



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. Today, many of our purebred breeders have outside income that covers the losses associated with their purebred cattle operations. Although it has always been part of the business, it bothers me that a higher percentage of our purebred operations are not economically sustainable on their own.

Most of the purebred breeders in our part of the country have historically generated most of their income through the sale of commercial bulls and a limited number of purebred females. The number of commercial cows in our state has declined through the years and feed costs have driven up development costs on bulls considerably. However, the demand for and average prices of range bulls has been outstanding the last few years in our state. Thus, bull sales have proven to be quite profitable for many purebred producers during this time period.

The marketing of purebred females has been more challenging. This part of the purebred 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 purebred 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 think it is extremely important that breeders sit down and really put some time and effort into developing a business plan for their operations that addresses how their operation can be most efficient. It is paramount that breeders really understand how expense dollars are divided up and how income can be maximized.

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 purebred breeders to develop a marketing plan that ensures that their advertising dollars are being placed in the media that is tailored most closely to their potential clientele, and that the timing of those advertisements will reach potential customers at the most opportune time to achieve marketing success.

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.

Southeastern Region

by **Jane Parish**, Mississippi State University,
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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

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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, 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.

Southern Great Plains

by **David Lalman**, Oklahoma State University,
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This year's historical drought has forced cattle producers in the Southern Great Plains to liquidate a portion or all of their

cattle, begin feeding months ahead of their normal winter feeding schedule, ship cows to grass somewhere North or East, purchase marginal or low-quality hay from hundreds of miles away, and deal with a higher percentage of open cows due to the extreme summer heat. Like never before, this is the winter feeding season to consider ways to improve efficiency of harvested forage use. And fortunately, there are a few relatively simple concepts or strategies that when combined could result in the need for only about two-thirds of the hay most of us think we need.

Possible strategies include:

1. Limit feeding hay.

By limiting forage intake, forage digestibility should increase and waste should go down. This can be accomplished by feeding a predetermined amount of around 75% of what the cattle would normally consume. This can be accomplished by rolling out the appropriate amount of round-baled hay every day or flaking off big square bales.

Another option is to place hay in feeders in a drylot where cattle can be allowed access to the hay for about 6 hours. Research shows that 6 hours of access to hay reduces forage intake to about 75% of normal. This

program should only be used with good-quality grass hay and is not recommended for first-calf heifers or thin, older cows. The better quality the hay, the better this program will likely work. Limiting access to extremely low-quality forage may exacerbate weight loss.

2. Using hay feeders designed to limit hay waste.

If producers are using round-bale hay feeders, be sure to select/purchase a model with a sheeted (solid) bottom. Open-bottom hay feeders have been shown to waste as much as 21% of the original bale weight! The sheeted bottom should reduce waste to around 12%-13%. Using a cone style feeder or modified cone feeder with a sheeted bottom should reduce waste to around 5%-6% of the original bale weight.

3. Using an ionophore (feed additive).

Finally, consider using an ionophore for grazing cattle and cattle consuming hay. Older research has shown that Rumensin® and Bovatec® improve the weight gain of growing cattle. Rumensin is approved for use in mature beef cows. Older research showed that Rumensin reduced hay intake by around 10% while still producing about the same amount of weight gain.

In a recent study in our shop at OSU, cows fed 200 mg of Rumensin gained an additional 0.5 pound (lb.) per head per day and nearly one-half a body condition score unit more during a 58-day study. Importantly in this project, the forage digestibility was improved dramatically, resulting in improved cow performance. One could look at the addition of Rumensin in the supplement as having increased the net energy value of this low-quality hay diet by about 15%.

In other words, less of the same diet (hay) would need to be fed to get the same performance. In our region, the cost of Rumensin is about \$0.02 per cow per day. I don't know any other way to get that much improvement in forage utilization at such a low cost. There is a reason why the cattle-feeding industry has been using this feed technology so well for so long, and a substantial improvement in feed efficiency is it. That improvement is available to the cow-calf industry, as well.

