



# Angus Advisor

► AUGUST herd management tips

## Southeast Region

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

- End breeding season early in the month if not already stopped; pull bulls.
- Feed first-calf heifers separately; give them the best forage, and supplement if needed.
- Plan marketing of calves.
- Line up preweaning vaccinations for calves to be sold in value-added programs.
- Continue fly control program.
- Continue feeding high-selenium (Se) trace-mineral salt.
- Continue creep-grazing and grazing warm-season grasses.
- Fertilize pastures that will be stockpiled for fall-winter grazing.
- Move cattle to some hay fields to give pastures a rest.
- Pregnancy-check cows and cull open or late-bred cows if needed for drought management.

## Fall-calving herds

- Condition score cows.
- Separate thin cows from the rest of the herd, and feed them the best pasture or a grain supplement until calving.
- Prepare for calving season, making sure you have all needed equipment and supplies.
- Continue fly control program.
- Continue feeding high-selenium trace-mineral salt.
- Move cattle to hay fields to give pastures a rest.
- Fertilize pastures that will be stockpiled for fall-winter grazing.
- Market commercial calves early in the month if not already done or continue backgrounding program.

## Conditions may dictate strategy

The extreme drought in our region continues, but some areas had limited rainfall. If late summer and fall rains come, pasture conditions will improve. The temptation is to let cows eat anything that is green. However, how we manage our pastures during the next few months will dictate how much feed we will have this fall and next spring, and whether we will be able to meet the nutritional needs of our cattle. In addition, this grazing management will affect how rapidly pastures recover.

## Pasture growth

We need to remember that pastures grow above and below ground. During long-term droughts not only has there been very little to graze on top, but the constant defoliation has reduced the amount of roots our pastures have as well. As the top of the plant grows and makes energy from the sun, it uses some of that energy to make more roots so it can get more nutrients and water. During severe grazing or drought, some of the grass and legume roots die because there is not enough energy to sustain them. Also, the plant will use some of its root reserves to grow more leaves during times of drought or severe grazing. If the severe grazing or drought continues long enough, the plants die or become weak.

It is important when we graze cattle that we don't let them graze the grass too short. We need to keep enough leaves on the plants for rapid regrowth and increase root growth. We need to leave 2-4 inches (in.) of plant height in our pastures.

Proper grazing with a rest period will allow plants to develop more tillers and roots. Several years ago Roy Blaser at Virginia Tech conducted an experiment in which grass plants were either grazed then rested or continuously grazed. Then the plants were either grazed severely or grazed properly. The properly-grazed plants that had a rest between grazing grew faster, had more roots and produced more tillers. So these plants made a healthier pasture. Most of our pastures are overgrazed; they have few roots and are making few tillers.

## Grazing management and nutritional needs of the cow

Since we know we need to give our pastures a little break, how do we manage them for the next few months? This is one time when we actually want the pasture to get a little ahead of us. First, fertilizing pastures this fall will be beneficial to pasture recovery. Second, grazing management is important. Finally, frost-seeding legumes in late winter or overseeding small grains this fall will help with pasture recovery and provide feed for cattle.

Remember that nutrient content of early growth from pastures emerging from a drought far exceeds the protein and energy needs of the cow, so if allowed to eat all she

can, she will gain weight. That may be a good thing, but if she overgrazes early on, she will hurt the stand. We can essentially use the pasture as a supplement for hay or other forages.

**Strategy 1.** Use multiple pastures and move fast. The idea is to allow cool-season (fescue) pastures to make 6-12 in. of growth, then graze the top 30%-50%, then move to the next pasture. For warm-season grasses it will depend on the species. Bermuda grass may only need 4 in. of growth, but other grasses may need to be taller. Check with your Extension agronomist for proper heights for your pasture species. You will need four to six pastures to do this, but you can make the divisions out of temporary electric fence. Don't leave cattle in any pasture for more than one week.

**Strategy 2.** Sacrifice one pasture to let the others recover. Continue to feed cattle in one pasture while allowing the other pastures to attain the proper stage before grazing. This will cause some damage to the one pasture, but it will allow the other pastures to recover from drought. This may be the easiest strategy for most of us.

**Strategy 3.** Strip-graze to limit access to pasture. Allowing cows to graze a portion of the pasture for 1-3 days while continuing to feed hay will reduce pressure on the rest of the pasture. Cows are moved to a new strip before overgrazing.

A combination of these strategies is probably the most effective, but you have to decide what works for you.

Pasture management will be a little tricky this fall depending on rainfall. The key is to not overgraze developing pastures and to leave at least 4 in. of pasture available to strengthen the pasture. This means you need at least four pastures or paddocks for rotational grazing. If you graze properly now, you will have more grass in late fall and next spring.

