



Angus Advisor

► JULY herd management tips

Southeast Region

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

Spring-calving herds

- Check bulls regularly for performance and injury.
- End breeding season; pull bulls.
- Feed first-calf heifers separately; give them best forage and supplement.
- Continue fly control program.
- Treat pinkeye early and aggressively.
- Continue feeding high-selenium (Se) trace mineral salt.
- Continue creep-grazing.
- Do midsummer deworming and implanting (commercial herds only) early in month.
- Start grazing warm-season grasses.
- Move cattle to hay fields to give pastures a rest.

Fall-calving herds

- Continue fly control program.
- Do midsummer deworming on replacement heifers, pregnant heifers (2-year-olds) and 3-year-old cows.
- Continue providing high-selenium trace mineral salt.
- Move cattle to hay fields to give pastures a rest.
- Vaccinate commercial calves for value-added programs; line up certification.
- Wean calves if selling commercial calves in a weaned value-added program in late August or September so they will be weaned for 45 days by sale day.
- Remember to weigh and condition score cows at weaning for Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR®).

Early pregnancy diagnosis important during drought

Continued drought in our region is forcing beef producers to seek ways to minimize feed inputs while maintaining cow numbers. The prediction for the summer is continued or increasing drought in most of the Southeast. As of the writing of this article (early June) most of the region needs 6-12 inches (in.) of rain to achieve close-to-normal rainfall. Barring tropical storms that bring rain with little damage to the region, most operations will be short on both hay and pasture this year.

An important drought management strategy is early pregnancy diagnosis. Within 30-45 days of the end of the breeding season, veterinarians can diagnose pregnancy in the herd. Those vets skilled in the use of

ultrasound can diagnose pregnancies as early as 25-28 days postbreeding. Identifying and culling open females in midsummer rather than fall will reduce the overall feed requirements of the herd. Reducing pressure on pastures will improve pasture quality and reserve feed for the most productive cows.

Early weaning an option for spring- and fall-calving herds

Calves can be weaned from cows as early as 90-100 days of age. Calves can be reared on remaining pasture with supplementation of byproducts. This allows cows to be maintained on poor-quality pasture, crop residues, or limit-fed byproducts in a drylot. Early weaning will improve calf growth and cow condition during drought.

Spring-calving herds need to consider weaning calves now if they are still nursing their dams. Fall-calving operations should assess pasture and feed availability at calving and make weaning decisions before the breeding season. For assistance with diets for calves weaned early, contact your state Extension service.

Midsouth Region

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

Spring-calving herds

Breeding bulls should be removed from the cow herd after 60-90 days.

Calf performance can be enhanced during summer months by creep-feeding or creep-grazing. High-quality forage, such as sorghum-Sudan grass or alfalfa pasture, is excellent creep-grazing forages.

In conventional creep-feeding programs, efficiency of feed conversion to added gain is quite variable and ranges from about 7 to 12 pounds (lb.) of creep feed per additional pound of weight gain. The creep-feed conversion will be at the lower end of this scale when forage quality is low, when forage quantity is limited, and/or when cows are giving little milk due to a low-quality diet or due to low genetic potential for milk production. First-calf heifers typically give 20%-30% less milk than mature cows.

This year, throughout most of the Midsouth Region, forage quality is excellent. Therefore, conventional creep-feeding programs may not be very efficient this year, especially with high feed-grain prices.

An alternative to conventional creep-

feeding is a self-limited, high-protein creep-feeding program (such as described in the Oklahoma Silver program). In this program, calves consume around 1 lb. per day of supplement, weight gain is improved substantially, and calves do not become fleshy compared to free-choice, lower-protein creep-feeding programs.

Check with your veterinarian regarding the potential value of deworming nursing calves during mid- to late summer. Response to the anthelmintic will vary substantially depending on the region, local conditions, grazing intensity and previous parasite management.

Fall-calving herds

Wean fall-born calves before the middle of July to allow cows time to regain body condition before calving again. Calf performance is probably marginal this late anyway.

At weaning, vaccinate calves according to your veterinarian's recommendations, deworm calves, pregnancy-check cows and heifers, weigh and estimate condition scores of cows, and weigh calves. Transfer records for your whole herd to the American Angus Association.

A small package of high-protein supplement, such as supplement in the Oklahoma Gold program, can facilitate around 2 lb. average daily gain (ADG) on weaned heifers and bull calves grazing abundant native pastures during July, August and September. A strategic deworming program and the inclusion of a feed additive such as Bovatec®, Rumensin® or chlortetracycline are important features in this program.

General recommendations

Cold weather and frost in April, along with stressful drought conditions during the past year may result in lower-than-normal forage production in native warm-season pastures and hay meadows. Consequently, range scientists are recommending continued reduction of stocking rate in native warm-season pastures by 20%-30%. Fortunately, excellent spring precipitation has restored subsoil moisture and water levels in ponds and streams.

Remove intensive early stocking (IES) cattle from native grass pastures by July 10.

Continue fly and tick control programs 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.

Harvest Sudan grass and Sudan hybrids for hay in the boot stage, which generally corresponds to 3 feet (ft.) to 4 ft. in height. A routine nitrate test on forage before harvesting may be advisable, particularly if soil moisture has been scarce prior to harvest.

