

# Angus Advisor

## Beef Cow Herd Management Tips—Rocky Mountain West Region

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### MARCH

1. With the spring calving season well under way in much of the region, energy is being expended toward getting calves delivered and making sure they receive an appropriate amount of colostrum. Although we've had a mild winter so far, wind chills can become severe, making it critical to provide newborn and young calves some protection from the elements. This might include some supplemental heat to get newborn calves dried off and on their way.
2. Once the newborn is independent, move the cow-calf pair to clean ground where cattle aren't concentrated any more than necessary. Offer some protection from the weather in the form of portable calf shelters or natural habitat, such as willows. Portable protection allows movement on a regular basis to keep the environment as free as possible from disease organisms.
3. Closely watch newborn calves for signs of scours, and work with your veterinarian on proper treatment. Hopefully your prepartum vaccination program will offer maximum protection and you will therefore have a minimum of problems. However, dehydration can occur rapidly, so it's critical to respond quickly to a problem.
4. Monitor body condition of cows. Severe winter weather can take its toll. Once the cow begins to lactate, her nutrient requirements increase considerably. A 1,100-lb. cow's daily energy requirement increases from about 11.2 pounds (lb.) total digestible nutrients (TDN) during her last trimester of pregnancy to 13-13.5 lb. once she starts lactating, assuming she produces approximately 15 lb. of milk/day. The higher the milk production, the higher the energy requirement. Her protein intake also should increase about 0.5 lb./day (from 1.6 lb./day crude protein to 2-2.2 lb.).
5. Monitor heifer development. Remember, heifers should weigh 60%-65% of their mature weight to reach puberty prior to breeding. Research from the Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Center in Miles City, Mont., suggests enhanced conception rates if heifers have at least one estrous cycle prior to the start of the breeding season. Heifers should have been vaccinated for brucellosis prior to a year of age.
6. During the hectic calving season, don't ignore herd bulls and young bulls that are being developed for sale. Keep bulls bedded and out of mud and snow to avoid testicle damage during severe winter temperatures.

7. Protect your cows in early lactation from grass tetany by adding some magnesium oxide to the mineral mix. Heavy-milking cows that graze lush grass forages on magnesium-deficient soils during the first couple of months of lactation are the most susceptible. MagOx should be supplemented one to two months prior to grazing if the problem exists. Offering a mineral supplement of 30% salt, 30% di-cal (or phosphorus source), and 10% dried molasses (or cottonseed meal, something rather palatable) will usually suffice. This mix is about 18% magnesium and should be continued for one to two months after the cows begin grazing the lush forage.
8. Start thinking about breeding season and planning your genetic program for the production of next year's calf crop.

### APRIL

1. In most of this region, calving season is moving toward its end. However, the later calvers and newborns are still requiring considerable attention. Spring storms, from which calves will still need some protection, can hit in April.
2. Branding time is approaching for early-born calves. Visit with your veterinarian about appropriate vaccinations and their best routes of administration to comply with Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) guidelines. Vaccinations generally include protection against clostridial diseases, as well as a four-way vaccine giving protection from IBR, P1<sub>3</sub>, BRSV and BVD. If a vaccine requires intramuscular (IM) administration, inject in neck-region muscles. Male calves may be castrated at this time.
3. Cows can be more effectively protected against IBR, BVD, leptospirosis and vibriosis by using a modified-live vaccine after the cows have calved and before breeding season. A killed vaccine should be used if the cow is pregnant.
4. Monitor cow body condition and adjust your feeding program accordingly. Extended periods of extremely cold temperatures with associated wind and moisture can cause loss of necessary body condition rapidly. This can extend the postpartum period to first estrus and delay subsequent conception.
5. Those who have potential grass tetany problems should supplement Mg as suggested in the March management tips (see #7).
6. Continue to monitor yearling replacement

heifer performance so they will reach their appropriate target weight prior to the time you want to breed them.

7. Replacement heifers should receive an IBR, BVD, lepto, vibrio four-way or a second-dose booster vaccination approximately one month prior to breeding. Check with your veterinarian about this and other potential problems in your area.
8. If you haven't already given it consideration, spend time planning your breeding program to produce next year's calf crop. Utilize expected progeny differences (EPDs) to make directional change for traits of economic importance. Balanced trait selection will tend to produce optimum-type cattle with more flexibility. Give special attention to birth weight EPD and calving ease when selecting bulls or semen to be used on first-calf heifers.
9. Whether winters are mild or severe, conducting a breeding soundness exam (BSE) on all bulls is a good means of identifying questionable and unsatisfactory potential breeders. All newly acquired bulls definitely should be tested.

