using MGA® and prostaglandin or some other estrous-synchronization program and artificial insemination (AI) to decrease calving difficulty and increase the value of next year's calf crop.
- Plan breeding season and bull turnout. Assign yearlings 10-15 cows; 2- and 3-year-olds, 20-25 cows; older bulls, 25-40 cows. Ninety days should be long enough; 65 days is optimum.

#### Genetic management

- When purchasing bulls, insist on performance records and expected progeny differences (EPDs).
- Order semen and AI supplies well in advance. Check semen tanks for leakage.
- Record yearling weights and submit records to breed associations.

#### General management

- Record calving information permanently.
- Replace lost or worn ear tags.
- Good fences and good brands make good neighbors.
- Check equipment—sprayers, dust bags, oilers, haying equipment—and repair or replace as needed. Have spare parts on hand; downtime can make a difference in hay quality.

### JUNE/JULY

June and July are months to let Mother Nature take her course. Native grasses are usually at peak production, therefore, little supplementation is needed, with the exception of some minerals.

#### Herd nutrition

- Provide plenty of clean, fresh water.
- Provide free-choice mineral to correct any mineral deficiencies or imbalances.
- Monitor grazing conditions and rotate pastures if possible and practical.
- If ammoniated wheat straw is planned for winter needs, follow these rules:
  - a. Best time is immediately after harvest, prior to weather deterioration.
  - b. Ammoniation process is temperature-sensitive, fastest during hot days.
  - c. Apply 3% anhydrous ammonia (60 lb./ton of straw).
  - d. Do not ammoniate wheat hay or any other intermediate- or high-quality forage; production of imidazole can cause cattle hyperactivity and death.
  - e. Will double crude protein content, enhance intake, and be cost-effective.
- Only consider creep feeding if cost effective (expect a low to moderate protein

supplement to have a feed conversion of 9:1. Expect a high-protein, limit-fed creep feed to have a feed conversion of 4:1).

#### Herd health

- Monitor and treat pinkeye cases.
- Provide fly control. Consider all options; price and efficiency will dictate the best option(s) to use.
- Monitor and treat foot rot cases.
- Avoid handling and transporting cattle during the hottest part of the day to reduce heat stress.
- Vaccinate replacement heifers for brucellosis if within proper age range (4-10 months).
- Continue anaplasmosis control program (consult local veterinarian).
- Consider deworming grazing cows.

#### Forage/pasture management

- Make hay while the sun shines.
- Check and maintain summer water supplies.
- Place mineral feeders strategically to enhance grazing distribution.
- Check water gaps after possible washouts.
- Harvest hays in a timely manner; think quality and quantity.
- Harvest sudan and sudan hybrids for hay in the boot stage (normally 3-4 ft. in height). It is a good idea to run a routine nitrate test on a field before harvesting hay.
- Provide ample shade.

#### Reproductive management

- If using AI, do not expect all females to conceive. A common practice is to breed twice with AI then turn out cleanup bulls for the balance of a 65-day breeding season. A 42-day AI season with estrous synchronization at the front end gives most females three chances to conceive AI.
- Watch bulls for libido, mounting and breeding function. Replace at the first signs of trouble.
- Record cow breeding dates to determine calving dates.
- If herd is divided into small groups, rotate bulls during the breeding season.
- If females are returning to heat after observed breeding suspect:
  - a. Early embryonic death;
  - b. AI technician/semen quality;
  - c. Bull fertility/function;
  - d. Inadequate cow body condition;
  - e. Insufficient days postcalving; or
  - f. Reproductive disorders (IBR, vibrio, leptos, cystic ovaries, uterine infections, etc.)
- By imposing reproductive pressure (45-day breeding season) on yearling heifers, no late-calving 2-year-olds will result. This will increase lifetime productivity and profits.
- Record body condition scores around July 1.

