



Checkpoint[®]

Management & Nutrition
Tips For Beef Producers



ANALYZE HERD NOW TO ADDRESS INCREASED WINTER NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

People who put up their holiday lights in October would probably make excellent cattle producers. They know that cold and wet weather are not far away, so it's smart to take care of things before the task becomes more difficult.

Putting together a feeding program in the fall to prepare a herd for winter and minimize cold stress is smart, too. Early preparation can improve the health of your herd, save money and increase your returns.

There's no better place to start than with an assessment of your herd's body condition. "We know that cows in good body condition, Body Condition Score (BCS) 5 or above, will get through winter and the accompanying wind chill better than those in poor body condition," said James Neel, Ph.D., professor and beef cattle extension specialist at the University of Tennessee.

"The body condition of cows just before the winter feeding period is a major factor in planning for the amount and quality of feed required. Otherwise healthy cows can quickly lose condition if not properly fed, and it's more efficient for them to gain weight in warmer weather than in the middle of winter," said Neel.

He recommends grouping the cows by body condition and/or age to enhance productivity. Mature cows in good body condition (5-6), can be grouped and fed average quality hay along with grain, minerals, fortified salt and vitamins.

Another grouping, also in good body condition, could consist of bred replacement heifers and second-calf heifers. These younger, growing animals do better if they don't have to compete with mature cows for feed, and they will benefit from good quality hay and extra grain.

Cows that are overweight (BCS 8-9) are costly to maintain. Grouping them and reducing their feed intake may bring them back to a 5 or 6 condition. However, it's sometimes best to take a close look at the overly thin and overly fat cows and cull the herd, Dr. Neel advised. Their feed and care costs may be too severe for them to be profitable.

Once you've grouped the cows, how do you know how much extra feed will be needed to get them through the winter in good condition? Neel credits Oklahoma State University beef specialists with developing a handy rule of thumb to calculate extra feed needs. "Cattle energy needs for maintenance rise about one percent

for each degree below 32 degrees Fahrenheit (freezing point) in dry cold. If the dry cold temperature is 25 degrees Fahrenheit, then the difference between 32 and 25 is 7, thus an increase of 7 percent in the current feed allotment is needed," said Neel.

The same rule of thumb works when the wind chill is taken into account and if the weather is more wet than cold, he added. For wet weather, the key temperature to start from is 59 degrees Fahrenheit and the energy increase is 2 percent for each degree below 59. A wet storm challenges cows to stay warm more than dry, cold weather. Wet, flat hair loses its insulating property and a cow will get cold rapidly.

Hay quality and feed supplements must be considered and balanced in order to properly meet a herd's nutrition requirements. "Hay quality and composition will vary greatly and can be analyzed for moisture, protein and energy. And minerals are an essential part of the beef cow's nutritional needs – they should be available to cows at all times," said Neel.

While beef producers lean on hay for winter feed, hay must often be supplemented with energy or protein to assure a balanced diet. Fortunately, several alternative and by-product feeds are now available, often at reasonable costs, to provide supplemental nutrition. It's important that the supplements provide the appropriate nutrients.

Purina recommends body condition be based on stage of production. According to Dr. Lee Dickerson, Senior Cattle Consultant for Purina, producers should target a BCS of 6 at calving, and no less than a BCS of 5.5 at bull turn-in, artificial insemination (AI), or embryo transfer (ET). Targeting no less than a 5 score at weaning will also help reduce the amount of weight gain required to return the cow to the right score (6) at calving again.

Purina offers a wide range of supplemental feeds, such as

Accuration[®], that provide complete, balanced nutrition and assure your cattle get the energy they need when the weather turns cold. When feeding Accuration with Intake Modifying Technology[®], your cows will only eat the amount of supplement they need to balance your forage, regardless of its quality. Contact your local dealer or Purina sales representative to learn how they can help keep your herd in top condition this winter.



