



# Angus Advisor

► OCTOBER herd management tips

## Southeast Region

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

### Spring-calving herds

- Give preweaning injections to calves not already weaned.
- Wean calves this month or early next month.
- Commercial producers should market calves through a value-added means such as your state certified feeder calf program or AngusSource<sup>SM</sup>.
- Make arrangements for backgrounding calves.
- Feed replacement heifers to gain 1.5 pounds (lb.) to 1.75 lb. per day, or use the Target Weight method to calculate rate of gain.
- Monitor bulls on test.
- 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 (AHIR) forms.
- Cull open, old and very thin cows; check feet, legs, udders and eyes.
- Switch to high-magnesium (Mg) minerals to prevent grass tetany.
- Inventory feed supplies and secure feed for winter.

### Fall-calving herds

- Continue calving.

- Move pregnant heifers and early-calving cows to calving area about two weeks before due date.
- Check cows three to four times per day, and check heifers more often — assist early if needed.
- Keep calving area clean and move healthy pairs out to large pastures three days after calving.
- Condition score cows at calving; plan nutrition/grazing program based on BCS.
- Tag all calves at birth; castrate male calves in commercial herds.
- Give selenium (Se) plus vitamin E and vitamin A and D injections to newborn calves.
- Feed young cows extra energy after calving; some protein may be needed also if good pasture is not available. Cows calving at a BCS of less than 5 (on a 9-point scale) should receive special nutritional attention.
- Keep high-quality, high-magnesium, high-selenium minerals available.
- Reproductive tract score (RTS) and measure pelvic areas on yearling replacement heifers; RTS should be 3 or better, and pelvic areas should be greater than 150 square centimeters (sq. cm).
- Purchase estrus synchronization supplies; line up artificial insemination (AI) technician or AI supplies.

## Fall-calving herds at risk for grass tetany

In areas where plentiful rainfall has occurred, conditions made excellent pasture this fall. However, the same conditions that create this lush pasture also reduce magnesium levels. In addition, well-fertilized pasture can exacerbate the problem. Producers with fall-calving herds should feed a high-magnesium mineral free-choice this fall. Cows in early lactation are most susceptible to grass tetany.

High-magnesium mineral supplements should contain 12% to 14% magnesium. The most common form of magnesium is magnesium oxide (MgO). While magnesium oxide is an acceptable form of magnesium for supplementation, it is bitter and causes cattle to decrease mineral intake. Producers should monitor mineral intake by cattle to ensure they are eating the recommended level indicated on the feed tag.

## Acorn poisoning could cause problems this fall

Cattle will often head for woods and wooded lots around the farm in search of grazing or to browse. However, that could be dangerous. Green acorns are plentiful this year. Hungry cattle love acorns that can quickly poison them. Green and ripe acorns contain gallo-tannins, which cause kidney damage and death. There does not seem to be as great a problem after a few hard freezes. The reduced palatability of acorns after weathering may be part of the answer.

To prevent acorn poisoning, cattle should be allowed access to abundant pasture and fenced out of areas with large amounts of oak trees until this winter. There are few other options, as only a few pounds of acorns can cause enough damage to kill cattle. Outward signs of acorn poisoning are few but include weight loss and

## Rocky Mountain West Region

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1. If you haven't been forced to wean due to the drought, consider these tips for weaning. Administer preweaning vaccinations at least three weeks prior to weaning. Preweaning vaccinations typically include respiratory vaccines [infectious bovine rhinotracheitis (IBR), bovine viral diarrhea (BVD, Type 1 & 2), bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV), and parainfluenza-3 (PI3)], seven-way clostridial, and pasteurized (now known as *Mannheimia haemolytica*). Calves should be revaccinated at weaning for the best health protection. Additional vaccines may include leptospirosis (five strains) and *Haemophilus somnus*. Consult your local veterinarian for specific vaccination needs in your area. As always, it's important to correctly handle vaccines, especially modified-live virus (MLV) vaccines. Keep them cool, out of direct sunlight, and mix and/or rehydrate as needed.
 

Make sure to read product labels, and administer subcutaneously (sub-Q) whenever possible. Choose vaccines that are approved for sub-Q injection. Follow beef quality assurance (BQA) guidelines, including staying in front of the shoulder to minimize injection-site blemishes that may show up later when an older animal is salvaged. For additional information on BQA programs, contact your state beef organizations or the Cooperative Extension service.
2. Collect weaning weight data for your entire calf crop for submission to your breed association, making sure you accurately identify contemporary groups. The current Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) guidelines define contemporary groups as cattle of similar age (within 90 days) that are of the same breed (or breed combinations) and sex and that have been raised in the same management group.
3. Also, consider participating in a local feedlot/carcass evaluation

program with some or all of your steer calves. Encourage neighbors and current customers to participate. The feedlot performance and carcass quality information obtained through these tests is extremely valuable, especially as the markets, as well as marketing opportunities, continue to change. Information on feedlot performance and carcass quality will help you market cattle and provide valuable information if you choose to retain ownership of your own cattle.

