



Angus Advisor

► SEPTEMBER herd management tips

Southeast Region

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

Spring-calving herds

- ▶ Consider weaning calves to reduce feed requirements of cows if pasture is short due to drought.
- ▶ Inventory feed supplies for winter; make decisions on alternative feed supplies now.
- ▶ Give preweaning vaccinations to calves for bovine respiratory disease (BRD).
- ▶ Pregnancy-check cows.
- ▶ Condition score and weigh cows at weaning and separate thin cows. Don't forget to record body condition score (BCS) on Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIRSM) forms.
- ▶ Put open, old and very thin cows on the cull list; put cull cows in a separate pasture to feed for sale in December.
- ▶ Make arrangements for backgrounding calves.
- ▶ Continue feeding high-selenium (Se) trace-mineral salt.
- ▶ Continue stockpiling grass, if possible.

Fall-calving herds

- ▶ Condition score cows; plan nutrition/ grazing program according to BCS.
- ▶ Inventory feed supplies for winter; make decisions on alternative feed supplies now.
- ▶ Make sure all calving supplies are on hand and are clean.
- ▶ Move pregnant heifers and early-calving cows to calving area about two weeks before due date.
- ▶ Start calving.
- ▶ Check cows three to four times per day; check heifers more often — assist early if needed.
- ▶ Keep calving area clean and well-drained; move healthy pairs to large pastures three days after calving.
- ▶ Tag all calves at birth; castrate male calves in commercial herds.
- ▶ Give selenium and vitamin A and D injections to newborn calves.
- ▶ Feed cows extra energy after calving, especially 2-year-olds. Cows calving at a BCS less than 5 should receive special nutritional attention.
- ▶ Keep high-quality, high-selenium and high-magnesium (Mg) minerals available.
- ▶ Purchase estrus synchronization supplies; line up artificial insemination (AI) technicians or AI supplies.

Fall fescue problems

For the past several years, producers with fall-calving herds have reported scattered incidences of problems with cows calving on stockpiled fescue. Problems include cows with

little or no milk, weak or starving calves and stillbirths. These problems appear to be worse when we have a dry summer followed by a normal or wet fall.

While a majority of the problems, such as low milk production and hungry calves, appear to be related to toxins produced by endophyte-infected fescue, other situations, such as stillbirths, cannot be conclusively linked to endophyte toxins. Producers should closely observe the first few cows that calve to ensure they have enough milk and are taking care of their calves.

Let's review what we know. Most herds never have a problem. Problems seem to be random. Herds that experience a problem one year won't have it the next. The same cow(s) will not be affected each year.

Fall-calving herds really are not calving on stockpiled fescue. They are calving on well-fertilized late summer and early fall growth — actively growing grass. These pastures will be higher in endophyte-related toxins and may be higher in nitrates than true stockpiled fescue.

Herds that had problems with low milk will benefit from feeding non-fescue hay or supplements for one-half of the late gestation and early lactation diet. This can be as simple as feeding 8 pounds (lb.) per cow per day of corn gluten feed or soyhulls during September. Grazing non-fescue pastures and allowing fescue to truly stockpile may be a better option. Once lactation has started and cows are milking well they can be moved to a fescue pasture or supplementation can stop.

Midsouth Region

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

Spring-calving herds

1. Consult your veterinarian to plan the vaccination program for spring-born calves and spring-calving cows. Purchase the necessary supplies. An ideal situation is to vaccinate two to six weeks prior to weaning and again at weaning.
2. Consider weaning calves earlier than normal if cows are thin (BCS 4 or less), particularly 2- and 3-year-old cows and cows that are 10 years or older. Many areas in the Southern Great Plains have low forage availability in pastures, little if any hay carryover from last winter and 30%-60% hay yields. There is no better way to reduce forage need on a ranch than to early-wean calves. By removing the nutrient requirement for lactation, cow energy needs are reduced by some 50%. Calves can be maintained in a drylot and are very efficient converters of well-

balanced feeding programs. Alternatively, calves can be sold or shipped to a feedyard.

3. Continue creep-feeding program (such as the Oklahoma Silver program) for calves through weaning, if applicable.

Fall-calving herds

1. The calving season for fall herds in this region will be in full swing during the month of September. Identify calves at birth if possible.
2. Identify herd sires to be used in the AI program.
3. Continue the newly weaned bulls and heifers on the highest-quality pasture available and provide a supplement such as in the Oklahoma Gold program (1 lb. per day of high-protein supplement with an ionophore) for cattle grazing native grass pasture or low-quality Bermuda grass pasture.

General recommendations

1. Concentration of critical minerals in forage declines as forage matures and as 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 (P), copper (Cu), zinc (Zn) and selenium. A balanced supply of macrominerals and microminerals is an important component of the overall herd health program, influencing health of weaned calves as well as reproductive success.
2. Late-summer applications of about 50 lb. per acre of nitrogen (N) 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.
3. Plan winter pasture program. Prepare seedbeds for small-grain pastures and fertilize according to soil test. Planting early (early September) ensures maximum forage production, whereas planting later enhances grain yield.
4. Treat cattle for grubs after heel fly activity ceases, between July 1 and Oct. 1 (dates will differ by region), before larvae reach the back.
5. Identify pasture weed problems to aid in planning control methods needed next spring. Adjust stocking rate and grazing system to control undesirable plants and forage accumulation for prescribed fire.
6. Evaluate cool-season pastures, commercial supplements and bulk feed commodity options for supplemental feed in winter.