TAKE CHARGE OF HERD HEALTH WITH A YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM

With the day-to-day challenges cattle producers face, it's easy to jump from one task or crisis to another.

But when it comes to herd health, you can ultimately save a lot of time and headaches—not to mention money—by stepping back from today's agenda and looking at the entire year.

By developing a year-round herd health program, you can take advantage of opportunities to prevent illness in your herd, rather than just reacting when problems arise. And ultimately, that means higher profits for your operation.

Unfortunately, according to W. Mark Hilton, DVM, clinical professor of beef production medicine at Purdue University, most producers don't have a year-round program to guide their herd's health.

"Many producers don't have a plan in place to guide them about what to do at key times in the production and weather cycle," Hilton said. "And, everyone has a lot going on, so it's easy to get behind on their protocols."

Another mistake many producers make, Hilton contends, is seeking advice from sources that may not really have expertise, instead of calling their herd health veterinarians. As a result, many producers react to situations rather than developing a long-term plan.

Hilton is well-equipped to make such observations. He grew up on a cattle operation, and before joining Purdue, was in private practice for 15 years in eastern Iowa.

Based on his experience, he advises producers to develop a solid relationship with their veterinarians, a relationship based on trust and teamwork. That's the first step in developing a proactive, year-round health program.

Many producers have the misconception that they are "bothering" their veterinarian when they call with problems, Hilton commented. But, he says, that's not the case at all.

"We are in this line of work because we enjoy helping animals and people. The number one thing that comes out when we talk with veterinary students is they love helping."

Another reason producers might not call veterinarians, is concern about cost. But, as Hilton points out, "Sometimes just talking to someone over the phone is enough to solve a problem. I've never talked to a veterinarian who won't take phone calls. Never."

Hilton also noted that in the great scheme of things, veterinary expenses usually constitute only about 5 percent of the cost of producing a beef animal.

Veterinarians can provide a fresh perspective because they see many different types of operations, he explained. Therefore, they can help develop a protocol that is tailored to the characteristics of each herd. If a herd is bringing in new animals, for instance, the vaccination requirements will be more demanding than they are for a closed herd, he remarked.

The veterinarian can also provide insights about animal health products and new technologies that might provide value and increase profitability. Implants and ionophores, for instance, can have a major impact on gain, feed efficiency—and on herd profits.

"The implant takes feed and makes more of it into muscle," Hilton explained. "You can make \$3,000 an hour by implanting calves. I can't think of anything else legal you can do to make that kind of money. Too many people are leaving that money on the table."

Ionophores provide an 8:1 benefit, he calculated. And, both are "fabulous for the environment because the animals need less feed and produce less manure."

Once protocols are established, veterinarians can help producers stay on track. At Hilton's Iowa practice, for instance, producers would often drop by his office and ask about a product or protocol.

"There was a copy of each producer's plan in our office, as well as on the farm. Anyone in the office could find their file and show them what to do when," he explained. "And, they could purchase the correct products while they were there."

In turn, producers can help their veterinarians by keeping comprehensive records about illness and treatment.

"Every producer needs to record data, preferably in a spreadsheet. They should note which calves (calf ID) were sick, how many were sick, what their temperatures were, what treatment was used, and how it worked," said Hilton. "Even smaller operations should consider developing an Excel spreadsheet when calves get sick. That will help them work with their veterinarians to achieve the healthiest herd possible."

"Work with your trusted veterinarian, develop a protocol and stick with it until your doctor says there's a better approach. He or she understands your operation is a business and wants to be on the asset side of your ledger."

Don't forget the effect nutrition has on your herd's health. Proper year-round nutrition keeps cows, heifers and bulls in top condition to help prevent health problems. Your Purina dealer can help you develop a healthy nutrition program for your herd with products containing Intake Modifying Technology®. In combination with your home-grown forage, IM Technology allows your herd to eat only what they need, when they need it. Be sure your herd is in the best condition possible heading into this winter. Call today.



