

# ANGUS ADVISOR



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

## Southern Great Plains



by David Lalman

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### Fall-calving herds

- Calves should be individually identified and weighed within 24 hours of birth.
- Identify herd sires to be used in the artificial insemination (AI) program and purchase semen.
- Plan the herd health program to be administered at “branding” time. Research published by Oklahoma State University (OSU) veterinary scientists indicates, in properly immunized cow herds, an MLV combination vaccine given at branding, followed by revaccination at weaning is as effective a vaccination strategy as vaccine given preweaning (21 to 30 days), followed by revaccination at weaning.
- Lactating fall-calving cows will likely lose some body condition during the calving and early lactation period. Ideally, your cattle genetics, forage management and supplementation program would result in limited weight and body condition loss during this critical period. In other words, when these components

of your program are not “in sync,” the cows will lose weight too rapidly, resulting in fewer cows cycling at the beginning of the breeding season and lower conception rates. Either that, or you will have to spend a lot of money on the nutrition program to minimize this rapid weight loss.

### Spring-calving herds

- Purchase supplies needed to complete the herd health program and prepare for processing calves at weaning in September or October.
- As the weaning date approaches, be sure to have facilities and equipment checked, repaired or updated as needed. This is also a great time to have your scale certified.
- Plan to collect cow weights, body condition scores and hip height while you have them in the working pens and report the information to the Association. This will be a tremendous contribution to the Angus breed as the industry strives to get a better handle on cow efficiency.
- A well-planned and -executed weaning management and nutrition program are major components in a successful weaning period. Fenceline weaning in a pasture is

preferable to sudden, complete removal and pen confinement. If pasture weaning is not an option, consider keeping the calves in the pen next to the cows in the pasture. Once calves have stopped bawling, immediately move them out to a pasture.

- Weaned calves can gain 1.5-2 pounds (lb.) per day grazing good-quality pasture during late summer and early fall if a complementary supplement package is provided. In situations where good-quality pasture is not available, calves can be fed a growing ration in a drylot, generally resulting in very efficient feed conversion. Consult a nutrition expert for assistance with ration balancing and supplement packages.
- Weaning is also an important time in the herd health program as it relates to the mature cows and replacement heifers. Potential management steps to be considered at this time include annual vaccinations, brucellosis vaccinations for replacements, pregnancy diagnosis, deworming and treatment for other parasites, retagging, culling decisions, and freeze-branding replacements.

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### General comments

- Harvested forage should be tested for nutrient value. Forage testing and monitoring cow condition are the best tools to use in determining an appropriate nutrition program for fall and winter. A list of certified commercial laboratories is available at [www.foragetesting.org](http://www.foragetesting.org).
- Concentration of critical minerals in forage declines as forage matures and as the leaf-to-stem ratio declines from grazing pressure. Minerals that are of particular concern in the predominant forage species found in the Southern Great Plains include phosphorus, copper, zinc and selenium. The Oklahoma Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory continues to identify copper deficiencies in newborn calves. Vitamin A is also critical when animals consume mature and senescent forage. A balanced supply of vitamins, macrominerals and microminerals is an important component of the overall herd health program, which influences health of weaned calves, as well as reproductive success.

- Late-summer applications of about 50 lb. per acre of nitrogen can produce high-quality Bermuda grass or fescue pasture from October through December. Pastures should be grazed, hayed or otherwise mowed before the fertilizer application is made. Forage production will be highly dependent on late-summer precipitation.

### Western Region



by Randy C. Perry

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### Fall-calving herds

*Main focus: The calving season.*

- **Sire selection:** Develop a list of potential AI sires. Focus on bulls that will produce high-quality herd replacements.
- **Calving supplies:** Supplies should be on hand and proper equipment should be available to assist females with problems at calving. Be sure personnel are properly trained in the most current procedures recommended for assisting females experiencing calving difficulties.
- **Newborn care:** As calves are tagged and weighed at birth, their navel stumps should be dipped or sprayed with a mild iodine or betadine product.
- **Selenium injection:** If you are in a selenium deficient area, calves should receive a selenium injection at birth.
- **Colostrum:** Be sure calves nurse within the first six hours after birth. A supply of frozen colostrum should be on hand and should be replaced at the start of each calving season. Do not freeze all of the product in one bag, rather divide it into the proper amount that would be fed to a newborn calf (about half of a calf bottle) prior to freezing.
- **Retained placenta:** Monitor females for the incidence of retained placenta. If problems arise, treat them promptly with a prostaglandin injection (5 or 6 cc). If they don't expel it, treat them again with another prostaglandin injection and a treatment of antibiotic as well.
- **Mineral supplementation:** Be sure cows are receiving adequate levels of calcium, phosphorus and trace minerals



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deficient in your area. The mineral products that include chelated minerals are more expensive but offer much better rates of absorption. Mineral boluses or injectable products can be used in addition to loose or block mineral products.

