



# Angus Advisor

► OCTOBER herd management tips

## Southeast Region

by John Hall, Virginia Tech, jbhall@vt.edu

### Spring-calving herds

- Give preweaning injections to calves not already weaned.
- Wean calves this month or early next month.
- Market calves at value-added sales such as AngusSource.®
- Make arrangements for backgrounding calves.
- Feed replacement heifers to gain 1.5 pounds (lb.) to 1.75 lb. per day, or use the target weight method to calculate rate of gain.
- Pregnancy-check cows.
- Body condition score (BCS) cows at weaning, and separate thin cows.
- Cull open, old and very thin cows; check feet and legs, udders and eyes.
- Switch to high-magnesium (Mg) minerals to prevent grass tetany.
- Inventory feed supplies, and secure feed for winter.

### Fall-calving herds

- Continue calving.
- Move pregnant heifers and early-calving cows to calving area about 2 weeks before due date.
- Check cows three to four times per day; check heifers more often. Assist early if needed.
- Keep calving area clean, and move healthy pairs out to large pastures three days after calving.
- Condition score cows at calving; plan nutrition/grazing program based on BCS.
- Ear tag and dehorn all calves at birth; castrate male calves in commercial herds.
- Give selenium (Se) plus vitamin E and vitamin A and D injections to newborn calves.
- Feed cows extra energy after calving; some protein may be needed if good pasture is not available. Cows calving at a BCS of less than 5 on a 9-point scale should receive special nutritional attention.
- Keep high-quality, high-magnesium, high-selenium minerals available.
- Assign reproductive tract scores (RTS) and measure pelvic areas on yearling replacement heifers; RTS should be 3 or better, and pelvic areas should be greater than 150 square centimeters (sq. cm).
- Purchase estrus synchronization supplies;

line up artificial insemination (AI) technician or AI supplies.

### Time to take stock

The long drought in the Southeast continues and in some areas worsens. Over the past few months, this Angus Advisor has focused on strategies such as pasture management, early weaning and feeding alternative feeds. Despite many beef producers' best efforts, many herds have been forced to make deep cuts in cow numbers and, therefore, in herd genetics. Some operations have been able to move cattle to areas of the country that have more forage. However, many operations just had to sell cows.

Is there any opportunity in this bad situation? Surely it will rain soon, and pastures will rebound and many Southeastern operations will be rebuilding. Before rebuilding begins is the time to consider what changes in the genetic base may result in improvements to productivity and marketability for the operation.

First, producers should make an honest assessment of their operation's role in the beef industry. Is the operation commercial or seedstock? What are the products produced — bulls, replacement females or commercial feeder calves?

If it is a commercial operation that sells feeder calves, what improvements can be made in the herd to increase marketability of calves and enhance their ability to provide the type of product that meets consumers' needs? Goals should include moderate-sized, easy-fleshing cows that calve in a short period of time (60-75 days) and rebreed. Calves produced should be uniform, medium- to large-framed, with excellent muscling and growth.

Purebred operations need to consider if they are elite breeders who produce bulls and heifers for other seedstock breeders or multipliers who produce bulls and heifers for commercial producers. Both types of operations are needed by the beef industry, but the goals for these two types of purebred operations can be different. Do the bulls and heifers produced in this operation meet the needs of my customer? What are the customer's needs? Do I know what kind of final product the offspring from the seedstock we market produce?

Both commercial and seedstock

operations need to know how calves produced perform in the feedlot and on the rail. By knowing this information, producers can make changes in breeding programs or the genetic product to influence final product quality. Although selection for traits that affect the final product is important, it is important for all producers to consider which traits currently garner premiums and which traits will be economically important in the future. Understanding genetic antagonisms among traits is also important.

