PURINA Checkpoint®
Management & Nutrition Tips For Beef Producers

Pay Close Attention to Winter Nutrition For Your Cattle

Taking shortcuts on your cattle nutrition during the winter months could risk next year's calf crop, this year's weaning weights and the long-term viability of your herd. According to information from University of Minnesota Extension beef experts, winter feeding programs vary for each cattle enterprise.[1] Feeding programs are dependent on variables such as:

- Forage quality.
- Cost and availability of winter supplements.
- Animal type (mature cows, replacement heifers or back-grounded calves).
- Body condition of your cattle.
- Calving date, if applicable.

The Minnesota beef experts explain that generally, winter feeding can be accomplished with harvested forages such as hay and silage. Grazing crop residues can also be utilized, but may not always be feasible in areas that receive significant amounts of snowfall during early winter months. Cows can graze through up to 9 inches of snow to get high quality forages, but reduced forage intake will occur with as little as ¼ inch of ice covering the snow. Plus, cold temperatures and precipitation can decrease the feed's nutritional value.

Regardless of whether you feed stored forages or graze crop residues, the cow's diet must be sufficient to uphold a body condition score (BCS) of 5 at weaning, a 6 at calving, and no less than a 5.5 score at breeding. At this level of condition, a cow is able to maintain its body weight and support production functions such as lactation and fetal growth. Maintaining adequate body condition in pregnant cattle is crucial in the two to three months prior to calving.

FEEDING SUPPLEMENTS

Depending on the quality of forage, supplementation may be needed by cows when nutrient demands are not met by the basic diet the cow is offered, say the Minnesota experts. Typically, diets of late gestating beef cows will meet nutrient needs if they contain a minimum of 55 percent total digestible nutrients (TDN) and 8 percent crude protein (CP). However, lactating cow minimum requirements during the winter increase to 62 percent TDN and 11 percent CP, such as with fall calving cows.

When feeding pregnant first- and second-calf heifers due to calve in the spring, maintaining a diet with TDN at 60 percent and CP at 11 percent from the beginning of winter through early lactation should be sufficient.

It is important to compare nutrient intake of the diet with nutrient requirements of the cow based on animal type and pregnancy status, and to determine what additional nutrient(s) are needed for supplementation.

EVALUATE COW PERFORMANCE

Throughout the winter, it's important to evaluate cow performance by observing

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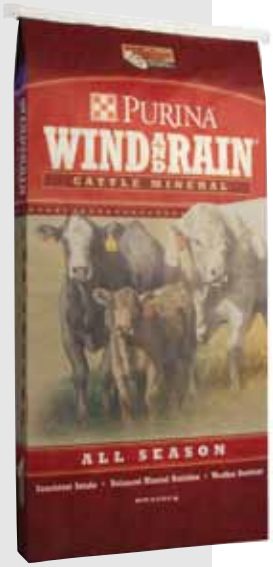
body weight and condition changes resulting from your feeding program. This will tell you if you are correctly supplementing your cattle through the winter and preparing those spring calving herds for the calving season.

Purina has made it easy for you to maintain your production level by designing supplemental feed products to help economically manage your herd's nutrition needs in all life stages. These products include Sup-R-Lix®, Sup-R-Block® and Accuration®/Cattle Limiter, all controlled intake products featuring IM Intake Modifying Technology®.



Purina also offers Wind and Rain® mineral supplements that have been specifically designed to meet mineral deficiencies based on forage quality and cattle nutritional requirements. These minerals are weather resistant and are proven to enhance consistent consumption.

Contact your Purina dealer today for more information on these and other nutrition programs that can benefit your beef cattle business.

Reference
1. http://www.extension.umn.edu/Beef/components/releases/11-10-05-Gill.htm

Nutrition is Important Part of Good Herd Health Program

Do you equate a good herd-health program only with a vaccination and/or deworming program? While these are important, they aren't the only considerations, says Christine B. Navarre, Extension Veterinarian, with Louisiana State University.