- **Body condition score:** Monitor body condition score (BCS) of calving females. The target level of BCS at calving is 5.0 (scale = 1 to 9) for mature cows and 6.0 for two-year-old heifers. Ideally, this level of body condition should be maintained during the breeding season. However, this is sometimes difficult to achieve, especially with cows that have extremely high levels of milk production.
- **Over-conditioned:** This is not usually a problem in most operations, but avoid getting cows over conditioned during the breeding season as reproductive performance starts to decline if cows are above a BCS of 6.5 to 7.0.
- **Supplementation:** Be certain both protein and energy requirements are being met. Supplements should be compared on a price per unit of either protein or energy depending on which nutrient is the most limiting in your situation. In general, if forage is available and is of poor quality, protein will be the most limiting nutrient. If the availability of forage is limited, energy most likely will be the most limiting nutrient.
- **Calf diseases:** Have treatment protocols and products on hand for both scours and pneumonia in suckling calves. If cows are calving on irrigated pastures, be prepared to have a higher incidence of

scours in young calves. It is well-advised to have first and second treatment options for both conditions and be sure the protocols have been communicated to the appropriate personnel.

### Spring-calving herds

*Main focus: Preparing for weaning.*

- **Pregnancy checks:** Cows should be pregnancy checked at weaning time. Avoid holding over open cows, even if they have been excellent producers as typically the problem will reoccur. As a general rule, each open cow maintained without raising a calf steals the profits from four cows raising calves.
- **Supplementation:** In terms of protein and energy supplementation, usually spring-calving cows can perform adequately without supplementation at this time of year provided that forage is available.
- **Heifer and bull development:** Be sure both weaned bull and heifer calves are being developed at adequate rates of gain so differences in terms of genetic potential for growth can be exhibited. However, neither sex should be developed at extremely high rates as excessive fat deposition can hinder future reproductive performance and detrimentally impact foot and leg soundness. Our target levels of performance in developing bulls is an ADG of 3.0 lb./hd/day and for heifers is an ADG of 1.5 lb./hd/day.
- **Prewaning vaccinations:** Calves should be administered preweaning vaccinations for the respiratory disease complex at least two to three weeks prior to weaning.

- **Weaned calf management:** After weaning, control internal and external parasites, and heifer calves should be vaccinated for Bang's.
- **Pasture weaning:** Consider pasture weaning if you have the facilities to accommodate this management technique. Minimal electric fencing can be used quite successfully, and pasture weaning usually results in significant reductions in the incidence and severity of respiratory disease associated with weaning.

### Midwest Region



*by Eric Bailey*

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### Fall-calving herds

- Take care of the newborn calves: If possible, dip navels, record birthweights, ear tag, castrate within the first 36 hours of life. They are quite agile after about 36 hours.
- Feed heifers at dusk. Some research reports dusk/nighttime feeding reduces number of calves born at night (let me know if you'd like a copy of the work: baileyeric@missouri.edu).
- Be prepared for dystocia issues with calving heifers.
- Fertility test bulls, especially if they are used for both a spring and fall breeding season.
- Develop your winter feeding plan.
- Do I have enough hay?
- Does it make more sense to stretch hay by limit-feeding

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and feed more supplement? Hay prices are high in Missouri, and commodities like soyhulls are running the same price as a ton of hay. Soyhulls have more nutrients than most hays and make a great addition as a pasture supplement.

- What kind of supplement am I going to use?
- Have I booked/contracted it already?

- What is my fall/winter grazing plan?
  - Stockpiled fescue
  - Corn stalks
  - Fall annuals

### Spring-calving herds

- Preweaning vaccinations are coming up, if Oct. 1 is the targeted weaning date: 1) do not hesitate to wean early if grass is short; 2) every 2.5 days

a calf is weaned early saves a day of grass for your cows.

- Sort into body condition score groups and feed separately if possible. Alternative plan: keep replacement heifers, two-year-olds and three-year-olds separate from older cows and feed them additional feed. They are still growing.

### Management calendar

Assumptions: Fall-calving herd — Sept. 1 is the beginning of calving and spring-calving herd — Feb. 1 is the beginning of calving.

### General comments

Fall calving season is upon us in the fescue belt, along with new forage growth in fescue pastures after the summer slump. As a reminder, a cow's nutrient requirements peak approximately 60 days after calving. In addition, to stay on a 365-day calving cycle, cows need to breed around 80 days after calving. This is not the time to skimp on nutrition. If pastures are still recovering after drought conditions this summer, plan to supplement when forage height gets below 4". If drought conditions persist, try to minimize damage by "sacrificing" one pasture and feeding hay/supplement on it while resting the forage in the rest of the pastures.

- Remember, the general recommendation is for cows to calve in a BCS of 5 (on a 1 – 9 scale). If your cows are BCS 5 or below going into calving, make sure the thin cows are fed separate from the rest of the herd (if possible). Perhaps it is time to cull some of the thin cows if they are long in the tooth or if their calves are smaller than the rest of the group. Get rid of marginally productive females one year too early, rather than one year too late. **AJ**



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