



Angus Advisor

► JUNE herd management tips

Southeast Region

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

Spring-calving herds

- Finish artificial insemination (AI); turn out cleanup bulls.
- Check bulls regularly for performance and injury.
- Feed first-calf heifers separately; give them the best forage and supplement.
- Use 48-hour calf removal for thin cows and first-calf heifers at the beginning of the breeding season.
- Begin a fly control program.
- Begin creep-grazing.
- Continue feeding high-magnesium (Mg) minerals to prevent grass tetany; you may be able to switch to high-selenium (Se) trace salt late in the month.

- Deworm all calves and implant commercial calves late in the month or early next month.

Fall-calving herds

- Score cows as to body condition; plan nutrition/grazing program based on body condition. Information for how to score your cows is available online at www.cowbcs.info.
- Begin fly control program.
- Deworm replacement heifers and pregnant heifers (2-year-olds).
- Plan marketing program for calves.
- Give preweaning vaccination for respiratory diseases to all calves.
- Plan to market commercial calves through a value-added program; line up certification if needed.
- Wean commercial calves if selling in July or August.

- Remember to condition score and weigh cows at weaning for Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR).
- Switch to high-selenium trace mineral salt.

Forage management

- Finish making first-cutting hay early in month.
- Start grazing warm-season grasses.

Next winter's feeding program starts in late-May and early-June hay fields. Maturity at harvest will have a dramatic effect on the ability of hay to meet the nutritional needs of the cow next winter. Studies from Virginia Tech indicate that energy content of hay [total digestible nutrients (TDN)] decreases 8 to 10 percentage points between May 15 and June 15. Protein levels also decrease 5 to 7 percentage points. Fescue or orchard grass hay made in the boot to early head stages meets the nutritional requirements of mature lactating cows. In contrast, hay harvested in late June will barely meet the nutritional needs of a dry pregnant cow in midgestation.

Round-bale silage is an excellent alternative to trying to make hay during May and June in the humid South and Mid-Atlantic areas.

Rocky Mountain West Region

by **Steve Paisley**, University of Wyoming, spaisley@uwyo.edu

Although some areas of the western United States have received much-needed rain, many areas are facing another dry spring, with very little winter runoff. While many operations have already reduced herd sizes, there are some additional considerations to maintain "core" herds and to maintain or improve range conditions.

Strict grazing management. Controlling turnout dates and managing the amount of grazing pressure will continue to be extremely important as grasses face another dry spring or recover from extended drought. Traditionally, cattle are pulled from pastures in the fall, but the last few years have caused that to change. If numbers weren't reduced prior to turnout, cattle may need to be removed early in the summer. This may be an opportunity to pregnancy-check the herd early and to sort off late calvers, open heifers, lame cows, cows with poor udder conformation, etc.

Summer supplementation. Lack of forage may force many producers to supplement cattle while they are on summer grass. Consider using alternative feeds and forages.

There are several byproduct feeds that work very well as grazing and forage supplements, complementing the forage while reducing the amount of hay required in addition to improving the energy status of the cow. Some of the more common byproducts include beet pulp, wheat midds, soybean hulls, corn gluten feed and distillers' dried grains. Additional alternative feeds include drought- or frost-damaged grains and oilseeds and grain screenings. All have inherent management challenges, but all represent an opportunity to replace a portion of forage in the diet.

Extension personnel, nutritionists and veterinarians can help work through some of the available options.

Early weaning. Weaning calves early continues to be a viable option for many operations. Weaning calves earlier in the summer can potentially have several positive effects on the herd and the operation. Removing the calf will reduce forage consumption, which may create a few additional days for cows on the pasture. Early weaning can also have positive effects by maintaining or improving a cow's condition during late summer. Having cows in good condition going into the fall may also reduce fall and winter feed costs. Early

weaning is an important management tool to consider for young cows with their first or second calves. Helping these at-risk females by reducing their nutritional demands will help them maintain their condition through the winter months.

Many commercial producers also experienced additional marketing opportunities, selling calves during late summer before the seasonal price decline, and the ability to put calves into the feedlot at an earlier age, increasing their chances of finishing during the April fed-cattle pricing window.

Water quality. Keep a close eye on water availability and quality. Water is our most essential nutrient. Warm weather in the arid or semiarid West emphasizes its importance.

Sulfate levels are another water-quality concern. High iron and sulfate levels can affect trace mineral absorption, especially that of copper (Cu), but high-sulfate water can also increase the risk of polioencephalomalacia, or polio. Symptoms include blindness, nervousness and uncoordinated movement.

South Dakota State University researchers recently reported results from an ongoing project evaluating water sulfate levels. Based on two years of data, their findings suggest that sulfate levels less than 1,000 parts per million (ppm) are generally safe, with levels of 1,000-2,500 ppm causing reduced performance and occasional cases of polio. Levels approaching 2,500-4,000 ppm indicate very poor water quality, with definite reductions in animal performance and increased occurrence of polio.

