

Angus Advisor

May Beef Cow Herd Management Tips

Upper Midwest Region

by Harlan Ritchie, Michigan State University

1. Before leaving drylot and going to clean pasture, coccidiosis can be a problem in young calves. Symptoms include dark or bloody scours and reduced performance. Treatment with amprolium is effective. Consult your veterinarian.
2. Research suggests that deworming the herd before going to pasture can result in significantly heavier weaning weights.
3. Beware of bloat on heavy alfalfa or ladino clover pasture stands. Blocks with poloxalene can help prevent bloat.
4. If horn flies in your area have developed resistance to pyrethroid ear tags, consider the following practices:
 - a. Delay application of insecticidal ear tags until flies become an economically significant problem (100-200 horn flies/animal).
 - b. Switch from pyrethroid tags to those containing an organophosphate such as diazinon, pirimiphos methyl, fenthion or chlorpyrifos.
 - c. Remove tags in the fall; do not leave them in year-round.
5. Breed heifers one heat period before cows so they have extra time to recover from calving next year.
6. Try to have bulls in moderate to good condition before turning out with cows. Also, they should have received their annual booster vaccinations — IBR, BVD, PI₃, leptos-5, vibrio and haemophilus.
7. Prepare for haying season. Have spare parts ready in advance. Extended periods of downtime can mean the difference between a high- or low-quality hay crop.

Southern Region

by R.S. Sand, University of Florida

1. Remove bulls May 21 to end calving season March 1.
2. Harvest hay from cool-season crops.
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. Update market information and refine market plans.

Rocky Mountain West Region

by Doug Hixon, University of Wyoming

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. Administer branding-time injections subcutaneously (sub-Q), if at all possible. This is especially critical with seven- or eight-way clostridial vaccines to avoid injection-site blemishes. If intramuscular (IM) injections are required for other vaccines, they should be administered in the neck muscles. Always follow label instructions.
3. Protect against grass tetany by adding approximately 30% magnesium oxide to your mineral supplement. This will produce a mineral supplement that contains about 18% magnesium.
4. Bull batteries should undergo breeding soundness exams (BSEs) prior to the breeding season. Most exams have probably been completed by this time, as they are most appropriately done about 60 days prior to breeding season. Remember, just because bulls are fertile one year, there is no guarantee they will be in subsequent years. The cost of an exam is good insurance.
5. Start breeding heifers 21-28 days prior to the cow herd to allow them a longer postpartum period to fit in with the cow herd calving season in subsequent years.
6. 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 very 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 the overreliance on an AI program to spread out your breeding and, therefore, calving seasons.

Midwest Region

by Twig Marston, Kansas State University

Herd nutrition

- Bulls should be in good body condition prior to the breeding season. Thin bulls will run out of stamina.

Herd health

- A BSE is recommended for all bulls.
- Vaccinate calves for clostridial diseases. Work calves prior to pasture turnout. Implant calves that will be sold at weaning.
- If branding calves, consider moving the brand away from the ribs.
- Delay fly control until critical numbers are reached (100-200 horn flies/animal).
- Consult with your herd health professional or veterinarian about your preventive health program.
- Deworm cows and bulls if needed.
- Review the calving season by asking tough questions and benchmarking analyses.

Forage/pasture management

- Plant sudan, sudan hybrids or other summer annuals for haying or grazing.
- Fertilize according to soil tests.
- Check and maintain summer water supplies.

Reproductive management

- Consider breeding heifers three weeks prior to the mature cow herd to give them a better chance of rebreeding.
- For thin cows consider 48-hour calf removal and "teasing" with a gomerized bull prior to the breeding season.
- Consider using MGA® and prostaglandin or some other estrous-synchronization program and AI to decrease calving difficulty and increase the value of next year's calf crop.
- Consider synchronizing lactating beef cows with gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) and prostaglandin F_{2α} (PGF).
- Plan breeding season and bull turnout ratios — yearlings, 10-15 cows; 2- and 3-year-olds, 20-25 cows; and older bulls, 25-40 cows. Ninety days should be long enough, and 65 days or less is optimum.

General management

- 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.

