



# Angus Advisor

► OCTOBER herd management tips

## Southeast Region

by John Hall, Virginia Tech, [jbhall@vt.edu](mailto:jbhall@vt.edu)

### Spring-calving herds

- Give preweaning injections to calves not already weaned.
- Wean calves this month or early next month.
- Commercial producers should market calves through a value-added means, such as your state's certified feeder calf program or AngusSource.®
- Make arrangements for backgrounding calves.
- Feed replacement heifers to gain 1.5 pounds (lb.) to 1.75 lb. per day or use the target weight method to calculate rate of gain.
- Monitor bulls on test.
- Pregnancy-check cows.
- Condition score and weigh cows at weaning and separate thin cows. Don't forget to record body condition score (BCS) on Angus Herd Improvement Records (AHIR<sup>SM</sup>) reports.
- Cull open, old and very thin cows; check feet and legs, udders and eyes.
- Switch to high-magnesium (Mg) minerals to prevent grass tetany.
- Inventory feed supplies and secure feed for winter.

### Fall-calving herds

- Continue calving.
- Move pregnant heifers and early-calving cows to calving area about two weeks before due date.
- Check cows three to four times per day; check heifers more often. Assist early if needed.
- Keep calving area clean and move healthy pairs out to large pastures three days after calving.
- Condition score cows at calving; plan nutrition/grazing program based on BCS.
- Tag all calves at birth; castrate male calves in commercial herds.
- Give selenium (Se) plus vitamin E and vitamin A and D injections to newborn calves.
- Feed young cows extra energy after calving; some protein may be needed also if good pasture is not available. Cows calving at a BCS of less than 5 (on a 9-point scale) should receive special nutritional attention.
- Keep high-quality, high-magnesium, and high-selenium minerals available.
- Assign reproductive tract scores (RTS) and measure pelvic areas on yearling replacement heifers; RTS should be 3 or better, and pelvic areas should be greater than 150 square centimeters (sq. cm).
- Purchase estrus synchronization supplies; line up artificial insemination (AI) technician or AI supplies.

## Southern region — two different worlds

The western and southern areas of the South are in extreme drought, while the northern and eastern areas are enjoying an almost normal year. As a result, management concerns and options are drastically different in these areas.

In drought areas, producers should be body condition scoring fall-calving cows. Cows that are less than BCS 5 need to be supplemented before and after calving. In extreme drought areas, producers should strongly consider weaning fall calves at 90 days of age. The decrease in nutritional stress on the cow will increase pregnancy rates by 15%-30%. In addition, feed costs for cows are reduced, and purchased feed can be focused toward calves. Body condition scoring information can be found at [www.cowbcs.info](http://www.cowbcs.info).

Bulls must not be overlooked during drought conditions. A BCS of 4 to 6 is ideal for bulls. Bulls that are BCS 3 or less have decreased sperm production, decreased libido and lowered fertility. Bulls should be supplemented before the breeding season so they are in shape for the breeding season.

Young bulls fresh out of the bull test station or on-farm test will crash if turned out on drought-stressed pastures without supplement. If these young bulls become severely emaciated, they may be permanently damaged.

Early weaning fall cows may increase the value of cull cows as well. Fleshy cows are bringing \$10-\$15 per hundredweight (cwt.) more than thin cows in most areas of the region. The combination of greater weights and higher prices per cwt. for fleshy cows may make feeding cows to increase weight worthwhile. For example, a fleshy 1,250-lb. cow is worth \$250-\$300 more than a thin 900 lb. cow in the current market.

Cattle in drought areas are at greater risk for poisoning from a variety of sources. Drought-stunted corn may be high in nitrates. Ensiling high-nitrate corn reduces nitrate levels, but corn stover (round-baled corn) will not decrease in nitrate content.

Prussic acid poisoning is a risk when grazing drought-stressed sorghum, Johnson grass, or Sudan grass. Hungry cows may eat acorns resulting in kidney failure and death. Contact your local Extension service for more information on using drought-stressed forages.

In areas where plentiful rainfall has occurred, conditions made excellent pasture this fall. However, the same conditions that create this lush pasture also reduce magnesium levels in pastures. In addition, well-fertilized pasture can exacerbate the problem. Producers with fall-calving herds should feed a high-magnesium mineral free-

choice this fall. Cows in early lactation are most susceptible to grass tetany.

