



Angus Advisor

▶ OCTOBER herd management tips

Guide to abbreviations and acronyms

To make the "Angus Advisor" more concise and consistent, we have used the following abbreviations or expressions:

\$Values	dollar value indexes
ADG	average daily gain
AI	artificial insemination
AIMS	Angus Information Management Software
BCS	body condition score
BLV	bovine leukemia virus
BMP	best management practices
BQA	beef quality assurance
BRD	bovine respiratory disease
BRSV	bovine respiratory syncytial virus
brucellosis	Bang's disease
BSE	bovine spongiform encephalopathy
BVD	bovine viral diarrhea
Ca	calcium
CHAPS	Cow Herd Analysis and Performance System
DM	dry matter
EPD	expected progeny difference
ET	embryo transfer
FMD	foot-and-mouth disease
GnRH	gonadotropin-releasing hormone
IBR	infectious bovine rhinotracheitis
ID	identification
IM	intramuscular
in.	inch
lb.	pound
LCT	lower critical temperature
lepto	leptospirosis
Mg	magnesium
MiG	management-intensive grazing
MLV	modified-live virus
N	nitrogen
P	phosphorus
PI	persistent infection
PI ₃	parainfluenza-3 virus
preg-check	pregnancy-check
Se	selenium
sq. ft.	square feet
SPA	Standardized Performance Analysis
TB	bovine tuberculosis
TDN	total digestible nutrients
THI	temperature-humidity index
trich	trichomoniasis
Zn	zinc

Western Region

by **Randy Perry**, California State University, Fresno, randyp@csufresno.edu

This month I am going to change the format of my column, and rather than focusing on the details concerning herd management in different areas, I am going to cover a couple topics that are important for any purebred herd.

Business plan. As I have mentioned previously, I believe that smaller to medium-sized purebred programs (50-100 cows) are going to face some very challenging times in the next five to 10 years. Smaller-scale breeders (less than 25 cows) are going to face the same challenges; however, the size of their operations will limit their economic losses. Although it has always been part of the purebred business, it is disturbing that most of our purebred breeders today are forced to have outside income to cover the losses associated with their cattle operations.

Most of the smaller-scale breeders in our part of the country have historically generated most of their income through the sale of commercial bulls and the sale of a limited number of females. The number of commercial cows in our state has continued to decline over the years, and feed costs have driven up development costs on bulls considerably. Both of these factors have taken most of the profit out of marketing commercial bulls.

Just as challenging has been the marketing of purebred females. That part of the business has almost dried up totally in our part of the country. I don't know all of the causes; however, fewer numbers of new breeders and widespread use of ET are most likely two factors that are involved. Females can always be marketed as commercial females; however, it is hard to justify the added labor and expense associated with purebred cattle if the progeny are going to be sold as commercial cattle.

I still believe that there are going to be opportunities for profit and success with purebred cattle. However, I think it is extremely important that breeders sit down and really put some time and effort into developing a business plan for their operation that addresses these and many other factors.

Marketing plan

The ability to market livestock is critically important in determining the level of success with any species of purebred livestock. Many areas of management such as reproduction, health or nutrition are equally important, whether you are managing purebred or commercial livestock. However, that is not the case in the area of marketing. In my opinion, many times marketing is the factor that differentiates the really successful vs. average purebred operations. Many times, average producers will have cattle that are just as good from a genetic and phenotypic standpoint; however, they never get to that elite level because they simply don't have the marketing ability to get there.

I am definitely not a person who can help anybody in this area because my marketing skills are average at best. However, there are firms available that do an excellent job in developing advertising and websites for livestock producers. In addition, I would encourage you to develop a marketing plan that ensures that your advertising dollars are being placed in the magazines that are tailored most closely to your potential clientele and that the timing of those advertisements will reach potential customers at the most opportune time to achieve marketing success.

Southeastern Region

by **Jane Parish**, Mississippi State University, jparish@ads.msstate.edu

General recommendations

Stock pastures according to current and projected available forage amounts. Implement intensive grazing systems. Purchase supplemental feed. Provide proper mineral supplementation and fresh water at all times.

Harvest remaining hay cuttings. Ensure that hay harvesting equipment goes into the off-season in good repair. Summer pasture quality and availability rapidly decline this time of year. Watch nutrition closely when grazing crop residues. Take precautions to prevent prussic acid and nitrate poisoning. Potassium fertilization is critical for Bermuda grass going into winter.

Monitor for fall armyworms in forages. Observe annual ryegrass for blast. Warm,

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humid conditions increase blast likelihood. Follow up on cool-season forage program implementation.

Watch body condition, and group the herd into winter-feeding groups. Match forage and feeding programs to the nutritional needs of each group.

Heat stress conditions are still possible in some areas, so manage cattle appropriately. Horn and face fly season is ending in most areas. Remove remaining insecticidal fly tags. Implement a complete herd health plan, including BQA-consistent practices in consultation with a veterinarian. Hurricane season is still under way. Develop a ranch-level disease and disaster preparedness plan.

Manage operations based on unit cost of production. Form alliances for group cattle marketing and input purchases. Continue good production and financial recordkeeping.

Spring-calving herds

Finish weaning late calves using weaning strategies that minimize calf stress. Use weaning performance reports to determine which cattle to retain. Identify and cull bulls

that have sired calf groups that are well below herd performance averages.

Vaccinate cattle based upon veterinary advice. Train calves to eat from a bunk and drink from a water trough. Continue a high level of nutritional management for early-weaned calves.