Treat cattle for grubs after heel fly activity ceases and before larvae reach the back, generally between July 1 and Oct. 1.

Closely monitor water source quantity and quality during hot, dry summer months. Concentration of minerals and other compounds can become excessive (toxic) in stagnant water sources during extended dry periods.

Midwest Region

by **Twig Marston**, *Kansas State University*,
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July and August are months when forages are maturing, weaning time is approaching and weather dictates several key management decisions.

Breeding season

- ▶ Limit the breeding season by removing bulls after 60 days with the cows and 45 days with the heifers. Cull cows that have not conceived after three or four services by a fertile bull. These steps will contribute to a more uniform calf crop, making winter nutritional management easier and increasing the success rate of next year's breeding season.

Herd nutrition

- ▶ Provide ample amounts of clean, fresh drinking water.
- ▶ Consider limited-intake creep-feeding if drought conditions develop and persist, range conditions limit milk production, creep feed or grain prices are relatively low, or value of gain allows for economic benefits.
- ▶ For a successful limited-intake creep-feeding program, limit intake to less than 2 lb. per head per day. Use an ionophore or other feed additive to maximize efficiency. The protein level should be at least 16%. High salt levels may help limit intake, but can be tough on feeders.
- ▶ Prepurchase bulk-rate winter supplements prior to seasonal price increases.

Herd health

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

Prevention: Make sure the herd is receiving adequate dietary vitamins and trace minerals. Consider using a medicated trace-mineral package and vaccinating for pinkeye and infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR). Control face flies. Clip pastures that have tall, coarse grasses that may irritate eyes, and provide ample shade.

Therapy: 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 show animals for respiratory diseases. Vaccinate suckling

calves for IBR, bovine viral diarrhea (BVD), parainfluenza-3 virus (PI₃), bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV) and possibly pasteurella at least three weeks prior to weaning. Revaccinate all calves for blackleg. Vaccinate replacement heifers (4-10 months of age) for brucellosis (Bang's disease).

- ▶ Monitor and treat foot rot.

Forage/pasture management

- ▶ Observe pasture weed problems to aid in planning the control methods needed next spring.
- ▶ Monitor grazing conditions and rotate pastures if possible and practical. Enhance grazing distribution by placing the minerals away from water sources. If pastures won't last all summer, get ready to provide emergency feeds. Start supplemental feeding before pastures are gone to extend grazing.
- ▶ For stocker cattle and replacement heifers, supplement maturing grasses with an acceptable level of degradable intake protein and ionophore (feed additive).
- ▶ Harvest and store forages properly. Minimize waste by reducing spoilage. Sample harvested forages, and have them analyzed for nitrate and nutrient composition.
- ▶ Plan your winter nutritional program through pasture and forage management.

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 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. 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.

Northwest Region

by **Thomas Hill**, *Oregon State University*,
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Breeding management

- ▶ Determine your options relative to calving season length. Removing bulls on July 20 should result in the following calving season ending April 1.
- ▶ Separate yearling bulls from mature bulls after the breeding season so yearling bulls can continue to grow and develop on better feed resources.

- ▶ If a split artificial insemination (AI)/natural-service breeding scheme was used, pregnancy-checking cows at 100 days post-AI will allow many veterinarians to determine if the fetus is AI- or natural-service-sired.

Calf management

- ▶ Monitor feed quality and availability. Early weaning is a possible solution to extending limited forage resources. Successful, well-managed programs can wean calves at 120-150 days of age. Early weaning can reduce cow energy requirements by 35%-50%.
- ▶ Separate bull calves from heifer calves by the time they are 6 months of age to avoid heifers being bred and creating added stress on the bull calves.
- ▶ Consider implanting steers and nonreplacement heifers. Seventy days preweaning is the optimum time to implant in order to capture the greatest economic return. It is important to use only implants labeled for suckling beef calves.
- ▶ July is an optimum time to evaluate the need to treat calves for internal parasites. Ideally, after treatment, calves can be turned out onto clean ground or regrowth from forage cut earlier for hay.
- ▶ Consider creep feed as an economical method to increase calf performance. Many successful creep diets are widely available. Successful creep diets have a dietary bypass protein fraction and an ionophore that assists with control of coccidiosis. Creep diets with high starch or grain content have been shown to reduce forage utilization.
- ▶ Be sure to check tattoos on any cattle that will be shown or sold this summer or fall.
- ▶ Be prepared to manage cattle for warmer temperatures. When temperatures increase from 70° F to 90° F, total water intake can increase by 2½ times. Cool water will enhance feed consumption and is critical to moderating heat stress. Water sources in direct sunlight or above-ground waterlines exposed to sunlight will increase the risk of heat stress.

Cattle become susceptible to heat stress when temperatures reach 90° at 35% relative humidity. Even moderate heat stress will affect growth, immune response, cow milk production and cow and bull fertility. When temperatures reach 100° and 55% relative humidity, cattle are subject to severe stress.

Avoid working cattle when they are heat stressed.

Program improvements

Plan to attend or watch on television the Western Video Market Cattle Sale July 9-12 in Reno or the Superior Livestock Video Royale July 30-Aug. 3 in Winnemucca, Nev. These sales represent a great opportunity to evaluate the trends, demands and value of commercial cattle produced in the West. 