Dr. Navarre says good overall beef cattle herd health entails the following four basic parts:

1. NUTRITION

"The first and most important part of a good herd health program is good nutrition," says Dr. Navarre. "If adequate nutrition is not provided, deworming, vaccinating and biosecurity practices will fail to make a big impact."

Cattle need adequate protein, energy, vitamins, minerals and clean water. Not providing these nutrients in the proper amounts will lead to diseases and production losses, according to Dr. Navarre.

"Poor nutrition depresses immunity to diseases and interferes with response to vaccination." Dr. Navarre says. "Much time and effort can be spent diagnosing, vaccinating for and trying to eliminate a disease, but if nutritional problems aren't addressed, other diseases will move into a herd."

2. DEWORMING

Parasite infestations can cause significant losses in beef herds by depressing weight gains of growing cattle and causing infertility and poor milk production in cows. Parasite infestations also mimic poor nutrition as they rob animals of protein and other nutrients. Like poor nutrition, parasites lower immunity to disease and decrease vaccine responses. A good parasite-control program is an essential part of a successful herd health program, says Dr. Navarre.

3. VACCINATIONS

Although good nutrition and deworming boost immunity to all diseases, some diseases can overwhelm that immunity and can cause losses even in well-fed and dewormed herds. In these cases, says Dr. Navarre, vaccination programs can help boost immunity to specific diseases, providing extra protection against common diseases.

4. BIOSECURITY

Even well-fed, dewormed and properly vaccinated herds still have a risk of introducing diseases and suffering losses. That's why a sound biosecurity plan is needed to help prevent the introduction and spread of diseases in a herd, says Dr. Navarre. "Preventing foreign animal diseases from entering cattle herds is important, but many diseases already here in the United States are costing the beef industry billions of dollars," she says. "You need to also keep these diseases out of your herds or keep them from spreading if your cattle already have them."

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Wolf Point Ranch Builds Quality Cattle for Tough Environment

Wolf Point Ranch (WPR) has a century-old tradition of raising beef cattle in a tough, challenging environment on the Gulf Coast near Port Lavaca, Texas. Today, the ranch has evolved into a 1,050-head commercial enterprise with quality Black Brangus cattle designed specifically for their environment.

"Between parasites and mineral deficiencies and all of our grass issues, conditions are pretty tough on cattle in this area," says Brandon Critendon, cattle manager for the ranch. "Fifty to 60 percent of the cattle ranch is on medium- to poor-quality ground," Critendon explains.

The commercial Black Brangus herd has been in development on the ranch for about five years. Prior to that, WPR was a purebred seedstock producer. "We've kept our purebred mentality and mixed that into our commercial operation and moved forward," says Critendon. "We've been able to take some very big leaps by using artificial insemination to source our bulls from some really good producers and be real critical in our cow herd. Fertility is the number one thing we're building towards right now."

Because the herd has been in a building phase the last several years, Critendon has been retaining a lot of females back into the cow herd to replace some of the older, original-purchased cows with ranch-raised females.

"Initially we were looking at the replacement female market as our target so we could supply some really functional type cattle back to our customers," he says. "At the same time, we wanted to be able to utilize our steers through either re-selling them off the cows through a background preconditioning phase, or else retain ownership and carry them on through the feedyard. Over the last couple of years, we've gone to a complete retained ownership."

Having healthy cattle that resist disease and parasites is critical to the success of WPR's cattle operation, Critendon says. "Right now, we feel real good about our parasite control and health programs."

PURINA NUTRITION

Critendon believes that good nutrition and good cattle health are interlocked. Purina has played a major role in economically providing good nutrition in the development of the herd, he points out.

At first he started feeding Purina's Accuration®/Cattle Limiter with IM Intake Modifying Technology® to developing bulls and heifers. He also fed it to the cow herd and to calves. Critendon says he likes Accuration because, among other benefits, it gives him the ability to feed it as a bulk feed or as a full feed and still know that consumption per day is going to be consistent.