## Midsouth Region

by David Lalman, Oklahoma State University, dlalman@okstate.edu

### Spring-calving herds

1. A self-limited, high-protein creep-feeding program (such as the Oklahoma Silver program) enhances weight gain without causing calves to become excessively fleshy,

because intake is limited to around 1 pound (lb.) of supplement per head per day. After about 30 days of creep consumption, a salt concentration of around 10% may be required to achieve this low level of intake.

2. Evaluate body condition of young cows. Wean the calf in August or early September if the cow BCS is 4 or lower (on a 9-point scale).
3. Secure the appropriate products and supplies for the fall herd health program.
4. If the cow herd can be gathered during August or September, an effective strategy is to vaccinate calves two to six weeks prior to weaning and again at weaning. In fact, many value-added health programs recommend this protocol to maximize immune response in weaned calves.

### Fall-calving herds

1. Yearling replacement heifers grazing native pastures may benefit from a small package (around 1 lb. per day) of high-protein supplement in order to ensure adequate growth and development prior to breeding in November.
2. Calves that were first vaccinated at weaning require booster vaccinations within two to four weeks.

### General recommendations

1. In preparing for the winter feeding season, be sure to send a sample of your different lots of hay to be tested for nutrient concentration. A tremendous quantity of wheat was baled for hay this year, and most of it was rained on several times before it was baled. Vitamin A is depleted by rain damage and digestibility declines substantially. Reduction in protein concentration is more variable, but should be expected.
2. Continue fly and tick control program for all cattle. The incidence of pinkeye is particularly high during late summer. Fly control is one key management factor in minimizing the spread of this disease.
3. Harvest Sudan grass and Sudan hybrids for hay in the boot stage, which generally corresponds to a height of 3-4 feet (ft.). A routine nitrate test on forage before harvesting may be advisable, particularly if soil moisture has been scarce prior to harvest.

4. Consider managing a portion of Bermuda grass and fescue pasture for late-summer fertilization and fall grazing. Standing forage should be removed by haying or grazing during early August. Fifty to 100 lb. of nitrogen (N) fertilizer should be applied during mid- to late August. Depending on rainfall, forage accumulation has ranged from about 20 lb. to 40 lb. of forage per pound of nitrogen fertilizer applied. Stockpiled forage can be grazed from October through December, and protein concentration is frequently between 10% and 15% of dry matter (DM).
5. Treat cattle for grubs after heel fly activity ceases and before larvae reach the back, generally between July 1 and Oct. 1.
6. Early to mid-August is about the latest a person can spray sericea lespedeza and expect to achieve reasonable reduction in the plant population the following year.
7. Identify other pasture weed and brush problems to aid in planning control methods needed next spring and summer. Adjust stocking rate and grazing system to control undesirable plants and forage accumulation for prescribed fire.

### Midwest Region

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

### Breeding season

1. Look for unsound cows that need to be culled from the herd. Feet and legs, udders, eyes, disposition, and fleshing ability can be considered in some keep/cull programs.
2. Identify cull prospects. Cull the cows that are "reproductively slow" either from artificial insemination (AI) and/or natural service.
3. Limit the breeding season. Remove bulls after 60 days with cows, 45 days with heifers. Length of natural service season can vary depending if estrus synchronization has been implemented.

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

### Cow herd nutrition

1. Provide ample amounts of clean, fresh drinking water.
2. Consider creep-feeding if:
  - ▶ drought conditions develop and persist;
  - ▶ range conditions limit milk production;
  - ▶ creep-feed/grain prices are relatively low; and/or
  - ▶ value of gain allows for economic benefits. (For example: Creep-fed calves weighing 650 lb. and selling for \$1.20 per lb. = \$780. Non-creep-fed calves weighing 600 lb. and selling for \$1.25 per lb. = \$750. Creep feed gain = 50 lb. Value of the gain is \$30 per 50 lb., or 60¢ per lb. If the creep feed can be fed for less than 60¢ per lb. of calf gain then profit would be expected.)
3. Tips for successful creep-feeding:
  - ▶ Limiting intake will usually increase feed efficiency.
  - ▶ Using an ionophore or some other feed additive can increase feed efficiency.
  - ▶ Protein level should be equal to or greater than 15%.
  - ▶ High salt levels may help limit intake but can rust metal feeders.
  - ▶ Taking advantage of pricing specials can greatly reduce the cost of supplements, creep feeds, and/or feed purchases.

### Herd health

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

#### Preventive:

- ▶ Make sure the herd is receiving adequate vitamins and trace minerals in its diet.
- ▶ Consider using a medicated trace-mineral package.
- ▶ Consult your veterinarian about developing a preventive health program that includes pinkeye control.
- ▶ Control face flies.
- ▶ Clip pastures with 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.

