



# 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
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

## Western Region

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

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

**Business plan.** The first topic is the importance of developing a business plan. One of the problems with the cattle industry today, in my opinion, is that many smaller producers depend on off-farm income in order to afford the purebred cows. The high cattle prices of today have improved the economic performance of many operations, especially commercial operations. Hopefully, these prices will persist over the long term. If they do, this requirement for off-farm income will become less important.

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 drought has forced major liquidation of commercial cows in the southern part of our state and thus has reduced the demand for range bulls significantly.

However, in the central and northern part of our state and other states in the West, the demand for range bulls has been good, and the prices have been outstanding. With the increased feed costs and developmental costs of bulls that we have experienced during the last five years, bull prices have to stay at these levels if bull sales are going to continue to be the major profit generator in most purebred operations.

The marketing of purebred females has been more challenging in the last five- to 10-year period. However, with the current demand for and prices that commercial females are bringing, I think we are in a period of time where selling females at profitable levels will be much easier than it has been historically.

I think it is extremely important that breeders sit down and really put some time, effort and energy 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 to optimize that relationship between expenses and income.

**Marketing plan.** The second topic, and one that is critically important in determining the level of success with any species of purebred livestock, is marketing ability. Many areas of management, such as reproduction, health or nutrition, are equally important regardless of whether a person is managing purebred or commercial livestock. However, that is not the case in the area of marketing. In my opinion, often it 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 of no help in this area as my marketing skills are average at best. However, many outstanding firms are available to assist breeders with the development of advertising plans and the development of marketing materials, including the design and building of websites.

In addition, I would encourage purebred breeders to develop a marketing plan that ensures their advertising dollars are being placed in media that are 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. In addition and probably most important, study and learn from the purebred operators that do a tremendous job in this area, because in this breed of cattle, there are many operations that simply do an outstanding job in the area of marketing.

## Mid-South Atlantic Region

by **Scott Greiner**, [sgreiner@vt.edu](mailto:sgreiner@vt.edu); and **Mark McCann**, [mark.mccann@vt.edu](mailto:mark.mccann@vt.edu), both of *Virginia Tech*

October usually marks the transition from the mild portion of our fall season to cooler weather and shorter days. Frost usually occurs sometime in the month depending on your location. The shorter days and cooler nights signal that cool-season forage growth will be declining soon. Diligent grazing management through the use of strip-grazing

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is a good way to stretch this precious commodity.

Moving the fence as frequently as possible will allow more efficient utilization. Be careful not to allow access to too much area at one time. If you are unsure if your forage allowance is adequate, you can provide an average- or poorer-quality bale of hay for the cattle to access. If the cattle are eating a great deal of hay, then you probably need to expand your forage allowance. Stockpiled forages are an important ingredient in minimizing hay needs. Managing them carefully will allow for maximum grazing while minimizing dependence on stored feeds.

October also signals the peak month of calf marketing. Sellers should focus on preconditioning and grouping calves to increase market price. Those purchasing calves for stocker programs or potential herd replacements should focus on receiving health and nutrition programs. At the current investment cost of calves, mass medication should be considered for commingled auction barn calves, while farm fresh calves do not usually carry the same level of risk. For both sets of calves, receiving nutrition programs should utilize excellent quality grass hay in addition to a highly palatable concentrate that is formulated for their nutrient needs.

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

#### **General**

- ▶ Finalize plans for marketing of calf crop. Coordinate and time weaning, vaccination program, and weaning-time management in concert with marketing plans. Calculate breakevens on various marketing options and consider risk-management strategies.
- ▶ Schedule and conduct pregnancy diagnoses with your veterinarian. Plan a marketing strategy for open cows.
- ▶ Evaluate winter feed and forage supplies and options, including forage tests to determine nutritional content of hay on hand.

#### **Nutrition and forages**

- ▶ Score cows for body condition at weaning and separate thin cows.
- ▶ Use palatable feeds and high-quality hay to background calves.

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- ▶ Continue stockpiling tall fescue.
- ▶ Continue to manage first-calf heifers separately; give them the best forage. Thin, mature cows could be added to this group.
- ▶ Continue to feed high-selenium trace-mineral salt. A forage analysis can reveal what other minerals should be supplemented.
- ▶ As warm-season pastures approach dormancy, continue to use grazing management to manage residue.
- ▶ Store your high-quality hay in the dry.

### Herd health

- ▶ In consultation with your veterinarian, finalize vaccination and preconditioning protocol for calf crop.

### Reproduction

- ▶ Schedule pregnancy-check of cow herd with veterinarian.
- ▶ Cull open, old and thin cows and cows with problem udders, eyes and soundness issues.

### Genetics

Collect 205-day weights on calf crop at appropriate time (AHIR® age range: 120-280 days), along with cow weights, hip heights and body condition scores (cow mature size data taken within 45 days of calf weaning measure).

Identify replacement heifers. Utilize available tools, including genetics, dam performance, individual performance and phenotype. Restrict replacement heifer pool to those born in defined calving season.

## Fall-calving herds (September-November)

### General

- ▶ Calving season is in full swing. Check cows frequently during calving season — optimal interval is to observe calving females every four hours (heifers more frequently, if possible). Address calving difficulties early.
- ▶ Tag; tattoo; and record birth weight, calving ease score, teat/udder score and mothering ability of dam. Keep accurate records at birth.
- ▶ Monitor young calves for scours. Prevent scours by keeping calving area clean and well-drained. Moving 2- to 3-day-old pairs out of calving area to separate pasture (reduce commingling of newborn calves with older calves) helps reduce exposure to scours.
- ▶ Evaluate winter feed and forage supplies and options, including forage tests to determine nutritional content of hay on hand.
- ▶ Initiate plans and schedule for breeding season.