"I like the condition that it puts on the cattle," he says. "As long as we've got a goal and a plan and they are consuming like they should, I never have to really worry about over-conditioning the heifers. They'll stay on Accuration through breeding season."

PRODUCER PROFILE

In addition to Accuration, Critendon uses other Purina cattle nutrition products as well. "We've incorporated more Purina products along the way." The nutrition strategies he uses in the herd have been designed and developed through a team effort between himself and Purina, he emphasizes. "They've helped me develop these strategies and educate me on the right way to use their feeds."

Purina also has helped Critendon develop a mineral supplement program specifically for his cattle enterprise. "We have a mineral nightmare in this area," he says. "We're very deficient in minerals. Purina has worked really well with me in water sampling and looking for areas where we may be having troubles with mineral tie-up, and things like that. They came in and worked with me really hard on our mineral program, and I've seen some very good benefits from that."

Critendon believes the mineral program is a big factor in the herd's success. "You can have the best fertility and the best genetic program in the world, but if you don't have good health and you don't have good nutrition, then you can't express any of that.

"Nutrition and health are so linked together. Without a good nutrition program, including a mineral program, cattle health is going to be poor. Without a good health program, then you're throwing your nutrition program out the window."

MORE ABOUT PURINA'S IM TECHNOLOGY®

Purina's exclusive IM Intake Modifying Technology®(IM Technology) causes cattle to consume the supplement through multiple small snacks daily. This effectively optimizes the flow of nutrients to the digestive system, thereby increasing forage intake, overall utilization, and cattle performance.

Feeding IM Technology controlled intake cattle nutrition products also can result in:

- Consumption based on the quality of forage present.
- Precision feeding that meets your cattle's needs regardless of forage quality.
- Herd uniformity — no more "boss" cows.
- Twenty-four-hour-a-day availability regardless of weather.
- Decreased labor and delivery costs versus hand feeding.

See your Purina dealer today for more information on cattle nutrition programs with IM Technology or other products that could fit in your situation.

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QUICK TIPS:
WHEN TO BCS YOUR COWS AND BULLS

There are several key times to pay particular attention to body condition scores (BCS) of cows and bulls. Beef cattle experts offer these suggestions:

COWS

- **Late summer/early fall** – Important especially in drought years or in systems where females are managed almost entirely on vegetative or dormant grazed forage. If cows are thin, early weaning should be considered. Non-lactating cows can pick-up condition by grazing forage alone or by feeding a small amount of supplement along with the grazed forage. If young cows are thin and grass in pasture is decreasing in nutrient quality, strategically wean calves.
- **Weaning** – Pay particular attention to young cows weaning their first calves. You may need to early wean their calves. Higher quality forage may also be needed.
- **45 days after weaning** – Thin cows should be gaining back condition if cow type is matched with the feed resources.
- **90 days before calving** – This is the last opportunity to economically get condition back on cows. Separate thin cows from cows in good condition.
- **Calving** – Target having cows in a 6 score (no ribs showing, fat in the tailhead and brisket and good muscle in the shoulders and hindquarters) prior to calving to optimize milk production and enhanced return to heat. If cows are thin you may want to modify your pre-calving feeding program.
- **Start of breeding season** – Target having cows in at least a 5.5 score (no more than 1 rib showing and good muscle in the shoulders and hindquarters) prior to bull turn-in, Artificial Insemination (AI), or Embryo Transfer (ET) for shorter postpartum interval and earlier conceptions. Thin cows may indicate a poor match of calving season to feed sources.

BULLS

- **When pulled out of breeding pasture** – The nutritional program for bulls should be designed to have them at BCS 6.0 to 6.5 at the start of breeding season.
- **Three months prior to start of breeding season** – Adjust nutrition to increase, maintain, or slow down BCS.
- **When turned into the breeding pasture** – Continue to monitor during breeding season.