High-magnesium mineral supplements should contain 12%-14% magnesium. The most common form of magnesium is magnesium oxide (MgO). While magnesium oxide is an acceptable form of magnesium for supplementation, it has a bitter taste and decreases mineral intake. Producers should monitor mineral intake by cattle to ensure they are eating the recommended level indicated on the feed tag.

## Midsouth Region

by David Lalman, Oklahoma State University, [dlalman@okstate.edu](mailto:dlalman@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 pregnancy-check cows and bred heifers. Vaccinate cows and replacement females according to herd health plan. Consider culling females that are open, poor producers, or those that have feet, leg, eye and/or udder problems.
3. Report whole herd records to your breed association.
4. Treat cows and calves for internal and external parasites as recommended by your veterinarian.
5. Dry, spring-calving cows can gain one full BCS during the fall, provided they have access to high-quality forage or stockpiled native range and a protein supplement. The equivalent of 0.3-0.4 lb. of supplemental protein is usually adequate for cows grazing abundant native range during late October and early November. This is equivalent to 1 lb. per day of a 32%-40% protein product or 2 lb. per day of a 20% protein product. Cows grazing fertilized, stockpiled fescue; Bermuda grass; or cool-season annual forages will not require protein supplementation. However, if cows are in marginal body condition at weaning, 1-2 lb. per day of an energy supplement (10%-16% protein) will facilitate body condition gain.
6. Pregnant replacement heifers and growing heifer calves may require more supplemental feed than indicated above, depending on the producer's goal for pregnancy rate the following year. Most purebred producers aim for a high pregnancy rate in replacement heifer calves. This goal generally requires more supplementation or higher-quality forage to achieve a minimum of 65% of expected mature body weight by the beginning of the breeding season. A rate of gain of 1.25 lb. to 1.5 lb. per day is generally adequate to

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achieve this goal. Some purebred breeders have chosen to put more selection pressure on reproductive efficiency. One way to achieve this is to limit gain of heifers so they weigh between 55% and 60% of expected mature body weight by the beginning of the breeding season. A rate of gain of 1-1.25 lb. per day is generally adequate to achieve this goal.

**Fall-calving herds**

1. Continue weaned bulls and heifers on the highest-quality pasture available and provide a supplement such as Oklahoma Gold (1 lb. per day of high-protein supplement with an ionophore) for cattle grazing native grass pasture or low-quality Bermuda grass pasture.

2. Evaluate bulls for semen quality and trim feet, if necessary.
3. Purchase new herd bulls using expected progeny differences (EPDs) as major selection criteria. Check history on health, including immunizations and diseases on the farm of origin. If possible, ask to see the dams of bulls you are interested in purchasing. Selection for good udder quality and other desirable female characteristics begin with bull and semen purchases.
4. Closely monitor late-calving heifers for possible calving problems.
5. Lactating cows grazing abundant native range forage should receive a minimum of 0.8 lb. per day of supplemental protein. Cows grazing stockpiled, fertilized fescue, Bermuda grass or cool-season annuals should receive 3-6 lb. of a 12%-20% protein product, depending on cow condition, genetic potential for milk production and forage quality.

6. Young, lactating cows have 20%-25% greater supplemental needs than indicated above.

**General recommendations**

1. See "Angus Advisor" in the September *Angus Journal* for critical mineral considerations in this region. Carotene, which is the precursor to vitamin A in ruminant animals, declines to almost zero in standing dormant forage. Therefore, vitamin supplementation, specifically vitamin A, is critical during the fall and winter months.
2. Oct. 15 is the last date for treating cattle with a grubicide.
3. Beginning in late October or November, provide supplemental feed for bulls on dry grass according to age and condition.
4. Overseed Bermuda grass with small grains.
5. Delay grazing of cool-season annuals until plant roots are established.

### Midwest Region

by **Twig Marston**, Kansas State University,  
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This year's drought conditions have magnified the need for best management practices. Producers should be extremely price-conscious when purchasing feedstuffs. Consider adjusting herd inventories to maximize profits and sustainability.

#### Cow herd management

- Pregnancy-check.
- Cull cows if they fall into one of the four O's — open, old, ornery, oddball — or if they are late- vs. early-calving; unsound (udder, feet and legs, eyes, teeth); or unproductive (most probable producing ability from herd performance records).
- Consider feeding cull cows to increase value and body weight and to utilize cheap feedstuffs. Recent research has indicated that healthy, young cull cows can dramatically increase in value in as little as 60 days on feed.
- Extremely thin cows may need extra feed to prepare for winter. Provide thin cows (BCS 4 or less) extra feed now. Take advantage of weather, stage of pregnancy, lower nutrient requirements and quality feedstuffs.
- Control external and internal parasites when needed; consult with your Extension educator, veterinarian and industry-support representatives.
- Check individual identification (ID) of cows. Replace lost tags or rebrand.
- Utilize crop residues. Grazing can reduce forage costs by 50% or more. Use management techniques to optimize grazing efficiency. Normal stocking rates are 1-2 acres per cow for 30 days, assuming normal weather and grain yields.

