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Department of Animal Sciences and Industry

Plan now to control winter feed costs

Sandy Johnson, NW Area livestock specialist

As I am writing this, college football season hasn't started yet, but I'm wondering about making plans to go to a bowl game, finding some tickets, making a hotel reservation—you know, trying to get ahead of the scalpers. I'm also hoping I can enjoy the game and yet not have to spend too much money in the process. It is a bit of a gamble, but well worth it if I'm right.

Cow/calf producers should be looking ahead this time of year, too. What will you be feeding your cows during bowl season and how much will it cost you?

More likely, producer's thoughts center on weaning weight and price this time of the year and what can be done to increase weaning weights. While those factors are certainly important, we don't want to overlook the fact that increasing calf weaning weight may actually decrease profits if costs associated with producing that calf are increased more than the value of the additional weight.

Let's look at how that could happen. In a spring calving herd, cow body condi-

tion often drops as lactation continues into the fall and protein becomes deficient in our typical grazing situations. The calf continues to gain weight at the expense of a loss of body condition on the cow. Fortunately the cow can regain this condition after weaning, but at what cost? Is there enough time to get that condition back on without purchasing expensive inputs? Is it more economically efficient to leave the condition on the cow and put any additional feed inputs directly into the calf?

Often a combination of poorer than expected forage quality, lack of time and harsh weather prevents us from getting cows back into the desired condition before calving. The following year cows will not resume normal estrous cycles as soon after calving, and when they do begin cycling, conception rates will be lower because of the lower body condition scores. This will result in more open cows at the end of the breeding season and younger and lighter weight calves the following year. Bottom line is fewer and lighter calves to pay for the winter-feeding costs of the cowherd.

See PLAN on page 2

What will you be feeding your cows during bowl season, and how much will it cost you?

Contributors

Dale Blasi

Stocker and Forages
Nutrition & Mgt.
785-532-5427
dblasi@oznet.ksu.edu

Frank Brazle

Livestock Production
316-431-1530
fbrazle@oznet.ksu.edu

Sandy Johnson

Livestock Production
785-462-6281
skjohnso@oznet.ksu.edu

Gerry Kuhl

Feedlot Nutr. & Mgt.
785-532-1250
amurphy@oz.oznet.ksu.edu

Twig Marston

Cow-Calf Management
785-532-5428
tmarston@oznet.ksu.edu

Steve Paisley

Livestock Production
316-663-5491
spaisley@oznet.ksu.edu

Ron Hale

Livestock Production
620-275-9164
rhale@oznet.ksu.edu



Profitability Conference

September 21, 2001

Kansas State University
Manhattan, Kansas

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So what can we do NOW to prevent those types of problems? A good starting point is to inventory forage resources that will be used from now until grass season begins next year. Given the rainfall in your area, how are current pasture conditions and how long can cows remain on grass and still maintain long-term health of the range?

What feedstuffs will be available after grass? How much, what quality and at what cost? For each producer's situation, estimates could be made of costs needed to winter cows in various body conditions and with various forage costs. This could be compared to estimates of weaning weights and returns for each situation.

The higher winter feed costs are for the cows, the less attractive it will be to allow the calf to nurse her way down. If cows do need to gain some weight after weaning, the time period immediately after weaning is generally the most efficient. This is because cow requirements are at their lowest point and weather conditions are relatively mild. As more extreme weather comes, a cow in better body condition will take less energy for maintenance than a thin cow, helping to control winter-feed costs.

Producers who want to control winter feed costs should also look ahead at protein and/or energy supplements options. We are fortunate to have a number of by-products available in the state—wheat midds, sunflower meal, and corn gluten feed to name a few. Some resources that might be useful for anyone looking into by-products are two Web sites that list various sources and weekly prices: <http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/exten/feedbull/>; and <http://agebb.missouri.edu/dairy/bull1r.htm>.

Significant savings are often available to those that are able to purchase in advance. Bulk purchases are sometimes required, so if you won't use an entire load yourself, perhaps you can make arrangements with a neighbor. Storage,

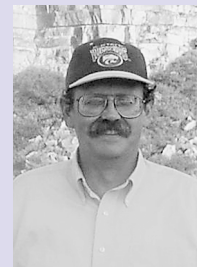
cost, method of feeding, as well as nutritional value will all need to be evaluated and compared with other options. Before purchasing, be sure to ask about the consistency of the product. It is hard to balance a ration with inconsistent resources.

Now is the time to plan ahead and look for ways to control winter feed costs and achieve goals for cow body condition. Proper planning and management of your winter feed costs will improve the profitability of your cow/calf operation.