Run breakevens on retained ownership options, and consider risk management strategies. Calf verification programs may be an attractive marketing alternative. Help bull customers in marketing their calves.

After weaning, cull cows based on pregnancy status, soundness, health and performance. Permanently identify replacement heifers, and implement a heifer development plan. Separate bred heifers from cows, and provide adequate nutrition as fall forage quality declines.

Fall-calving herds

Fall calving is well under way for many Southern herds. Assemble calving supplies. Separate the cow herd into calving and nutritional management groups. Cows need to be in moderately good condition prior to calving. Move fall-calvers close to handling facilities and observe frequently. Manage late-gestation females in pastures with adequate shade. Move pairs to clean pasture to minimize calf health risk.

Collect yearling data in proper age windows. Schedule an ultrasound field technician in advance. Use performance reports to cull yearlings. Reserve higher-quality forages and feedstuffs for growing cattle.

Schedule prebreeding vaccinations. Breeding is now one to two months away for most herds. Check heifer weights and adjust nutrition to meet breeding targets. Provide good nutrition for lactating cattle approaching breeding.

Finalize herd sire plans for the upcoming breeding season, considering bulls with performance information. Arrange for breeding soundness exams. Manage bulls to start the upcoming breeding season in good condition. Order semen and breeding supplies.

Midwest Region

by **Twig Marston**, University of Nebraska, tmarston2@unl.edu

Cow herd management

- ▶ Preg-check, weigh and condition score every breeding female.
- ▶ Cull cows if they fall into one of the four O's — open, old, ornery or oddballs. Oddballs can be caused by a number of reasons; i.e., late vs. early calving; unsound; or unproductive.

- ▶ Consider feeding cull cows to increase value. Research has indicated that healthy cull cows can dramatically increase in value in as little as 60 days.
- ▶ Extremely thin cows may need extra feed to prepare for winter.
- ▶ Control external and internal parasites when needed.
- ▶ Check individual ID of cows. Replace lost tags or rebrand.
- ▶ Utilize crop residues. Grazing crop aftermath can reduce forage costs by 50% or more. Use management techniques to optimize grazing efficiency.
- ▶ Vaccinate cows according to your veterinarian's recommendations.

Calf management

If October is your weaning month, 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 according to your veterinarian's recommendations.

- ▶ Weigh, measure and record all calves individually.
- ▶ Participate in national-level breed association performance [AHIR®/Beef Record Service (BRS)] and recordkeeping programs (AIMS).
- ▶ Select replacement heifers for:
 - Age. Older heifers breed earlier.
 - Daughters of above-average-producing cows.
 - Proper frame size to complement the desired mature size and weight.
 - Structural correctness. Avoid breeding udder, feet and leg problems into your herd.
- ▶ Develop replacement heifers to reach a target weight of 50%-65% of their mature weight for first breeding.

General management

- ▶ Test forages.
- ▶ Repair, replace and improve facilities.
- ▶ Plan your marketing program.

Southern Great Plains

by **David Lalman**, *Oklahoma State University*,
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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 preg-check cows and bred heifers. Some herd health programs call for vaccinations at weaning.

3. Cull females that are open. Our experience in the Oklahoma State University (OSU) research herd and other data shows that rolling open cows into the fall-calving herd or keeping them for an entire year results in a very poor success rate: around 50%-60% pregnancy rate in subsequent breeding seasons. This is also a great time to build your culling priority list. Include cows with poor attitudes and any cows with feet, leg, eye or udder problems. Your desired selection pressure for these traits, herd inventory, grazing resources, winter feed costs, and market conditions will determine the most optimal time to sell, and the number of cows to sell on your culling priority list.

4. Report whole-herd records to your breed association.

5. Treat cows and calves for internal and external parasites as recommended by your veterinarian. This is best timed after the first killing frost, although many understandably do this at the time of weaning to save time and labor.

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Fall-calving herds

1. Evaluate herd bulls for semen quality and purchase new herd bulls using a balanced, multiple-trait selection approach. If possible, ask to see the dams of bulls you are interested in purchasing. Selection for good udder quality and other desirable female characteristics (like moderate mature size and fleshing ability) begins with bull and semen purchases.

2. Closely monitor late-calving heifers for possible calving problems.

3. Purchase herd health products that will be needed for the fall “branding” time herd health program.

4. Food for Thought: Supplementation

Philosophy. Fall-calving cows should be in the stage of production referred to as early lactation with the breeding season approaching. They should be in excellent body condition. If they are not in good condition, something is wrong. This is a critical period because extreme or rapid weight loss will result in later pregnancies and more open cows.

However, this period also represents an opportunity to challenge your cows from a nutritional perspective. Let’s assume the grazing resource is abundant, low-quality warm-season native range. The cows’ environment can be modified in many ways: calve in spring rather than fall, reduce stocking rate, graze wheat pasture, supplement more, etc. You can “modify” their environment by providing large quantities of protein and/or energy

supplement to meet their requirements according to the textbooks. The goal would be to minimize or eliminate cow weight and condition loss. This is difficult and expensive because supplemental energy is partitioned to support maternal tissue only after requirements for maximum genetic potential for milk have been met.

At the other extreme is the low-input philosophy. You can choose to not supplement at all (extreme approach) or provide a small package of protein supplement (moderate approach) and let the cows tell you which ones are the best “fit” for your ranch resources. This is a fun topic to ponder and discuss. I hope it stimulates a few good arguments/debates among Angus enthusiasts.