4. Because of summer rains in parts of the intermountain west, lower meadows have had a chance to green up, and cow asthma (pulmonary emphysema and edema) may also be a concern this year. Cow asthma is typically associated with a sudden change from dry pastures to lush meadows, where the rumen bacteria produce a toxic compound that causes an allergic reaction in the lungs. Ionophores such as Rumensin<sup>®</sup> and Bovatec<sup>®</sup> [at least 150-200 milligrams (mg) per head per day] will help prevent this situation if ingested at least one day prior to going on the lush forage through the first week, but often supplements are not fed until cattle are closer to home.
5. Have a veterinarian analyze fecal samples on approximately 5%-10% of cows for internal-parasite egg counts if cows or calves have had access to irrigated pastures. Egg counts aren't perfect, but they are probably the best indicators of parasite loads other than samples taken during a necropsy after an animal dies. Internal parasites are typically not a problem in cows extensively managed on native range, but there may be exceptions.
6. If applicable, remove insecticide ear tags after the first hard freeze in the fall to help prevent resistance.

diarrhea, but often these are not noticed until other cattle in the herd have died.

## Midsouth Region

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### Spring-calving herds

1. Wean and individually weigh calves and administer booster vaccinations according to the herd health plan.
2. Individually weigh, condition score and pregnancy-check cows and bred heifers. Vaccinate cows and replacement females according to herd health plan. Consider culling females that are open, poor producers, or have feet, leg, eye and udder problems.
3. Report whole herd records to your breed association.
4. Treat cows and calves for internal and external parasites as recommended by your veterinarian.
5. Dry, spring-calving cows can gain one full BCS during the fall, provided they have access to high-quality forage or stockpiled native range and a protein supplement. The equivalent of 0.3-0.4 lb. of supplemental protein is usually adequate for cows grazing abundant native range during late October and early November. This is equivalent to 1 lb. per day of a 32%-40% protein product or 2 lb. per day of a 20% protein product. Cows grazing fertilized, stockpiled fescue; Bermuda grass; or cool-season annual forages will not require protein supplementation. However, if cows are in marginal body condition at weaning, 1-2 lb. per day of an energy supplement (10%-16% protein) will facilitate body condition gain.
6. Pregnant replacement heifers and growing heifer calves may require more supplemental feed than indicated above, depending on the producer's goal for pregnancy rate the following year. Most purebred producers aim for a high pregnancy rate in replacement heifer calves. This goal generally requires more supplementation or higher-quality forage in order to achieve a minimum of 65% of expected mature body weight by the beginning of the breeding season. A rate of gain of 1.25 to 1.5 lb. per day is generally adequate to achieve this goal. Some purebred breeders have chosen to put more selection pressure on reproductive efficiency. One way to achieve this is to limit gain of heifers so they weigh between 55% and 60% of expected mature body weight by the beginning of the breeding season. A rate of gain of 1 lb. to 1.25 lb. per day is generally adequate to achieve this goal.

### Fall-calving herds

1. Continue the newly weaned bulls and heifers on the highest quality pasture available and provide a supplement such as Oklahoma Gold (1 lb. per day of high-protein supplement with an ionophore) for cattle grazing native grass pasture or low-quality Bermuda grass pasture.
2. Evaluate bulls for semen quality and trim feet, if necessary.
3. Purchase new herd bulls using expected

progeny differences (EPDs) as major selection criteria. Check history on health, including immunizations and diseases on the farm of origin. If possible, ask to see the dams of bulls you are interested in purchasing. Selection for good udder quality and other desirable female characteristics begin with bull and semen purchases.

4. Closely monitor late-calving heifers for possible calving problems.
5. Lactating cows grazing abundant native range forage should receive a minimum of 0.8 lb. per day of supplemental protein. Cows grazing stockpiled, fertilized fescue, Bermudagrass or cool-season annuals should receive 3-6 lb. of a 12%-20% protein product, depending on cow condition,

genetic potential for milk production and forage quality.