Just as well aim high, I'm going to get tickets to the Rose Bowl. So who's with me?

Hale joins SW Area Office

Welcome Ron Hale, Ph.D., who has joined the Southwest Area office as a



Ron Hale

livestock production specialist. He has an extensive background in feedlot research, has worked as a staff nutritionist for a cattle-feeding company and served in a

technical service capacity for the animal pharmaceutical industry. He has practical production experience in the stocker and cow/calf segments of the industry as well. His wealth of experience will be a strong asset to the beef extension team. Ron says he is looking forward to being of service to Kansas producers.

Paisley accepts position at University of Wyoming

Farewell to Steve Paisley who has taken a position with the Animal Science Department at the University of Wyoming beginning Oct. 1. Steve has been a valuable member of our beef team, and we wish him well.

October 1 Deadline for IRM Tips for Profit Contest

The entry deadline for the IRM Tips for Profit contest is approaching fast. Entries must be submitted by Oct. 1 to be eligible for \$6,500 in cash awards and other incentives.

The contest is sponsored by the Pennington Seed Co. and administered by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). It rewards cattle producers willing to share management ideas they use in their operations. Top prize is \$3,500 cash and a trip to the 2002 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show in Denver in February. Second prize is \$1,500, and third is \$1,000. Up to 10 honorable mentions will also be recognized.

All winning ideas will be displayed at the 2002 Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show. The winners will also appear in the quarterly IRM newsletter section of BEEF magazine.

Last year's winner included a hay feeding/manure management system developed in Maryland; a tractor-mounted, hydraulic round-bale scale devised in Arkansas; and a Texan's syringe "coozie" for handling vaccines.

Your management tip does not have to be something you can touch or hold in your hand. Consider management ideas or concepts as well.

Individuals are encouraged to submit their own management tip. Groups or organizations are eligible to nominate one cow/calf operation.

Eligibility Requirement

- Nominees must be NCBA members and involved with a cow/calf operation.
- All entries must be *original, non-patented ideas*.
- Anyone may nominate himself or herself.

Your entry should include four parts:

1) Your management tip—

Describe the ideas. Discuss your concept in 200 words or less.

Please include pictures when applicable.

Describe the situation. What was the need for this idea in your operation? If applicable, provide a brief description of your operation, e.g., business structure, acreage, stocking rate, herd numbers, etc.



2) Methods—Describe how the idea was implemented. List challenges and how they were overcome.

3) Results—Describe the benefits obtained. How has your idea affected your cow/calf business, including productivity and profitability; e.g. increased production efficiency, reduced costs, higher quality calves, etc. Supporting information and benchmark data is encouraged.

4) Future Uses—How could this practice be adapted to other regions, different sized herds, other resources bases, etc. How could other cow/calf producers be persuaded to implement the concept in their business?

For more information contact: Renee Lloyd, NCBA, 5420 S Quebec St, Englewood, CO 80111. She also may be reached at 303-850-3373 or rlloyd@beef.org

Kansas Feedlot Performance and Feed Cost Summary*

Gerry Kuhl, Feedlot Specialist, Kansas State University

July 2001 Closeout Information**

Sex/No.	Final Weight	Avg. Days on Feed	Avg. Daily Gain	Feed/Gain (Dry Basis)	% Death Loss	Avg. Cost of Gain/Cwt.	Projected Cost of Aug.-Placed Cattle
Steers/17,752	1,247	169	3.24	5.96	2.05	\$48.42	\$46.67
		(145-188)	(2.88-3.54)	(5.54-6.70)		(44.93-53.64)	(45.00-49.00)
Heifers/24,856	1,144	168	2.88	6.28	1.88	\$52.32	\$48.67
		(153-188)	(2.58-3.16)	(5.87-7.00)		(49.15-54.61)	(47.00-51.00)

Current Feed Inventory Costs: Mid August	Avg. Prices	Range	No. Yards
Corn	\$ 2.28/bu	\$ 2.10-2.46	6
Ground Alfalfa Hay	\$101.67/ton	\$90.00-113.00	6

*Appreciation is expressed to these Kansas feedyards: Brookover Ranch Feed Yard, Decatur County Feed Yard, Fairleigh Feed Yard, Hy-Plains Feed Yard, Kearny County Feeders, Pawnee Valley Feeders, and Supreme Cattle Feeders.

**Closeout figures are the means of individual feed yard monthly averages and include feed, yardage, processing, medication, death loss and usually sold FOB the feedlot with a 4% pencil shrink. Interest charges normally are not included.

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Dale A. Blasi
 Dale Blasi, Extension Specialist