SOUND NUTRITION YIELDS QUALITY, PROFITABILITY FOR WEAVER-LINMAN CATTLE COMPANY

Lyle Linman says he was born in the cattle business. And, that's probably true. He's a fourth-generation rancher, raised in western Colorado before landing at what is now the Weaver-Linman Cattle Company in Sedgwick, CO, in 1985.

There on the High Plains, near the Nebraska state line, they run a Registered Angus seed stock herd. They graze 12,000 acres and wean about 650 spring calves each year, selling bulls and heifers to commercial customers.

That's a lot of territory to cover, and water and pasture are at a premium. Last year's drought made things particularly tough. Lyle said they had to reduce their herd by about one third.

Nevertheless, even last year, they maintained quality—and profitability—through astute use of their resources.

"The drought has been really rough," Lyle declared. "We had to cut back on cows and institute some new management techniques. And we had to work harder. Probably the most important thing was we had to be very aware of the nutrition of our cows ... what input we were getting into them so that we could get the most out of what we had," he added.

Their management practices include a stringent pasture rotation program. Lyle says it's more work but he firmly believes it allows them to derive the greatest benefit from their grass.

In general, he said they put more cows on each pasture for shorter amounts of time (14-30 days), so cows are on fresh feed all the time. And, they rotate grasses in their 23 pastures, each about a section in size, housing one water tank each.

Plus, Lyle said they never graze anything at the same time of the year two years in a row. "We'll use it only once per year, then use it at a different season the following year," he explained. "Then, you always have a seed crop of some kind. We never use more than 50 percent of the grass, so it will go back and seed."

Their updated feed program also helped them enhance utilization of their assets during the drought. The new program was instituted during last year's drought after Lyle called Rick Haynes of Northeast Feed in Ovid, Colo.

"It was late summer, and I wondered how I was going to get 650 calves through the winter," Lyle offered. "Rick came over several times and helped me figure out what we could do and what it would cost. We have to watch our input costs, and I was afraid it might be too expensive, but it didn't figure out that way. For what we got out of them, I've been very satisfied, and the service has been just great."

Rick is well-equipped to help customers like Lyle. He himself maintains a cow-calf herd of approximately 250, utilizing the same Purina nutrition program he offers other producers.

Lyle is also impressed with Purina, especially after attending a producer VIP conference at the Purina Animal Research Center in Missouri. He describes the company as "full of knowledge."

"This company has the resources to answer all your questions, and they will do it," Lyle asserted. "An answer is no more than a phone call away. The Purina folks will come out and see what you are doing and then make suggestions. They are a great resource."

As for other results, he said his yearling weights on Accuration® were "as good or better than in the past." Lyle said that's pretty impressive, considering the drought conditions. He was also pleased with Impact® Starter (now called Accuration® Starter).

"The calves started really well, and we had as tough a year last year as we've ever had. We used it for 2-3 weeks, then went on to Accuration, and the calves really took off on it."

Perhaps most notable were the results he achieved with yearling heifers that were on Accuration®. More than 90 percent (92 percent, to be exact) cycled within the first 21 days.

Lyle also noticed the herd was utilizing more of the existing forage, in spite of its low quality, because of the altered eating patterns induced by the Intake Modifying Technology® in the supplement. IM Technology encourages animals to eat smaller, more frequent meals, then consume forage in between feedings to provide the added roughage their rumen needs to function properly.

"I used to hand feed calves every morning, and they'd hang around the feed bunk most of the day," Lyle commented. "With Accuration and self-feeders, I could go out any time of the day, and there would only be about one-third of the calves at the feeder. The rest were scattered in the pastures. They used the roughage in the pasture better than they ever used it."

Minerals comprise another important aspect of the Weaver-Linman nutrition program. They started using Wind and Rain® Storm Minerals 7.5 Phosphorus Complete with Altosid through the summer months and other mineral products the rest of the year.