6. Young, lactating cows have 20%-25% greater supplemental needs than indicated above.

### General recommendations

1. See "Angus Advisor" in the September *Angus Journal* for critical mineral considerations in this region. Carotene, which is the precursor to vitamin A in ruminant animals, declines to almost zero in standing dormant forage. Therefore, vitamin supplementation, specifically vitamin A, is critical during the fall and winter months.
2. Oct. 15 is the last date for treating cattle with a grubicide.
3. Beginning in late October or November,

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provide supplemental feed for bulls on dry grass according to age and condition.

4. Overseed Bermudagrass with small grains.
5. Delay grazing of cool-season annuals until plant roots are established.

## Midwest Region

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### Cow herd management

- ▶ Pregnancy check.
- ▶ Cull cows based on whether they are:
  - open;
  - late- vs. early-calving;
  - unsound — udder, feet and legs, eyes, teeth;
  - unproductive — most probable producing ability (from herd performance records); and
  - of bad disposition.
- ▶ Provide thin cows (BCS 3-4) extra feed now. Take advantage of weather, stage of pregnancy, lower nutrient requirements and quality feedstuffs.
- ▶ In late October you may start feeding supplement to mature cows using these guidelines:
  - Dry grass — Provide 1-2 lb. per day of a 40% crude protein (CP) supplement.
  - Dry grass — Give 3-4 lb. per day of a 20% CP supplement.
  - Dry grass and 10 lb. good, nonlegume hay — no supplement needed.
  - Heifers may need more supplement than older cows. Supplement nutrients that are most deficient, and compare supplements on the basis of cost per pound of nutrient.
- ▶ Control external and internal parasites when needed; consult with your Extension agent, veterinarian and support-industry representatives.
- ▶ Check individual identification (ID) of cows. Replace lost tags or rebrand.
- ▶ Utilize crop residues:
  - Strip-graze or rotate fields to improve grazing efficiency.
  - Graze cows of average body condition at 1-2 acres per cow for 30 days, assuming normal weather.
- ▶ Consider feeding cull cows to increase value and body weight and to utilize cheap feedstuffs.
- ▶ Vaccinate cows according to your veterinarian's recommendations.

### Calf management

- ▶ Wean calves using the following guidelines:
  - Reduce stress by providing a clean, dust-free, comfortable environment.
  - Provide a balanced nutritional program to promote weight gain and health.
  - Observe feed and water intake. Healthy, problem-free calves have good appetites and drink adequate amounts of water.
  - Observe calves frequently. Early detection of sickness reduces medical costs and performance losses.
  - Vaccinate calves and control internal and

external parasites with veterinary consultation (ideally done prior to weaning).

- Vaccinate all replacement-heifer candidates for brucellosis (Bang's disease) if 4-10 months of age.
- Use implants and feed additives to improve efficient animal performance.
- ▶ Weigh all calves individually. That allows for correct sorting, herd culling, growing programs, replacement-heifer selection and marketing plans.
- ▶ Participate in national-level breed-association performance programs, Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS) or another ranch-record system.
- ▶ Finalize plans to merchandise calves or to background them through yearling or finishing programs. Consider feedstuff availability, and realize that limit-feeding high-concentrate diets may be a profitable feeding program.
- ▶ Select replacement heifers on the following criteria:
  - Born early in the calving season. That should increase the number of yearling heifers bred during the early days of the subsequent breeding season.
  - Daughters of above-average-producing cows. Performance traits are moderately heritable.
  - Of the proper frame size to complement the desired mature size and weight.
  - Structurally correct. Avoid breeding udder, feet and leg problems into your herd.
- ▶ Vaccinate replacement heifers with the first round of viral vaccines.
- ▶ Plan a replacement-heifer nutrition program so heifers will be at their target weight (65% of their mature weight) by the start of the breeding season.

### Forage and pasture management

- ▶ Observe weed problems to assist in planning control methods needed next spring for pastures.
- ▶ Monitor grazing conditions, and rotate pastures if possible and practical.
- ▶ Plan winter nutritional program through pasture and forage management.
- ▶ For stocker cattle and replacement heifers, supplement maturing grasses with an acceptable degradable intake protein (DIP) or ionophore (feed additive) supplement.

### General management

- ▶ Avoid unnecessary stress. Handle cows and calves to reduce shrink, to sustain good health and to minimize sickness.
- ▶ Analyze forages for nitrate and nutrient content. Use the data to develop winter feeding programs.
- ▶ Repair, replace and improve facilities.
- ▶ Plan your marketing program, including private-treaty, consignment, test-station and production sales.
- ▶ A penny saved is a penny earned. Price byproducts, grains and other feedstuffs on a nutrient basis.