The opportunity that comes from herd down-sizing is that proper genetic selection of replacement stock during the rebuilding phase can result in more rapid genetic improvement. Producers who wish to rebuild when the drought breaks should take the next few months to consider where genetic improvement can be made and possible sources of those genetics. Take time to consult with various professionals, producers and breeders as you make your decisions. Reading the recent Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) proceedings (available at [www.bifconference.com](http://www.bifconference.com)) as well as "Priorities First" by Tom Field (available at [www.angus.org](http://www.angus.org)) would be a good place to begin.

## Midsouth Region

by David Lalman, Oklahoma State University, [dlalman@okstate.edu](mailto:dlalman@okstate.edu)

### Spring-calving herds

1. Wean and individually weigh calves and administer booster vaccinations according to the herd health plan.
2. Individually weigh, condition score and preg-check cows and bred heifers. Vaccinate cows and replacement females according to herd health plan. Consider culling females that are open; are poor producers; or have feet, leg, eye and udder problems.
3. Report whole-herd records to your breed association.
4. Treat cows and calves for internal and external parasites as recommended by your veterinarian.
5. Nonlactating, spring-calving cows can gain one full BCS during the fall, provided they have access to high-quality forage or stockpiled native range and a protein supplement. The equivalent of 0.3-0.4 lb.

of supplemental protein is usually adequate for cows grazing abundant native range during late October and early November. This is equivalent to 1 lb. per day of a 32%-40% protein product or 2 lb. per day of a 20% protein product.

Cows grazing fertilized, stockpiled fescue; Bermuda grass; or cool-season annual forages will not require protein supplementation. However, if cows are in marginal body condition at weaning, 1-2 lb. per day of an energy supplement (10%-16% protein) will facilitate body condition gain.

6. Pregnant replacement heifers and growing heifer calves may require more supplemental feed than indicated above, depending on the producer's goal for pregnancy rate the following year. Most purebred producers aim for a high pregnancy rate in replacement heifer calves. This goal generally requires more supplementation or higher-quality forage to achieve a minimum of 65% of expected mature body weight by the beginning of the breeding season. A rate of gain of 1.25 lb. to 1.5 lb. per day is generally adequate to achieve this goal.

Some purebred breeders have chosen to put more selection pressure on reproductive efficiency. One way to achieve this is to limit gain of heifers so they weigh between 55% and 60% of expected mature body weight by the beginning of the breeding season. A rate of gain of 1 lb. to 1.25 lb. per day is generally adequate to achieve this goal.

### Fall-calving herds

1. Continue weaned bulls and heifers on the highest-quality pasture available and provide a supplement such as Oklahoma Gold (1 lb. per day of high-protein supplement with an ionophore) for cattle grazing native grass pasture or low-quality Bermuda grass pasture.
2. Evaluate bulls for semen quality and trim feet, if necessary.
3. Purchase new herd bulls using expected progeny differences (EPDs) as major selection criteria. Check history on health, including immunizations and diseases on the farm of origin. If possible, ask to see the dams of bulls you are interested in purchasing. Selection for good udder

quality and other desirable female characteristics begins with bull and semen purchases.

4. Closely monitor late-calving heifers for possible calving problems.
5. Purchase herd health products that will be needed for the fall "branding" time herd-health program.
6. Lactating cows grazing abundant native range forage should receive a minimum of 0.8 lb. per day of supplemental protein. Cows grazing stockpiled, fertilized fescue; Bermuda grass; or cool-season annuals should receive 3-6 lb. of a 12%-20% protein product, depending on cow condition, genetic potential for milk production and forage quality.
7. Young, lactating cows have 20%-25% greater supplemental needs than indicated above.

### General recommendations

1. See "Angus Advisor" in the September *Angus Journal* for critical mineral considerations in this region. Carotene, which is the precursor to vitamin A in ruminant animals, declines to almost zero in standing dormant forage. Therefore, vitamin supplementation, specifically vitamin A, is critical during the fall and winter months.
2. Oct. 15 is the last date recommended for treating cattle with a grubicide.
3. Beginning in late October or November, provide supplemental feed for bulls on dry grass according to age and condition.
4. Overseed Bermuda grass with small grains.
5. Delay grazing of cool-season annuals until plant roots are established.