Phosphorus is one of the minerals they are "short on" in his area, along with zinc, to a lesser degree. Lyle explained the ground is alkaline, which binds up trace minerals, such as copper, so minerals are very important. And, the Altosid additive, which they used for the first time last year, has really helped with fly control.

"I'm really pleased and amazed at how it is working," Lyle remarked. "Usually this time of year, the cattle are all bunched up and biting flies, but this year, even on hot days, the cows are scattered out, and we're finding very few flies on them. They're bound to be gaining weight and doing better without all those flies."

Clearly, Lyle is devoted to his herd and his way of life. When the weather is good, he says he "likes everything about it." He said he and his wife, Deb, who does everything from heifer calving to helping with the AI, enjoyed raising their family on the ranch. And, their children have ranching in their blood, too. One daughter works at the National Resource Conservation Service and one son and another son-in-law are brand inspectors. And now there are five grandchildren, ages 4 to 8, who are already itching to spend time on the ranch. Guess they were born in the cattle business, too.



For more information, call or visit your local Purina dealer.


PURINA
CheckPoint
7113 W 135th St. #305
Overland Park, KS 66223

Change service requested

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

**ANALYZE HERD NOW TO ADDRESS INCREASED
WINTER NUTRITIONAL NEEDS**

**TAKE CHARGE OF HERD HEALTH WITH
A YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM**

**SOUND NUTRITION YIELDS QUALITY, PROFITABILITY
FOR WEAVER-LINMAN CATTLE COMPANY**

WINTERIZING YOUR HERD STARTS RIGHT NOW

By Larry Hollis, DVM, M.Ag.

Nobody likes going out in the freezing cold to tend their herd, but it's a fact of life for cattle producers. Nevertheless, there are some steps you can take right now to make your winter a little easier.

Preg-checking: a moneymaking tool. The first thing to consider is preg-checking cows so you don't feed any freeloaders this winter. And while you're at it, have your veterinarian tell you how far along each pregnant cow is. That way you have the option of selling late-calving cows.

Pregnant cows bring a higher sale price than open cows. Plus, selling late calvers shortens your calving season and increases the weights of calves you sell. Every cow incurs the same wintering expenses, so why not feed the ones that are going to deliver the highest return on your investment?

Body condition scoring. You want to make sure pregnant cows are in good body condition or they won't breed back, and their "stability" declines. Cows must calve five times before they break even, cost-wise. First and second-time heifers must be emphasized, because they are still growing, and if body condition is not maintained, their body will prioritize growth over reproduction. So, if necessary (and feasible), maintain them in a separate feeding group so they don't have to compete with mature cows. And remember, if they need to put on weight, it's more economical to put it on with inexpensive forage in early winter than with anything right before they calve.

Deworming. A lot of producers don't believe in worming cows, especially in the fall. However, worms decrease feed efficiency, especially protein, as nutrients are siphoned off to the immune system to fight off the worms. To maximize feed efficiency, you need them worm-free. Also, a worm load represses the cows' appetite, so even if you have adequate feed, they may not eat enough to maintain body condition scores.

A word about fecal testing for worms: Calves—and to a lesser extent heifers—carry a higher worm burden than mature cows. Therefore, it's a good idea to pull fecal samples on calves around weaning time, before you sell them. If they are positive, you know the cows have worms, too, and should be dewormed.

Vaccinations. Fall is not generally the preferred time to vaccinate. However, once you preg-check cows and know which animals you will keep, you may want to consider vaccinating them for diseases that affect the reproductive system, such as IBR and BVD—if you haven't already done so. If you do vaccinate at this point, you should use a killed virus vaccine.

Environmental considerations. Check your windbreaks and make repairs as appropriate before the cold weather hits. Also, if you have to bed, know what you are going to use for bedding and have it ready to go. Finally, if you must use water tank heaters, make sure they are checked out and functioning properly.

Larry Hollis is extension beef veterinarian and professor of beef cattle management and nutrition at Kansas State University.