



# Angus Advisor

► FEBRUARY 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
CP	crude protein
cwt.	hundredweight
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 <sub>3</sub>	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

## Southern Great Plains

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

### Spring-calving cows

- Maintain cows on fresh, clean pasture or in a dry, clean calving facility if they are confined.
- Consult your veterinarian in the event that calf scour problems develop.
- Check first-calf heifers several times daily for possible calving difficulties.
- Visit with your veterinarian to develop a *written* protocol before the calving season starts. This protocol should include what to do, when to do it, who to call (if someone besides your veterinarian is to be called), phone numbers, how to know when the veterinarian should be called, etc.
- The process of parturition (calving) is generally divided into three stages:
  - Stage 1 is the dilation of the cervix and occurs 4 hours to 24 hours before the actual birth.
  - Stage 2 is the delivery process and begins when the fetus enters the birth canal. The beginning of Stage 2 is usually identifiable when membranes or a water bag appears at the vulva. Published research indicates that Stage 2 averages about 30 minutes in mature cows and about one hour in first-calf heifers. Intervention should be considered (refer to your protocol) if there has been no progress in the birthing process after 30 minutes in mature cows or one hour in first-calf heifers.
  - Stage 3 includes expulsion of the placenta and involution of the uterus.
- Feed during evening hours to encourage daytime calving.
- During early lactation, energy and protein requirements increase dramatically. Assuming above-average genetic potential for milk production, these cows would require about 19 lb. of TDN and 3.4 lb. of protein. This is roughly equivalent to a diet containing about 59% TDN and 11% protein.

### Fall-calving herds

- Fall-calving purebred cows with above-average genetic potential for milk

production should receive about 7 lb. of a supplement containing 20%-24% protein daily when the following conditions exist: Abundant dormant native range (3%-5% protein) is available and cows are at a BCS 5 or less and/or winter weather conditions are severe. A second alternative that works well under these conditions is to feed around 4 lb. of a protein supplement containing 20%-24% protein with 5 lb. of good-quality alfalfa hay.

- With moderate- to high-quality grass hay (minimum of 9% protein and 54% TDN) as the forage base, 5 lb. of a 12%-14% concentrate supplement will supply adequate protein and energy for 1,200-lb. purebred cows with above-average genetic potential for milk production.
- Cool-season annual (small-grains) forage has been a tremendous resource thus far this winter. A high-calcium, high-magnesium mineral supplement should be provided to lactating cows grazing small-grains forage.
- Continue to monitor calves for the possible development of BRD.

### General recommendations

- Consult a forage specialist in your area as you consider the fertility and management program for both native and “improved” cool- and warm-season grass pastures and rangeland. Develop a plan for stocking density, grazing management, control of weeds and invasive plants with herbicide or prescribed fire and fertilizer use in introduced forages.

## Mid-South Atlantic Region

by **Scott Greiner**, sgreiner@vt.edu; and **Mark McCann**, mark.mccann@vt.edu, both of Virginia Tech

Is it the time to expand the cow herd or cash in on high prices? There has never been a better time to take advantage of enterprise budgets as a tool. Enterprise budgets can provide a summary of annual production costs and facilitate the identification of factors that impact your bottom line from both a cost and revenue standpoint.

Enterprise budgets can be constructed for a number of components of the operation,

---

including replacement-heifer development, implementation of a timed-AI program, creep feeding and calf backgrounding. By combining budgets with key assumptions, it is possible to consider the adoption of certain management practices in terms of their costs and potential returns.

History has taught us that grazed forages are our best value for the cow. The addition of clovers to pastures, strategic weed control and stockpiling are management options worthy of consideration in the upcoming year to reduce reliance on harvested forages and feedstuffs and decrease annual feed costs.

### **Spring-calving herds (January-March)**

#### **General**

- ▶ Prepare for calving season by checking inventory and securing necessary supplies (obstetric equipment, tube feeder, colostrum supplement, ear tags, animal health products, calving book, etc.).
- ▶ Move pregnant heifers and early-calving cows to calving area about two weeks before due date.
- ▶ Check cows frequently during calving season. Optimal interval to check calving females is every 4 hours.
- ▶ Utilize calving area that is clean and well-drained. Reduce exposure to scours by moving 2- to 3-day-old pairs out of calving area to separate pasture (reduce commingling of newborn calves with older calves).
- ▶ Identify calves promptly at birth. Record birth weight, calving ease score, teat/udder score and mothering ability of cow.

