



# Angus Advisor

► NOVEMBER herd management tips

## Southeast Region

by **John Hall**, Virginia Tech, [jhall@vt.edu](mailto:jhall@vt.edu)

### Spring-calving herds

- Body condition score (BCS) cows and separate thin cows.
- Market commercial calves at value-added sales such as state-certified feeder calf programs or through AngusSource.®
- Background commercial calves for sale in December.
- Feed replacement heifers to gain 1.5 to 1.75 pounds (lb.) per day, or use the target weight method to calculate rate of gain.
- Cull open, old and very thin cows; check feet and legs, udders and eyes.
- Feed cull cows on stockpiled fescue until December or January to increase marketability.
- Test hay for nutrient quality.
- Move cows to stockpiled grass late this month or in early December.
- Get list of bull sales coming up early this winter.
- Remember to submit weaning data to the Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR<sup>SM</sup>) program.

### Fall-calving herds

- Finish calving.
- Check cows two to four times per day, checking heifers more often. Assist early if needed.
- Keep calving area clean, and move healthy pairs out to large pastures three days after calving.
- Tag and dehorn all calves at birth; castrate male calves in commercial herds.
- Give selenium (Se) and vitamin A and D injections to newborn calves.
- Feed cows extra energy after calving; stockpiled fescue will take care of most nutritional needs. Cows calving at a BCS of less than 5 (on a 9-point scale) should receive special nutritional attention.
- Test hay for nutrient quality.
- Look for opportunities to secure low-cost feed supplies of bulk feeds or commodity feeds.
- Keep high-quality, high-magnesium (Mg), high-selenium minerals available.
- Move cows to stockpiled grass late this month or in early December.
- Begin breeding replacement heifers late

this month; try artificial insemination (AI) on heifers.

- Perform breeding soundness exams (also referred to as BSEs) on all bulls.
- This is your last chance to buy bulls at November-December bull sales.

### Short hay supplies and low-quality hay call for supplementation

As we move into the fall, many locations in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic regions are short on hay this year. In areas where the amount of hay harvested was near normal, rain delays at harvest caused problems with nutrient quality of hay. Winter supplementation will be essential in most herds in the Southeast.

In general, eastern forages need supplementation with energy first. Many cool-season hays such as orchard grass and fescue require little, if any, protein supplementation. Warm-season hays such as Bermuda grass or Bahia grass will need protein and energy supplementation.

Although corn is a great energy supplement, feeding high-starch energy supplements like corn can reduce the cow's

## Midwest Region

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### Herd management for spring-calving cows

1. Pregnancy-check if not already completed.
2. Finish culling. Consider feeding cull cows to increase body weight and value, and to utilize cheap feedstuffs.
3. Score cows for body condition. Provide thin cows [body condition scores (BCSs) 3 and 4] extra feed now. Take advantage of weather, stage of pregnancy, lower nutrient requirements and quality feedstuffs.
4. In late fall and early winter, start feeding supplements to mature cows grazing dry grass using these guidelines: (a) 1-2 pounds (lb.) per day of a 40% crude protein (CP) supplement; (b) 3-4 lb. per day of a 20% CP supplement; or (c) 10 lb. good nonlegume hay, no supplement needed.
5. Compare supplements on the basis of cost per pound of nutrient.
6. Utilize crop residues. Strip-graze or rotate fields to improve grazing efficiency. Cows with average body condition can be grazed at 1-2 acres per cow for 30 days, assuming normal weather. Available forage is directly related to grain production levels. Protein, phosphorus (P) and vitamin A are usually the limiting nutrients.
7. Discontinue feeding tetracycline if used for anaplasmosis control.

### Calf management

1. Participate in national breed association performance programs, the Cow Herd Analysis and Performance System (CHAPS), and/or other ranch record systems.
2. Finalize plans to merchandise calves or to background through yearling or finishing programs.
3. Use Angus Information Management Software (AIMS) to record calf data.

### Forage/pasture management

Plan a winter nutritional program through pasture and forage management.

### General management

1. Document the cost of production by participating in Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) programs.
2. Review management decisions, and lower your costs per unit of production.
3. Plan your marketing program, including private-treaty, consignment, test and production sales, etc.
4. A penny saved is a penny earned. Price byproducts, grains and other feedstuffs on a nutrient basis.

ability to digest hay. In addition, corn is similar to most cool-season hays in protein content. Fortunately, many byproduct feeds available in our region provide energy as readily digestible fiber, which does not impair hay digestion.

Byproducts such as corn gluten feed, brewer's grains, soy hulls and wheat midds contain 80%-90% of the energy of corn while providing additional protein. For large beef producers, these byproduct feeds can be purchased economically by the tractor-trailer load.

For producers with smaller herds, many local feed co-ops include these byproducts in their bagged feed products. These byproduct feeds can vary greatly in moisture content as they can come in wet, pressed or dried forms. Contact your local Extension educator or nutritionist for assistance in designing feeding programs with these useful and economical feeds.