### 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.
- ▶ Offer high-magnesium mineral. Generally, fall-calving cows are not as predisposed to grass tetany, but this year's cool, wet

conditions increase the risk.

- ▶ Reserve high-quality hay and stockpiled pasture areas for cows postcalving. Use strip-grazing as a tool to increase the efficiency of utilization of cool-season pastures by cows postcalving.
- ▶ Use grazing management to control the residue of warm-season pastures as they approach dormancy.
- ▶ Store your high-quality hay in the dry.

### Herd health

- ▶ Ensure colostrum intake within 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 and pneumonia; have treatment supplies on hand.
- ▶ Consult with your veterinarian concerning prebreeding vaccination schedule for cow herd and yearling heifers. Plan early to allow 30-day vaccination window prior to breeding season.

### Reproduction

- ▶ Reproductive tract score and measure pelvic area on yearling replacement heifers.
- ▶ Plan AI and synchronization program to be used during breeding season. Schedule AI technician, order supplies and semen.
- ▶ Schedule and conduct breeding soundness exams on herd sires, including annual vaccinations. Do so prior to fall/early winter bull sales to allow time to secure replacements as necessary.

### Genetics

- ▶ Collect yearling performance data (weight, height, scrotal, ultrasound) in seedstock herds.
- ▶ Evaluate bull battery and begin planning for the breeding season by evaluating herd genetic goals and selection criteria for both AI and natural-service sires. Establish herd strengths and weaknesses from genetic standpoint, and benchmark EPD criteria accordingly. Make plans for bull-buying season.

## Midwest Region

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

At the time of writing this column, corn silage harvest has just begun. Although many producers have not yet started fall weaning,

my mind quickly jumps to thoughts of grazing and baling cornstalks, as well as prebreeding preparations for fall-calving herds.

### Cornstalks

As with any forage, quality is important, and remember that stalk quality is reduced over time due to weathering. Thus, regardless of whether stalks are baled or grazed, a forage analysis is always money well-spent. Care should be taken to plan out the stalk-grazing season. For each bushel of corn produced, approximately 16 lb. of leaf and husk residue is created. A cornstalk grazing calculator has been developed by the University of Nebraska and is an excellent resource ([www.beef.unl.edu](http://www.beef.unl.edu)) for planning grazing days.

Keep in mind that even though cows can often maintain body condition on a well-managed stalk-grazing system, stalks are almost always deficient in protein regardless of stage of production. Therefore, use your forage analysis and plan for the proper supplementation scheme, if needed.

### Fall breeding

If estrus synchronization is part of the plan, get your calendar planned out well in advance, and get supplies such as semen, pharmaceuticals and AI detection aids ordered now.

If using estrus synchronization, I highly encourage use of the Estrus Synchronization Planner ([http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/estrus\\_synch.html](http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/estrus_synch.html)), a free Excel program provided by the National Association of Animal Breeders (NAAB) and the Beef Reproduction Task Force and developed by Iowa State University. Effective utilization of this program will help avoid many common pitfalls that producers run into, such as administering the wrong hormones on the wrong day or executing AI at the wrong time relative to prostaglandin administration when using a timed-AI protocol.

Likely due to fall grain harvest, the absolute need for a breeding soundness exam (sometimes referred to as a BSE) for the entire bull battery is commonly overlooked in fall herds. A BSE is only good for the day it is conducted, so don't rely on a spring test for fall use. Due to the length of spermatogenesis, heat stress and weight loss during the summer months can lead to reduced sperm motility and increased morphological abnormalities for up to 60 days.

Given the recent uptick in trichomoniasis (trich) cases across the Midwest, and how devastating it can be to any beef enterprise, be sure to add this test to the standard BSE. Even if you have not introduced new cattle to the herd, don't assume the neighbor's bull hasn't

crossed the fence without your knowledge. A new swab sampling method has been developed by researchers at the Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine that is less invasive than the preputial scraping technique traditionally used.

With the current and projected price of feeder calves and replacement heifers, no producer can afford to turn out a sterile or trich-infected bull. In most instances these two procedures can be conducted for less than \$100 per bull, which is an extremely cheap insurance policy.

As always, for more information on fall nutrition and breeding preparation, consult with the team of experts you have assembled, including your beef extension specialist, herd health veterinarian and nutritionist.

## Southern Great Plains

by **David Lalman**, Oklahoma State University,  
[david.lalman@okstate.edu](mailto:david.lalman@okstate.edu)

### 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. Remember that cow body weight and body condition score data should be recorded within 45 days of calf weaning weight data.
3. Cull females that are open this fall. Our experience in the 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.
4. Report whole-herd records to the Association office. Include individual cow weight and body condition score data if at all possible. This information is increasingly important as the beef industry strives to improve cow efficiency.
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 weaning since the cattle are gathered.

### Fall-calving herds

1. 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, fleshing ability and a long history of reproductive success) begins with bull and semen purchases.
2. Prepare for the breeding season by purchasing semen and other breeding

supplies and testing your breeding equipment.

3. Evaluate herd bulls for semen quality and purchase new herd bulls using a balanced, multiple-trait selection approach.
4. Closely monitor late-calving heifers as the frequency of calving difficulty may be higher in heifers that have experienced long gestation periods.
5. Purchase herd health products that will be needed for the fall "branding" time herd health program.