#### **Nutrition and forages**

- ▶ Evaluate growth of yearling heifers with goal of reaching 60%-65% of mature weight by breeding. Depending on forage quality, supplementation may be needed to meet weight gain target.
- ▶ Feed better-quality hay during late gestation and early lactation. If quality is unknown, submit sample for nutrient analysis (local extension office can assist). Target quality is 11%-12% crude protein and 58%-60% TDN. Supplement protein and/or energy as needed.
- ▶ Frost-seed clovers mid- to late month. Four lb. red clover and 2 lb. of ladino is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 136

recommended. Best success will be achieved by choosing areas with little or no plant residue.

### Herd health

- ▶ Ensure colostrum intake in the first few hours of life in newborn calves. Supplement if necessary. Newborn calves need 10% of body weight in colostrum in the first 24 hours of life.
- ▶ Provide selenium and vitamin A and D injections to newborn calves.
- ▶ Castrate commercial calves at birth.
- ▶ Monitor calves closely for scours; have treatment supplies on hand.
- ▶ Evaluate lice-control program and consult your veterinarian for recommendations.

### Genetics

- ▶ Make plans for spring bull-buying season. Evaluate current herd bulls for progeny performance and soundness. Establish herd genetic goals, and selection criteria for AI sires and new herd bulls. Order semen.
- ▶ Collect yearling performance data (weight, height, scrotal circumference, ultrasound) in seedstock herds.

### Fall-calving herds (September-November)

#### General

- ▶ Monitor cows closely during breeding season for signs of return to estrus. Contact veterinarian to evaluate fertility of bull if

many cows repeat cycle. Remove bulls to maintain controlled calving season (60-90 days).

- ▶ Begin planning marketing strategy for calf crop.
- ▶ Plan to pregnancy-check heifers as soon as possible postbreeding.

### Nutrition and forages

- ▶ Begin creep-feeding or creep-grazing calves if desired.
- ▶ Once breeding concludes, supplementation should be adjusted to mid-lactation nutritional requirements.
- ▶ Frost-seed clovers mid- to late month. Four lb. red clover and 2 lb. of ladino is recommended. Best success will be achieved by choosing areas with little or no plant residue.

### Herd health

- ▶ Monitor calves closely for health issues, particularly respiratory disease.
- ▶ Administer seven-way clostridial vaccine and respiratory vaccinations (especially if killed products are used; booster dose given at preweaning) to calves.
- ▶ Evaluate lice-control program and consult your veterinarian for recommendations.

### Genetics

- ▶ Make plans for spring bull-buying season. Evaluate current herd bulls for progeny performance and soundness.

## Midwest Region

by **Justin Sexten**, University of Missouri, [sextenj@missouri.edu](mailto:sextenj@missouri.edu)

### Managing first-calf heifers

Females failing to rebreed during the first five years of production results in lost genetic progress and negative returns to the enterprise despite record-high cull-cow prices. Ensuring successful rebreeding is best achieved by focused management before, during and after the first calving.

Ironically, breeding heifers to calving-ease bulls is the first step to successfully rebreeding for the second calf. Heifers that experience calving difficulty during their first calving have longer postpartum recovery periods and are less likely to rebreed during a controlled breeding season. When purchasing a bred heifer, the genetic management decision should already be addressed.

When heifers calve can also influence rebreeding success, which is why many producers prefer to calve heifers earlier than the mature cow herd. Early calving allows focused calving assistance while providing a longer recovery period following calving. This model also provides heifers' calves a weaning age advantage to compensate for lower milk production and typically lighter weaning weights of calves born to heifers.

For producers who do not like the longer calving season caused by calving heifers earlier than cows, consider breeding heifers at the same time as the cows but shortening the breeding season by 14 days. This allows for longer postcalving recovery, but maintains a shorter calving season. Challenging heifers to breed initially during a shorter breeding season will eliminate heifers late to puberty who conceive late in the breeding season.

Nutritional management prior to calving will influence both the heifer and her calf. Heifers should be managed to achieve an adequate body condition score prior to calving. A body condition score of 6, where there are no visible ribs and the spine is completely covered, is the target condition level for heifers at calving. Condition will provide enough surplus energy after calving to allow heifers to return to estrus and rebreed during a controlled calving season. Condition also provides insulation during the cold and wet days of winter.

Heifers who accumulate condition prior to calving have adequate energy reserves for a



difficult calving while producing higher-quality colostrum for calves.

Producers worry about feeding heifers prior to calving and the potential for increased birth weight. Birth weight and calving difficulty are controlled by genetics rather than nutrition. If calving difficulty is attributed to nutrition, the cause is likely from heifers accumulating excessive fat around the birth canal. To observe condition-related dystocia, heifers would be at a body condition score of 7.5 or greater.