### Midwest Region

by **Twig Marston**, Kansas State University, [tmarston@oznet.ksu.edu](mailto:tmarston@oznet.ksu.edu)

This year's drought conditions have magnified the need for best management practices (BMPs). Producers should be extremely price-conscious when purchasing feedstuffs. Consider adjusting herd inventories to maximize profits and sustainability.

### Cow herd management

- ▶ Preg-check.
- ▶ Cull cows if they fall into one of the four

O's — open, old, ornery, oddball — or if they are late- vs. early-calving; unsound (udder, feet and legs, eyes, or teeth); or unproductive (most probable producing ability from herd performance records).

- ▶ Consider feeding cull cows to increase value and body weight and to utilize cheap feedstuffs. Recent research has indicated that healthy, young cull cows can dramatically increase in value in as little as 60 days on feed.
- ▶ Extremely thin cows may need extra feed to prepare for winter. Provide thin cows (BCS 4 or less) extra feed now. Take advantage of weather, stage of pregnancy, lower nutrient requirements and quality feedstuffs.
- ▶ Control external and internal parasites when needed; consult with your Extension educator, veterinarian and industry-support representatives.
- ▶ Check individual identification (ID) of cows. Replace lost tags or rebrand.
- ▶ Utilize crop residues. Grazing can reduce forage costs by 50% or more. Use management techniques to optimize grazing efficiency. Normal stocking rates are 1-2 acres per cow for 30 days, assuming normal weather and grain yields.
- ▶ Vaccinate cows according to your veterinarian's recommendations.

### Calf management

If October is your weaning month, wean calves using the following guidelines:

- ▶ Reduce stress by providing a clean, dust-free, comfortable environment.
- ▶ Provide a balanced nutritional program to promote weight gain and health.
- ▶ Observe feed and water intake. Healthy, problem-free calves have good appetites and drink adequate amounts of water.
- ▶ Observe calves frequently. Early detection of sickness reduces medical costs and performance losses.
- ▶ Vaccinate calves and control internal and external parasites with veterinary consultation (ideally done prior to weaning).
- ▶ Vaccinate all replacement heifer candidates for brucellosis (Bang's disease) at 4-10 months of age.
- ▶ Use implants and feed additives to improve efficient animal performance.

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- ▶ Weigh all calves individually. That allows for correct sorting, herd culling, growing programs, replacement heifer selection and marketing plans.
- ▶ Weigh and condition score dams; data can be used in genetic evaluations.
- ▶ Participate in national-level breed-association performance [AHIR®/Beef Record Service (BRS)] and recordkeeping programs [Angus Information Management Software (AIMS)].
- ▶ Finalize marketing plans. Consider feedstuff availability, and realize that limit-feeding high-concentrate diets may be a profitable feeding program.
- ▶ Select replacement heifers on the following criteria:
  - Born early in the calving season. That should increase the number of yearling heifers bred during the early days of the subsequent breeding season.
  - Daughters of above-average-producing cows. Performance traits are moderately heritable.
  - Heifers of the proper frame size to complement the desired mature size and weight.
  - Structurally correct heifers. Avoid breeding udder, feet and leg problems into your herd.
  - Vaccinate replacement heifers with the first round of viral vaccines.
- ▶ Plan a replacement heifer nutrition program so heifers will be at their target weight (65% of their mature weight) by the start of the breeding season.

### **General management**

- ▶ Avoid unnecessary stress. Handle cows and calves to reduce shrink, to sustain good health and to minimize sickness.
- ▶ Analyze forages for nitrate and nutrient content. Use the data to develop winter feeding programs.
- ▶ Repair, replace and improve facilities.
- ▶ Plan your marketing program, including private-treaty, consignment, test-station and production sales.
- ▶ A penny saved is a penny earned. Price all forages, byproducts, grains and commercial products on a per-nutrient basis.