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- ▶ Always consult your veterinarian on the best treatments available.
- 2. Develop a vaccination/health program for show cattle.
- 3. Vaccinate suckling calves for infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR), bovine viral diarrhoea (BVD), parainfluenza-3 virus (PI3), bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV), and possibly pasteurized at least three weeks prior to weaning.
- 4. Revaccinate all calves for blackleg.
- 5. Vaccinate replacement heifers for brucellosis (Bang's disease) at 4-10 months of age.
- 6. Monitor and treat foot rot.

**Forage/pasture management**

1. Enhance grazing distribution with mineral feeder/supplement placement.
2. Observe pasture weed problems to aid in planning control methods needed next spring.
3. Monitor grazing conditions and rotate pastures if possible and practical.
4. If pastures will run out in late summer, get ready to provide emergency feeds. Start supplemental feeding before pastures are

gone to extend grazing. Rotational grazing can be an effective forage management system and increase harvest efficiency of grazed lands.

5. Harvest and store forages properly. Minimize waste while raking, baling and storing mechanically harvested feeds.
6. Forage-test harvested forages for nitrate content and nutrient composition.
7. Plan a winter nutritional program through pasture and forage management.
8. For stocker cattle and replacement heifers, supplement maturing grasses with an acceptable degraded intake protein (DIP)/ionophore (feed additive)-type supplement.

**General management**

1. Avoid unnecessary heat stress — don't handle or truck cattle during the heat of the day.
2. Repair, replace and improve facilities needed for fall and winter activities.
3. Order supplies, vaccines, tags and other products needed at weaning time.
4. Consider weaning earlier than normal if:
  - ▶ drought conditions develop and persist;
  - ▶ range conditions limit milk production;
  - ▶ cows lose body condition; or
  - ▶ facilities and management are available to handle lightweight calves.
 First-calf heifers have the most to gain from early weaning.
5. Resist the temptation to feed cows without weaning; feeding early-weaned calves is more efficient than feeding lactating cows.
6. Prepare to have your calf crop weighed and analyzed through your state, regional or breed performance-testing program.
7. Consider your marketing options. AngusSource® is an excellent program developed for Angus genetics. AngusSource is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Process Verified Program (PVP) for Angus-sired calves that documents source, group age and a minimum of 50% Angus genetics.

**Northwest Region**

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**Planning/scheduling**

- ▶ Prepare your weaning strategy and fall cow work schedule. Inventory your winter feed resources.
- ▶ Time of weaning will require an assessment of available forage. If cow body condition scores (BCSs) of 4 or less are common, then early weaning will be a viable management option. First- and second-calf females will have the greatest challenge to maintain body condition with

limited forage resources. Early weaned calves will need a ration that contains 16% crude protein (CP).

- ▶ Work with your veterinarian and review your weaned calf vaccination protocols. Vaccination recommendations change rapidly, so what was recommended last year may not be the best choice this season. Newly weaned calves will be susceptible to respiratory infections and clostridial diseases. An effective vaccination program involves managing cattle in order for a protective immune response to occur. Vaccinate before weaning, allowing time for immunity to occur before cattle are put at risk. Use proper vaccine types and handling methods, with safe and effective application. Order and store vaccines as appropriate.
- ▶ In addition to weaning, fall cattle work will include pregnancy-checking cows and brucellosis vaccination for replacement heifers. Schedule help as needed.
- ▶ Inventory your winter feeding needs. Try to take advantage of forage byproducts such as crop byproducts (grass seed or wheat straw and cornstalks), cannery waste and grain products to lower production costs.
  - Ensure that grass seed byproduct feeds have been tested for ergot alkaloid concentrations and determined safe at the level you plan to feed.
- ▶ Cattle trucking options will be limited again this fall. Make contacts 30-60 days in advance to make sure you will have available transportation. Early scheduling may allow for more back-haul options that may reduce costs.

**Cattle health and management**

- ▶ Maintain adequate vitamin and mineral supplementation.
- ▶ Control and prevent pinkeye infections. Prevention begins with elimination of sources of eye irritation such as dust and grass seed stalks, continues with face fly control and includes providing shade.
- ▶ Monitor internal parasite risk, especially if cattle were not dewormed in July.
- ▶ Identify cattle with missing tags so replacement tags can be made and used during the weaning processing phase.
- ▶ Attempt to have calves started on hay or creep feed to facilitate a low-stress weaning event.
- ▶ Provide shade and check to ensure that a clean, cool water supply is available. During hot weather, cows can drink up to 20 gallons (gal.) of water per day.
- ▶ Repair corrals and working facilities to facilitate a low stress and efficient calf weaning scenario.