Starving heifers to reduce calf birth weight is a poor management strategy due to increased losses attributed to weak calves at birth. As birth weight declines, the calf's surface-to-mass ratio increases. Increased surface area with less body mass allows calves to chill faster, contributing to weaker calves more susceptible to early death loss. Combine a weak calf with lower-quality colostrum and a heifer with limited energy reserves, and the goal of successful rebreeding takes a backseat to successfully weaning the first calf.

Making sure first-calf heifers get adequate nutrition becomes challenging in mixed herds where heifers and cows are managed together. A simple management strategy to ensure heifers are managed correctly is to separate them from the cow herd 30-60 days prior to calving. Producers who separate heifers just before calving have limited opportunities to make nutritional adjustments. For those who are calving now and do not have an opportunity to improve condition, make sure and note the calving body condition score to evaluate which heifers have the greatest likelihood of rebreeding.

Increasing heifer nutrition following calving will increase milk production and does little to improve colostrum quality and calf vigor. Once a cow calves, nutrients are prioritized toward milk production, therefore adding body condition following calving is minimal at best. Increased nutrition following calving will reduce the condition heifers mobilize, but has been shown to have little effect on subsequent reproductive rates.

Determining adequate supplement rates is achieved only by forage testing. A forage test will allow producers to ensure nutrient requirements are met. The greater error when supplementing first-calf heifers is not meeting their requirements for growth, lactation and reproduction. Because reproductive success is measured as pregnant or not, almost meeting heifer requirements becomes costly when a \$20 forage test is leveraged against the value of a bred heifer.

## Western Region

by **Randy Perry**, *California State University, Fresno*, [randyp@csufresno.edu](mailto:randyp@csufresno.edu)

### Fall-calving herds

Cows and calves are on cruise control.

### Reproductive management

**Natural-service bulls.** Bulls should be turned out and hopefully are doing their job.

Watch for return heats from natural-service dates. If a high percentage of females are coming back into heat, switch sires if that is an option.

### Nutritional management

**Mineral supplementation.** It is important that minerals are supplemented on a year-round basis. Supplements should be formulated to meet deficiencies specific to your region or area.

#### Protein and energy supplementation.

Most fall cows in the West graze native foothill pastures during the winter months. As is the case in any environment, timing and amount of rainfall are two of the critical factors that determine the pattern and amount of forage production. In most years in California, mid-February marks the start of the good forage-production period in the foothills. Therefore, cattle typically don't need any supplemental energy or protein during this time of the year.

### Health management

**Treatments.** This is the time period of the year when fall-calving cows and calves should have very few problems with animal health.

### General management

Early spring is an excellent time of the year to work on general repairs such as repairing and building fences and other facilities. Also, if irrigated pastures comprise part of the pasture resources during the summer months, this is the time to make repairs to irrigation lines or ditches before they are needed later in the spring.

In addition, I would encourage producers to spend some time in the office working on setting long-term and short-term goals for their operations. Most producers spend the majority of their time providing the physical labor associated with the operation. However, time spent with a blank piece of paper developing some strategies for how to improve an operation can be very beneficial. Development of a strategic marketing plan is an excellent example of one of these activities.

### Spring-calving herds

The calving season is the main focus.

### Genetic management

**Sire selection.** Although the start of the breeding season is still months away, now is the time to start finalizing a list of potential sires.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 138

**Reproductive management**

**Calving management.** Females should have already started calving or should be shortly. Supplies should be on hand and personnel should be properly trained or advised as to how to assist females with calving problems. In addition, any females that experience retained placentas should be treated promptly.

**Nutritional management**

**Mineral supplementation.** It is important that females receive adequate levels of calcium, phosphorus and trace minerals that are deficient in your area. Many of the nutritional companies now have mineral supplements that are tailored to different times of the year and forage conditions.

**Body condition.** The target level of body condition at calving is a BCS of 5.0 (scale = 1 to 9) for mature cows and 6.0 for 2-year-old heifers. Although difficult to achieve, this level of body condition should be maintained during the breeding season.

**Protein and energy supplementation.** The period from calving through the end of the breeding season is by far the most important period in terms of meeting protein and energy requirements of beef cows. If cows are going to maintain a yearly calving interval (which is the goal of most beef producers), then they must conceive by 80 days postpartum. This goal is extremely difficult to achieve if nutritional requirements are not being met.

The most practical way to monitor energy

status (the relationship between energy consumed vs. energy requirements) is to evaluate body condition score. The most practical way to monitor level of protein intake is to evaluate an animal's fecal output. If the stool is loose and the cow pies flatten out on the ground, the animal is receiving adequate levels of protein. If the fecal output is extremely firm and the cow pies do not flatten out on the ground, then the animal is most likely protein deficient.

**Health Management**

**Treatment protocol.** Treatment protocols and products should be on hand for both scours and pneumonia in suckling calves.