## Midsouth Region

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### Spring-calving herds

1. Wean calves as soon as possible, if not already done. Cow milk production is at its lowest point in the lactation curve, and forage quality rapidly declines through the fall months. As a result, adjusted weaning weights generally decline for calves that are weaned late in the season. Furthermore, under most circumstances, cows will continue to lose condition until the energy demand for milk production is removed.
2. For cows grazing forage that contains less than 7% protein, begin supplementing the equivalent of about 0.4 lb. of protein per day. This is approximately equivalent to feeding 1 lb. of a 38% protein product or 2 lb. of a 20% protein product. This strategy will increase forage intake and digestibility, allowing the cattle to harvest 25%-50% more energy from the forage resource. As a result of this tremendous response, cows should gain one-half to one full BCS before the end of the year, assuming they have access to abundant forage.
3. Depending on forage quality, retained heifer calves will likely require supplementation in order to achieve gains of 1-1.5 lb. per day. The most appropriate and efficient supplementation program can only be designed with the nutritional characteristics of the forage resource in mind. For example, high-quality forage, such as wheat pasture, will not require protein or energy supplementation. In contrast, high-quality prairie hay may require up to 1.5% of body weight of

supplemental feed to achieve the desired level of gain.

4. There is much interest in feeding fat to beef cattle (generally through supplements) to increase weight gain and achieve improved reproductive performance. Published experiments have failed to document consistent positive responses to fat supplementation in general. However, the research is more consistent in demonstrating that too much ruminally active fat can hinder intake, forage digestion and weight gain in general. Under most circumstances, forage-fed cattle should receive diets that

contain no more than 4%-5% total fat. Many forages contain 1%-2% fat, leaving a maximum of 2%-4% supplemental fat.

### Fall-calving herds

1. Lactating, fall-calving cows should receive approximately twice the amount of supplemental protein as the spring-calving cow herd. The goal for the supplementation program is to minimize weight loss through the breeding season so cows are able to maintain moderate condition through this period. Moderate weight and

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condition loss after breeding will not compromise the pregnancy.

2. Brand calves and vaccinate for clostridial diseases, if not done in October. Vaccinate cows for reproductive diseases according to your herd health plan.
3. Many producers choose to begin breeding yearling heifers 20-30 days before the cows to maintain similar breeding/calving dates with the mature cow herd.

### General recommendations

1. Discontinue feeding tetracycline for anaplasmosis control after the end of the vector season (30-50 days after a hard freeze).
2. Check with your Extension office for information on educational meetings about livestock and forage production practices.
3. Lightly graze native hay meadows after frost. Remove cattle from meadows in wet conditions.
4. Use prescribed fire every other year in dry leaf litter to control hardwood sprouts [less than 4 inches (in.)]. Fire will also reduce winter tick infestations.

## Northwest Region

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### November Angus management

- ▶ Pregnancy-check cows. Open cows need to be marketed as influenced by feed

resources and marketing options. Cull cows historically sell 10%-20% cheaper in the late fall than after the first of the year. Feeding cull cows can be profitable when an economical feed resource is available and the market risk is low. Care must be taken not to create overly fat cows that would be significantly discounted.

- ▶ Evaluate cow and heifer BCSs. The current commodity markets suggest that corn and barley can replace many forage resources. These markets remain volatile and should be closely monitored if feed inventory problems are an issue. Supplementing grain at a level of higher than 0.5% of body weight is not advised due to reduction in both forage grazing intake and utilization. In grazing animals, usually 1 lb. of grain can substitute for 2 lb. of alfalfa hay, 3 lb. of grass hay or equivalent forage. Maintain cows and heifers at a BCS of 5.
- ▶ Consider feeding ionophores. Use of ionophores such as Bovatech® and Rumensin® in heifers and cows will improve weight gain by 0.1-0.2 lb. per day when fed at recommended levels. Cows can maintain BCSs with 5%-10% less feed. Ionophores can be fed daily or in free-choice supplements. Remember that ionophores are toxic to horses and not allowed in most natural beef production models.
- ▶ Prevent prussic acid risk. Freezing conditions can spike toxic compounds in certain forages. Prussic acid can be toxic to

cattle if present in forage plants at more than 600 ppm on a dry-matter (DM) basis. Plants that are rapidly growing or stressed will have elevated levels of prussic acid.

Allowing plants to have a 5- to 7-day recovery period after a frost will reduce the risk of prussic acid poisoning. Sudan grass, sorghum and white clover carry the greatest risk for prussic acid poisoning.

- ▶ Prevent nitrate poisoning risk. Nitrate poisoning can occur when cattle are fed plants that have grown on highly fertile soil and then become stressed due to freezing conditions or reaction with certain herbicides. Nitrate poisoning is more common with plants grown in acid soils. The lower leaves and stems of corn, small grains and forage have more potential for nitrate poisoning. Nitrate poisoning can occur in standing forage or hay.
- ▶ Prevent lice. Lice control will be important in early winter if cattle were not treated for grubs in the fall. Effective lice control is accomplished by breaking the parasite's life cycle and choosing the correct product for either biting lice or sucking lice.
- ▶ Don't neglect data collection. An accurate forage analysis can fine-tune a winter feeding program. It is important to collect a representative sample. Forages should meet daily energy, protein, mineral and vitamin requirements. The Extension service is an excellent resource to accomplish this management task.
- ▶ Consider collecting whole blood samples as a method to monitor animal mineral status. This process will require consultation with your veterinarian. Despite limitations, this process can yield valuable information, especially when done on an annual basis.
- ▶ Consider performance testing. Collect accurate data to test weight gain in weaned bulls and heifers. For accurate data, cattle must be fully weaned, experience a pre-test adjustment period of 21 days, and be weighed initially either full or before feeding. If animals are weighed full, two consecutive weights should be taken and averaged to compensate for differences in fill. The minimum length of any gain test should be 112 days to get the best possible data.
- ▶ Plan for taxes. Consult with your certified public accountant (CPA) or tax advisor for year-end tax planning. The viable options to consider include income stimulation or deferral, deduction planning, Section 179 expensing, utilization of IRAs and annual gifts.