Additional concerns. Additional concerns with poor water quality include mineral interactions and secondary mineral deficiencies that can occur if water is high in total dissolved solids (TDS) and sulfate. High levels of sulfate, or other minerals, can compromise the animal's immune system, leading to increased incidence of health problems. It is always a good idea to sample and test water sources to avoid future problems.

One of the best tools to manage through dry conditions is to establish an overall road map for the operation. Recognize potential problems before they happen and manage to reduce risks, lower costs and extend forage supplies. Make short-term management decisions with the long-term program in mind.

Round-bale silage requires only one day of wilting time compared to the three days it takes to dry hay. Hay must still be cut in the boot to heading stages to make acceptable round-bale silage, but wrapping bales eliminates the weather factor in quality forage production.

Midsouth Region

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

Spring-calving herds

- ▶ Follow the vaccine program outlined for May, if not done at that time.
- ▶ Consult your veterinarian regarding the need to deworm young cows and calves if not done in May. This investment will depend a great deal on the location of your operation, among other factors.
- ▶ Check for heat during early morning and late evening hours.
- ▶ Turn bulls out with cows after the AI program is completed. The bull-to-cow ratio will vary depending on the number of cows or heifers serviced to AI and the age of the bull.
- ▶ For those breeders who choose to creep-feed calves grazing native pastures, consider using a limit-fed, high-protein creep, such as the feed described in the Oklahoma Silver program. In this program, calves consume around 1 pound (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.

Fall-calving herds

- ▶ Wean fall-born calves in June or early July, if not done in May. A dam's milk production and calf performance decline dramatically during the month of July due to declining forage quality.
- ▶ At weaning, vaccinate calves according to your veterinarian's recommendations, deworm calves, weigh and condition score cows, and weigh calves. Transfer records for your whole herd to the American Angus Association.
- ▶ A high-protein supplementation program, such as the Oklahoma Gold program, can facilitate around 2-lb. average daily gains (ADGs) on weaned calves grazing native pastures during June and July.

General recommendations

- ▶ Continue fly and tick control programs for all cattle.
- ▶ Monitor cattle closely for foot rot and treat according to your veterinarian's recommendations.
- ▶ Plan to harvest native grass hay during early July to achieve near-optimum balance between quality and quantity of hay. Harvest Bermuda grass hay, or graze at about 30-day intervals when precipitation is abundant. All else being equal (maturity, precipitation, soil fertility, etc.), Bermuda grass harvested for hay in June has higher digestibility than Bermuda grass harvested in the hot summer months of July and August.

- ▶ Begin grazing Sudan grass and Sudan hybrids when 18 to 24 inches (in.) in height.
- ▶ Federal and state estimated tax payments are due June 15.

Midwest Region

by **Twig Marston**, Kansas State University, tmarston@oznet.ksu.edu

June is a month to let Mother Nature take her course. Native grasses are usually at peak production; therefore, little supplementation is needed, with the exception of some minerals.

Cow-herd nutrition

- ▶ Provide plenty of clean, fresh water.
- ▶ Provide free-choice minerals to correct any mineral deficiencies or imbalances.
- ▶ Monitor grazing conditions and rotate pastures if possible and practical.
- ▶ Consider creep-feeding if it's cost-effective.

Herd health

- ▶ Monitor and treat pinkeye cases.
- ▶ Provide fly control. Consider all options; price and efficiency will dictate the best options to use.
- ▶ Monitor and treat for foot rot.
- ▶ To reduce heat stress, avoid handling and transporting cattle during the hottest times of the day.

Forage and pasture management

- ▶ Check and maintain summer water supplies.
- ▶ Place mineral feeders strategically to enhance grazing distribution.
- ▶ Check water gaps after possible washouts.
- ▶ Harvest hay in a timely manner; think quality and quantity.

Reproductive management

- ▶ If using AI, do not expect all females to conceive. A common practice is to breed once or twice with AI, then turn out cleanup bulls for the balance of a 65-day breeding season. A 42-day AI season with estrus synchronization at the front end gives most females three chances to conceive by AI.
- ▶ Watch bulls for libido, mounting and breeding function.
- ▶ Record breeding dates to determine calving dates.
- ▶ By imposing reproductive pressure (45-day breeding season) on yearling heifers, no late-calving 2-year-olds will result. This will increase lifetime productivity and profits.

Genetic management

- ▶ Monitor herd performance. Then identify candidates to cull because of poor performance.

General management

- ▶ Check equipment (sprayers, dust bags, oilers, haying equipment, etc.), and repair or replace as needed. Have spare parts on hand because downtime can make a big difference in hay quality.