7. Continue supplementation (such as the Oklahoma Gold program) for stocker and replacement heifers grazing moderate- to low-quality pasture.

Northwest Region

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Preconditioning/weaning

- ▶ Obtain and properly store vaccines to complete a comprehensive calf health program.
- ▶ Make sure corrals, working facilities and scales are in proper working order.
- ▶ Recognize that stress is the leading precursor to BRD complex, or shipping fever, in weaned calves. Stress can be realized from emotional, environmental, nutritional and social events.
- ▶ Prepare to reduce stress with proper management. Stress management includes not allowing calves to hear their mothers after weaning unless using a fenceline weaning method; reducing dust in corrals; providing adequate bunk space and clean, cool water (running water may improve water intake); and providing quality forages that are highly palatable. Placing panels at right angles to fencelines can reduce the time calves spend walking fencelines. To reduce social dominance issues, try not to mix calves from different pastures when weaning.
- ▶ Prepare a comprehensive calf vaccination/preconditioning program with your health professional. This vaccination program will vary with cattle management options and potential calf health risks.
- ▶ Prevent vaccination failure, which can occur when vaccines are at any time (during shipping, storage or at chuteside) exposed to warm temperatures and direct sunlight, or improperly mixed and administered. The animals' own immune responses will be compromised if they are not vigorous and healthy when vaccinated or if the vaccine label directions are not strictly followed, including injection method and interval between boosters.

Cow management

- ▶ Identify cows as cull candidates due to disposition, offspring performance, age, udder quality and pregnancy status. Historically, cull cows sell at a premium in September as compared to the later fall months.
- ▶ Mature dry cows in the late second trimester and early third trimester have their lowest nutrient requirement of the year. Make use of lower-quality feeds at this time or manage thin cows to regain lost body condition.

Midwest Region

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September is when forages mature rapidly, weaning becomes appropriate and weather dictates several key management decisions.

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Breeding season

Remove bulls after 60 days with cows, or 45 days with heifers. Never use bulls for more than a 90-day 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 and/or grain prices are relatively low; or
 - value of gain allows for economic benefits.
- ▶ Tips for successful limited-intake creep-feeding include:
 - limit duration to the last 30-75 days before weaning;

- limit intake to less than 2 lb. per head per day;
 - use an ionophore or other feed additive to maximize efficiency;
 - keep protein levels equal to or greater than 16%; and
 - watch high salt levels; salt may help limit intake, but it can be tough on feeders.
- ▶ Prepurchase bulk-rate winter supplementation prior to seasonal price increases.

Herd health

If pinkeye is likely to be a problem, consider the following measures.

Preventive:

- ▶ Make sure the herd is receiving adequate dietary vitamins and trace minerals.
- ▶ Consider using a medicated trace-mineral package.
- ▶ Consider vaccination for pinkeye and IBR.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Consult your veterinarian.
- ▶ Consider revaccinating any show animals for respiratory diseases.
- ▶ Vaccinate suckling calves for IBR, BVD, PI₃, BRSV and possibly pasteurella at least three weeks prior to weaning.
- ▶ Revaccinate all calves for blackleg.
- ▶ Vaccinate replacement heifers for brucellosis (Bang's disease) at 4 to 10 months of age.
- ▶ Monitor and treat foot rot.

Forage/pasture management

- ▶ Enhance grazing distribution by placing mineral mixture away from water sources.

- ▶ Observe pasture weed problems to aid in planning control methods for next spring.
- ▶ Monitor grazing conditions and rotate pastures if possible and/or practical.
- ▶ If pastures will run out in late summer, get ready to provide emergency feeds. Start supplemental feeding to extend grazing before pastures are gone.
- ▶ Harvest and store forages properly. Minimize waste by reducing spoilage.
- ▶ Collect samples of harvested forages and have them analyzed for nitrate and nutrient composition.
- ▶ Plan winter nutrition program through pasture and forage management.
- ▶ For stocker cattle and replacement heifers, supplement maturing grasses with an acceptable degradable intake protein/ionophore (feed additive) supplement.

Reproductive management

- ▶ Remove bulls to consolidate calving season.

- ▶ Pregnancy-check and age pregnancies 60 days after the end of the breeding season.
- ▶ Consider culling cows that are short-bred.

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

General management

- ▶ Avoid unnecessary heat stress. Don't handle and/or truck 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 early weaning if:
 - drought conditions develop and persist;
 - range conditions limit milk production;
 - cows are losing body condition;
 - calf and cull cow prices indicate maximum profit; or

— facilities and management are available to handle lightweight calves.

- ▶ Remember, first-calf heifers have the most to gain from early weaning.
- ▶ Resist the temptation to feed 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.
- ▶ Document cost of production by participating in Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) programs.
- ▶ Plan your marketing program, including private-treaty sales, consignment sales, test stations, production sales, etc.

