



Angus Advisor

► DECEMBER herd management tips

Southeast Region

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

Spring-calving herds

- Market backgrounded calves.
- Feed replacement heifers to gain 1.5-1.75 pounds (lb.) per day or use the Target Weight method to calculate rate of gain.
- Monitor cow body condition.
- Test hay for nutrient content and supplement accordingly — don't guess.
- Increase cow energy during cold periods.
- Check heaters in waterers regularly.
- Monitor stockpiled grass to keep cows well-fed.
- Attend bull and replacement heifer sales.
- Market cull cows this month or January.
- Send in soil samples if not done earlier this year.

Fall-calving herds

- Begin breeding season on cows; complete artificial insemination (AI) on heifers.
- Monitor body condition on cows, especially first-calf heifers.
- Keep 2- and 3-year-old cows separate from main herd.
- Feed cows extra energy after calving; some protein may be needed also if good stockpiled forage is not available. Cows

calving at a body condition score (BCS) of less than 5 (on a 9-point scale) should receive special nutritional attention.

- Keep high-quality, high-magnesium (Mg) and high-selenium (Se) minerals available.
- Keep cows on stockpiled grass as long as available.
- Monitor condition and health of all bulls; remove and replace injured or thin bulls.
- Check heaters in waterers regularly.
- Send in soil samples if not done earlier this year.

Enjoy the holidays!

Midsouth Region

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

Spring-calving herds

If not done in November, create a contemporary group (sort and manage separately) of 2-year-old cows and, if necessary, 3-year-olds and extremely old cows that you intend to retain. This contemporary group can then be provided access to higher quality stockpiled pasture, fed better quality hay, fed more supplement or provided with access to small-grain forage as a supplement. The nutritional goal for this contemporary group should be to obtain a BCS at calving that is similar to that of the remaining cow

herd. Most purebred breeders choose not to sort and separately manage individual thin cows within age groups because this makes genetic evaluation difficult.

Bred heifers should have a minimum BCS of 6 by this time of year. If not, an immediate intervention strategy is necessary to achieve positive condition gain (not just weight gain due to fetal growth) before calving.

December and early January are excellent times to check-weight a portion, if not all, of the virgin replacement heifers. Using this information and the targeted breeding weight and rate of weight gain established at weaning, producers can evaluate their nutritional strategy and make necessary adjustments.

Fall-calving herds

December is the heart of the breeding season for fall-calving herds. Consequently, the goal of the nutritional program is to minimize weight and condition loss of cows that are nursing 30- to 100-day-old calves. Five to 8 lb. of a concentrate supplement, along with 5 to 10 lb. of high-quality legume hay or silage, may be necessary to achieve this. In this region, limited access to small-grain pasture is an excellent and cost-effective supplementation program for fall-calving cows. Some producers choose to graze purebred cows on small-grain pasture full-time for the purpose of maximizing genetic potential for milk production and weight gain of calves.

A high-calcium (Ca), high-magnesium mineral supplement should be provided to lactating cows grazing small-grain forage.

Due to more economical conversion of creep feed to weight gain, a higher percentage of fall-calving purebred operations creep-feed calves compared to spring-calving operations. December is a good time to implement a creep-feeding or creep-grazing program.

General recommendations

- Cattle afflicted with fescue foot should be removed from fescue pastures and fed a different roughage until recovered.
- Begin grazing dormant weeping lovegrass pastures, feeding supplement accordingly.
- Check your financial management plan and make appropriate adjustments before the end of the year.
- Native hay meadows can be lightly grazed after a hard frost. Leave a minimum of about 6 inches (in.) of forage regrowth and remove cattle if wet conditions develop.

Midwest Region

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

Cow herd management for spring-calving cows

- In late fall and early winter, start feeding supplement to mature cows using these guidelines:
 - Dry grass — 1-2 pounds (lb.) per day of a 40% crude protein (CP) supplement
 - Dry grass — 3-4 lb. per day of a 20% CP supplement
 - Dry grass — 10 lb. good nonlegume hay, no supplement needed
- Compare supplements based on cost per pound of nutrient.
- Utilize crop residues.
- Strip-graze or rotate cattle to improve grazing efficiency.
- Cows in average body condition can be grazed at 1-2 acres per cow for 30 days, assuming normal weather. Available forage is directly related to grain production levels.
- Limiting nutrients are usually protein, phosphorus (P) and vitamin A.
- Control lice.

General management

- Document your cost of production by participating in Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) programs.
- Review management decisions; lower your costs per unit of production.
- Check your financial management plan and make appropriate adjustments before the end of the year.

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