### MAY

1. Cow-calf producers should have most calves on the ground and going well by this time. Most are probably thinking about going to grass if not already there.
2. Remember to protect against grass tetany as outlined in the March tips (see #7).
3. Conduct BSEs on the bull battery if you haven't already done so. BSEs should be done 60 days prior to the breeding season. Remember, just because a bull is fertile one year, there is no guarantee he will be fertile in subsequent years. The cost of an exam is good insurance.
4. Begin breeding heifers 21-28 days prior to the cow herd to allow them a longer postpartum period to fit in with the cow herd's calving season the following year.
5. Consider using one of the several estrous synchronization schemes to enhance the effectiveness of artificial insemination (AI) programs. These are especially effective in heifers. Several of these programs are also effective with the cow herd. However, since cows differ in days postpartum (length of period after calving) it may be appropriate to target only those early calvers for synchronization and AI. Most synchronization programs require that cows be cycling prior

to their administration. Don't allow overreliance on an AI program to spread out your breeding and, therefore, calving seasons.

## JUNE/JULY

1. Branding should be completed by now except for possible late-born calves. See April and May tips for information on vaccines and their administration to both calves and cows.
2. Once cows are on green grass, Mother Nature is probably meeting mineral requirements unless you have a specific known deficiency that must be supplied. Otherwise, a source of salt either in loose or block form offered free choice might be the only thing you need to supply. By this time the possibility of grass tetany is probably past and MagOx in the salt mix is probably not needed (see March tips).
3. The breeding season should be underway. Continuously monitor breeding pastures for possible injury to bulls and make sure you are not seeing an unusual number of females returning to estrus after initial service. First-service conception should be 65%-70% whether breeding natural service or AI. It is good management to limit the breeding season with yearling bulls to 45-60 days.
4. Develop an effective fly-control program. Fly tags can be used. If resistance has become a problem, switch type of tags. Pyrethroids and organophosphates are the two choices. Best results have been seen if you don't put tags on until flies reach an economic threshold. Tags should offer 150 days of protection. Other fly-control options might include spraying, oilers or dust bags.
5. If pinkeye is normally a problem, you might check with your veterinarian about using a pinkeye vaccine.
6. Water is our most essential nutrient. Warm weather in the arid or semiarid West emphasizes its importance. Make sure a clean, fresh supply of water is available at all times.
7. Slower days of summer may offer good opportunities to repair facilities and other equipment.
8. Forage quality should be kept in mind as producers harvest their hay crop. Don't let forages get too mature prior to harvest in an attempt to increase tonnage. If quality (associated with protein level) is sufficient, you may avoid having to purchase expensive supplements to meet the cow's nutrient requirements.



# Angus Advisor

## Beef Cow Herd Management Tips—Southern Region

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### MARCH

1. Prepare land for summer crops.
2. Begin grazing warm-season permanent pastures.
3. Check and fill mineral feeder.
4. Observe bulls for condition and success. Rotate and rest if needed.
5. Deworm cows as needed.
6. Make sure calves are healthy and making good weight gains.
7. Hang forced-use dust bags by April 1 for external parasite control or use insecticide-impregnated ear tags.
8. Identify, vaccinate, implant and work late calves.
9. Put bulls out March 1 for calving season to start Dec. 9.
10. Remove bulls March 22 to end calving season Jan. 1.
3. Plant warm-season perennial pastures.
4. Fertilize warm-season pastures.
5. Check mineral feeders.
6. Check for spittlebugs and treat if necessary.
7. Apply spot-on agents for grub and louse control.
8. Check dust bags.
9. Vaccinate and implant with growth stimulant any later calves.
10. Reimplant calves with growth stimulant at 90-120 days, when you have the herd penned.
11. Dispose of dead animals properly.
12. Update marketing information and refine marketing plans.

### APRIL

1. Plant warm-season annual pastures.
2. Plant corn for silage.
3. Check and fill mineral feeder.
4. Check dust bags or apply treated ear tags.
5. Check for external parasites and treat if necessary.
6. Observe cows for repeat breeders.
7. Deworm cows as needed if not done in March.
8. Vaccinate against blackleg and brucellosis (Bang's disease) after 3 months of age and before 12 months of age.
9. Market cull cows and bulls.
10. Update market information and refine marketing strategy for calves.

### MAY

1. Remove bulls May 21 to end calving season March 1.
2. Harvest hay from cool-season crops.

### JUNE

1. Last date for planting sorghum.
2. Check mineral feeder; use at least an 8% phosphorus level in mineral and don't allow the calcium-to-phosphorus ratio to exceed 2.5-to-1.
3. Check pastures and hay fields for spittlebugs, mole crickets and army worms. Treat if necessary; June is the best month for mole cricket control.
4. Check dust bags.
5. Watch for evidence of pinkeye and treat.
6. Utilize available veterinary services and diagnostic laboratories.
7. Vaccinate heifers for brucellosis if not already done.
8. Pregnancy-check cows.
9. Update marketing information and plans.
10. Make first cutting of hay.
11. Put bulls out June 1 for calves starting March 11.
12. Reimplant calves at 90-120 days with growth stimulant.

