

Angus Advisor

Beef Cow Herd Management Tips—Midwest Region

by Twig Marston, Kansas State University, tmarston@oz.oznet.ksu.edu



JULY AND AUGUST

July and August are months when forages are maturing, weaning time is approaching, and weather dictates several key management decisions.

Breeding season

- If heifers or cows are still showing signs of estrus, look for problems, such as:
 - Inadequate bull power;
 - Nutritional stress;
 - Inadequate body condition; and
 - Reproductive disorders, including IBR, vibrio, leptospirosis, cystic ovaries and uterine infections.
- Cull cows that are not conceiving after three or four services by a fertile bull.
- Remove bulls after 90 days of service (preferably 60 days with cows, 45 days with heifers).

Cow-herd nutrition

- Provide ample amounts of clean, fresh drinking water.
- Consider limited-intake creep-feeding if:
 - Drought develops and persists;
 - Range conditions limit milk production;
 - Creep or grain prices are relatively low; or
 - Value of gain provides economic benefits.
- Tips for successful limited-intake creep-feeding:
 - Limit duration to last 30-75 days before weaning.
 - Limit intake to less than 2 lb./head/day.
 - Use an ionophore or other feed additive to maximize efficiency.
 - Protein level should be at least 16%.
 - High salt levels may help limit intake, but they can be tough on feeders.
- Prepurchase bulk-rate winter supplementation prior to seasonal price increases.

Herd health

- If pinkeye is likely to be a problem, consider the following preventive and therapeutic measures.

Preventive:

- Make sure herd is receiving adequate vitamins and trace minerals.
- Consider using a medicated trace-mineral package.
- Consider vaccination for pinkeye and IBR.
- Control face flies.
- Clip pastures having tall, coarse grasses that may irritate eyes.
- Provide ample shade.

Therapeutic:

- Administer an intramuscular (IM) injection of long-acting oxytetracycline when symptoms are first noticed.
- Shut out irritating sunlight by patching eyes, providing shade, etc.
- Control flies.
- Consult your veterinarian.
- Consider revaccinating for respiratory diseases any animals that will be taken to livestock shows.
- Vaccinate suckling calves for IBR, BVD, PI₃, BRSV and possibly pasteurized whole cell Brucella abortus at least three weeks prior to weaning.
- Revaccinate all calves for blackleg.
- Vaccinate replacement heifers for brucellosis (Bang's disease) at 4-10 months of age.
- Monitor and treat foot rot.

Forage and pasture management

- Enhance grazing distribution by placing mineral mixture away from water sources.
- Observe pasture-weed problems to aid in planning control methods needed next spring.
- Monitor grazing conditions and rotate pastures if possible or practical.
- If pastures will run out in late summer, get ready to provide emergency feeds. Start supplemental feeding before pastures are gone to extend grazing.
- Harvest and store forages properly. Minimize waste by reducing spoilage.
- Sample harvested forages and have them analyzed for nitrate and nutrient composition.

- For stocker cattle and replacement heifers, supplement maturing grasses with an acceptable degradable intake protein or ionophore (feed additive) supplement.

Reproductive management

- Remove bulls to consolidate calving season.
- Pregnancy check and age pregnancies 60 days after the end of the breeding season. Cull cows that are short-bred.

These methods contribute to a more uniform calf crop, make winter nutritional management easier and increase the success rate of next year's breeding season.

General management

- Avoid unnecessary heat stress. Don't handle or transport cattle during the heat of the day.
- Repair, replace and improve facilities needed for fall processing.
- Order supplies, vaccines, tags and other products needed at weaning time.
- Consider earlier-than-normal weaning if:
 - Drought develops and persists;
 - Range conditions limit milk production;
 - Cows are losing body condition; or
 - Facilities and management are available to handle lightweight calves.
 - First-calf heifers have the most to gain.
 - Resist the temptation to feed the cows without weaning; feeding early-weaned calves is more efficient.
- Look for unsound cows that need to be culled from the herd.
- Prepare to have your calf crop weighed and analyzed through your state, regional or breed performance-testing program.
- Document cost of production by participating in Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) programs.
- Plan your marketing program, including private treaty, consignment sales, test stations or production sales.