Late spring is decision time for cow-calf managers

Twig Marston, beef specialist

As winter subsides and spring weather begins, cattle producers are faced with some important management decisions. Most of the spring calving is done, so calf survival, calf performance, and reproduction are paramount issues to producers.

Last year’s drought greatly affected winter feed supplies. If you are one of those producers caught with short feed supplies and days or weeks of feeding cows before turning them out to pasture, you may need to decide whether to buy extra feed, reduce herd inventory, extend grazing, or a combination of these.

The worst decision is to underfeed cows. Feeding cows at protein and energy levels less than their maintenance and production needs certainly will be reflected by inflated numbers of open cows next fall and lighter than expected weaning weights. Underfeeding before calving will also extend the time from calving to first estrus, which will delay breeding. Research shows that not meeting a cow’s protein and energy requirements compromises heat production ability of the newborn calf and increases the time for it to stand and nurse. Finally, limited nutrient intake during early lactation will decrease a cow’s milk production. Weaning weight this fall may suffer from limited milk intake, which is an obvious factor in pounds of calf produced per cow. But lower pregnancy rates and delayed breedings will be the most serious economic production traits effected by poor nutrition before and after calving.

Several factors should be considered in deciding what feeds to purchase: time until pasture turnout (how much to buy); what cows have been eating (what to buy); supplies available (what can be bought); and economic considerations (the least cost, best return investment).

Assuming cows have been on a forage-based diet throughout the winter, producers should first consider buying more forage and forage supplements that will maximize the utilization of the forage. Buy low- and medium-quality forages, and supplement with protein to increase their digestibility.

Research from several U.S. universities is providing further proof that a popular corn by-product is not only an “excellent” feedstuff for livestock, but also can save money for beef producers.

Details are outlined in a new bulletin, titled Corn Gluten Feed, just released by Kansas State University. From the milling process to storage issues, ranchers should be able to answer their questions easily with this bulletin, said K-State Research and Extension animal scientist Dale Blasi.

In 1999, Kansas farmers produced 419 million bushels of corn on 3 million acres. Blasi estimates the value of corn in Kansas at $800 million, based on the
Often, feed ingredients that are high in crude protein carry a hefty price tag, and comparing cost on a per pound of protein basis is the best way to determine value.

Pushing a sharp pencil is the best formula for success. To determine the cost of protein, simply divide the ton cost of a feedstuff by 2,000 times the percent crude protein. This will equal the cost of the crude protein on a per pound basis for comparison between different feedstuffs. Often, feed ingredients that are high in crude protein carry a hefty price tag, and comparing cost on a per pound of protein basis is the best way to determine value. Avoid high urea and animal-sourced proteins because of their detrimental effects on forage intake and digestibility.

Mixing different quality of forages can be used to extend your forage feed supply. Grinding and mixing low-, medium- and high-quality forages may buy producers enough time to make it to green pastures.

According to Blasi, corn gluten feed can help beef and dairy producers reduce costs “dramatically” if it is readily accessible and priced competitively.

Currently CGF is milled in Nebraska and Iowa; there are no milling facilities in Kansas.

K-State’s Corn Gluten Feed bulletin was funded by the Kansas Corn Commission and K-State Research and Extension. For more information on corn gluten feed or to obtain a copy of the bulletin, contact the local extension office. The publication is also available on the World Wide Web at http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library.
8:00 a.m. Registration and Browsing
KSU Brandeberry Sports Complex
- Commercial Trade Show
- