



# Angus Advisor

► APRIL 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](mailto:david.lalman@okstate.edu)

### Spring-calving herds

Plan to implement estrus-synchronization systems for heifers and cows. Some systems require initial management steps as early as 31 days in advance of the targeted initial breeding date. Purchase AI supplies, acquire semen, and check facilities and equipment. Don't forget to find and test the thawing bath before the first cow walks into the chute for breeding. An excellent resource for this planning process is the Estrus Synchronization Planner at [www.iowabeefcenter.org/estrus\\_synch.html](http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/estrus_synch.html).

Consult your veterinarian about vaccinating cows a minimum of 30 days prior to breeding and prepare for spring turnout or branding vaccinations, calthood implants and other herd health tasks related to the new calf crop.

Conduct breeding soundness exams for all herd sires.

### Fall-calving herds

Consult your veterinarian to plan the vaccination program for fall-born calves and to purchase the necessary supplies. An ideal situation is to vaccinate two to six weeks prior to weaning and again at weaning. Implant any steer calves and heifers not intended to be kept as replacements. Remember that implants cost around \$1.25-\$2 and return \$20-\$30 of additional sale weight.

Determine your preferred timing for weaning and prepare facilities. Inventory veterinary and feed/supplement supplies for the weaning program.

### General recommendations

**1.** Introduced warm-season forages, such as Bermuda grass and Old World bluestem, should be fertilized in late April through mid-May. Approximately 50 lb. of nitrogen (N) is required to produce about 1 ton of forage. Efficiency of nitrogen use is improved with multiple applications (generally two or three).

**2.** High-magnesium mineral supplements should be provided for cattle grazing cool-season forages through the month of April.

**3.** A moderate- to low-phosphorus (P) mineral supplement (10% phosphorus or less) is recommended for most classes of

cattle and forage types during the lush spring growing season.

**4.** Plan a fly- and tick-control program. Check spraying equipment, dust bags and oilers, and purchase needed chemicals or tags for fly and tick control. New-generation ear tags are highly effective if they are not applied until the 200-flies-per-animal threshold has been reached. Check with your veterinarian to determine what tags are working well in your area. Feed-through insect growth regulator (IGR) products are highly effective in reducing the horn fly population. These products can and should be incorporated into mineral supplements early in the spring.

**5.** Check with your extension educator or forage agronomist to determine the most effective herbicide treatment to control sericea lespedeza. Be sure to read the herbicide label for the most effective rate and timing of application. Other tools to help manage this invasive legume species include late-season prescribed fire and management-intensive grazing with goats.

## Midwest Region

by **Patrick Gunn**, Iowa State University, [pgunn@iastate.edu](mailto:pgunn@iastate.edu)

### Forage concerns for 2016?

At the time of writing this article, we just experienced a fresh blanket of snow in Iowa. As such, making forage harvest plans and developing a forage budget for next winter still seems premature. However, if weather forecasts come to fruition, 2016 is going to be a trying year across the agricultural sector that merits significant advanced planning.

All indications are that *El Niño* will subside sometime in mid-2016 and give way to *La Niña*. Thus, it is expected that many parts of the Midwest will experience a wet spring, followed by a potentially significant drought later in the year. This projected drought



illuminates the necessity of making plenty of good-quality forage early in the growing season and being proactive about a drought-management plan in order to avoid the emergency feed situation we experienced in 2012 and 2013.

Perhaps unfortunately, the Midwest weather that promotes a great forage growing environment does not coincide with optimal weather for producing dry forages. In many instances, wet spring weather delays the first cutting, resulting in mature hay that is decreased in quality, palatability and digestibility. If harvest is not delayed, oftentimes the window of opportunity for optimal drying is reduced, resulting in hay that is baled either too wet or after it has been rained on, again, resulting in reduced quality at the time of feeding. In both of these circumstances, reduced hay quality and palatability will likely lead to increased waste at the feeder, particularly if bales have been stored outside.

So, as we begin to think about the 2016 forage season, here are some management tips and considerations to stretch our forage budget a bit further.

**1. Consider making baleage early in the growing season.** Proper implementation of a baleage feeding system can overcome many potential disadvantages of first-cutting dry hay, including poor nutritional quality, dry-matter loss and waste. Best management practices for baleage production can be found at a new factsheet from the Iowa Beef Center at <http://store.extension.iastate.edu/product/ibcr202>.

**2. Start stockpiling dry hay now.** This is stating the obvious, but *La Niña* could mean a prolonged drought. Most producers liquidated all hay stockpiles in 2012 and 2013 and likely have yet to replenish those reserves.

**3. Assess your forage storage.** Research at the University of Tennessee has shown that hay storage losses can be anywhere from 5%-40% depending on storage methods used. Fairly low-cost storage modifications can reduce losses significantly. Moreover, improved storage conditions usually result in reduced waste at the feeder, as well.

**4. Critically evaluate your feeding methods.** If forage resources are going to be limited, consider limit-feeding options that are available to you. Switching to a total mixed ration may likely require infrastructure upgrades that can be costly up front, but are almost always a profitable investment in the long run. For smaller producers, limit-feeding forage by restricting access to the feeder may be the best alternative to reduce intake and/or waste. Purdue research has shown that cows can consume their maximum daily intake of dry

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matter in as little as 6 hours per day. Limiting access to hay and supplementing energy and protein as needed will likely be cheaper than *ad libitum* hay access if and when hay prices increase.

**5. Use alternative forages.** Although corn silage and corn stover/stalks may not be considered a true alternative anymore, don't overlook the value of these feedstuffs for your winter feeding strategy.

## Western Region

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

### Spring-calving herds

The main focus is to prepare for the breeding season.

## Genetic management

**Sire selection.** Sire selection is one of the most important management decisions made each year in a purebred cattle operation. The challenging and difficult aspect concerning sire selection is predicting industry cycles and trends. What kind of cattle are going to be the most sought after in three to five years? Those who are able to forecast or predict these trends will always be in the driver's seat from a genetic standpoint.

In addition, I think it is most important that we use sires that are going to produce daughter progeny that we can build a herd around. Many times we use sires because we believe they will produce bull progeny that we can market from a phenotypic and genetic standpoint. That is fine; however, it is hard to justify the time and expense associated with AI if the daughter progeny

are not the kind of females that will improve our cow herd.

## Reproductive management

**Semen.** Get semen ordered early to avoid last-minute problems. Do not try to save money on semen — cheap semen is the most expensive item you will ever buy.

**Synchronization protocol.** If you are going to use estrus synchronization, now is the time to decide which protocol is going to work best in your production situation. Avoid programs that require excessive amounts of animal handling and trips through the chute prior to breeding. These programs are expensive from both a labor and product standpoint. In addition, animals are stressed each time that cows and calves are gathered and sorted for processing. Today there are some excellent protocols that offer the option of timed AI (TAI) with very

satisfactory results. (The Newsroom at [www.appliedreprostrategies.com](http://www.appliedreprostrategies.com) provides a wealth of information on the various protocols.)

**Heat detection.** Heat detection is often the most overlooked factor influencing the success of AI programs. Effective heat detection is achieved by developing the skills or ability to recognize the subtle signs of estrus and being able to detect the females that never do exhibit standing estrus.

**AI equipment.** Have extra AI supplies on hand and thoroughly clean all breeding equipment (including the thaw thermos) prior to the start of the breeding period.

**Semen and trichomoniasis test.** Semen- and trich-test bulls far in advance of the breeding season. If problems arise, replacement bulls can be located prior to the time they are needed for turnout.

## **Nutritional management**

**Mineral supplementation.** Be sure females are receiving adequate levels of calcium, phosphorus and trace minerals that are deficient in your area. Mineral boluses or injectable products can be used in addition to loose or block mineral products. Consider products that include chelated minerals, especially during the breeding season.

**Protein and energy supplementation.** Normally, by late spring forage resources are at their peak from both an energy and a protein standpoint. Therefore, usually supplemental feeding is not needed at this time of year.

## **Health management**

**Vaccinations.** Make certain that females and service sires are vaccinated at least 30 days prior to the start of the breeding period.

I recommend vaccinations that include fetal protection against PI-BVD.

## **General management**

Late spring is a good time to start spraying fencelines and to be certain that irrigation lines and ditches are in good repair prior to the start of the irrigation season if your operation includes irrigated pasture or hay fields.

## **Fall-calving herds**

Hopefully, cows and calves are on cruise control. If fall-calving cows and calves are grazing native foothill rangeland, normally late spring is the time of the year that cattle require very little attention or management. Plans should be developed to administer preweaning vaccinations to bull and heifer calves two to three weeks prior to weaning.