- 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 and control internal and external parasites with veterinary consultation (ideally done prior to weaning).
- Vaccinate all replacement heifer candidates for brucellosis (Bang's disease) at 4-10 months of age.

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- Use implants and feed additives to improve efficient animal performance.
- Weigh all calves individually. That allows for correct sorting, herd culling, growing programs, replacement heifer selection and marketing plans.
- Weigh and condition score dams; data can be used in genetic evaluations.
- Participate in national-level breed-association performance [AHIR/Beef Record Service (BRS)] and recordkeeping programs [Angus Information Management Software (AIMS)].
- Finalize marketing plans. Consider feedstuff availability, and realize that limit-feeding high-concentrate diets may be a profitable feeding program.
- Select replacement heifers on the following criteria.
  - Born early in the calving season. That should increase the number of yearling heifers bred during the early days of the subsequent breeding season.
  - Daughters of above-average-producing cows. Performance traits are moderately heritable.
  - Heifers of the proper frame size to complement the desired mature size and weight.
  - Structurally correct heifers. Avoid breeding udder, feet and leg problems into your herd.
- Vaccinate replacement heifers with the first round of viral vaccines.
- Plan a replacement heifer nutrition program so heifers will be at their target weight (65% of their mature weight) by the start of the breeding season.

**General management**

- Avoid unnecessary stress. Handle cows and calves to reduce shrink, to sustain good health and to minimize sickness.

- Analyze forages for nitrate and nutrient content. Use the data to develop winter feeding programs.
- Repair, replace and improve facilities.
- Plan your marketing program, including private-treaty, consignment, test-station and production sales.
- A penny saved is a penny earned. Price all forages, byproducts, grains and commercial products on a per-nutrient basis.

**Northwest Region**

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**Calf management**

- Wean late calves as per management outline in September “Angus Advisor.”
- Collect accurate weaning weight data. Record contemporary groups in order to reflect important management differences (i.e. dam age, pasture and feed conditions).
- Ensure that registered animals have an

accurate five-digit or shorter tattoo in each ear or the appropriate freeze or hot-iron brand in order to establish permanent and unique ID within a herd.

- Screen bull sale candidates for performance, structural soundness and scrotal uniformity.
- Screen replacement heifers for age at birth, performance, body conformation and soundness.
- Consider elective termination of pregnancy in heifer calves if heifers were penned with bulls or bull calves. Treat with a prostaglandin product at least, and preferably, 10 days after the last opportunity that the heifer could have been bred. Treating bred heifers within five days of breeding will produce unsatisfactory pregnancy termination results.

- Provide booster vaccinations if needed to complete vaccination protocol.

### **Nutrition**

- Consider separating the cow herd into three management groups: (1) heifer calves, (2) first- and second-calving cows and thin cows, and (3) dry cows. Feed heifer calves enough energy so they can gain on average 1.5 lb. per day with a 12.5% crude protein (CP) diet. Thin cows and young cows need to be moved up to a BCS of 5 at calving. Cows with a BCS of 5 or higher can be fed low-cost forages at this time.
- Vitamin A is low in standing dry forage and most harvested hay. Vitamin A supplement of 25,000-30,000 international units (IU) per day will be satisfactory. Vitamin A can be supplied by injection. Most commercially available vitamin A injectable forms will supply adequate vitamin A for two to three months.

### **Health**

- Vaccinate heifer calves for Bang's disease between 4 and 10 months of age.
- Remove any insecticide-treated ear tags so that insecticide-resistant flies do not become a problem.
- Fecal sample 5%-10% of the cow herd in order to screen for internal parasites.
- Avoid losses due to pine needle abortion. Do not allow cows in the last trimester of pregnancy to ingest fresh or dry needles from ponderosa pine trees.
- Late-term abortions may be caused by vibriosis and leptospirosis. Monitor late-term abortions and, with the assistance of your veterinarian, attempt to determine the cause.

### **Education**

- Plan to attend your local or state cattlemen's association fall meeting. These organizations are effective messengers in representing producers in the political-legal arena. Attend, participate and lead. 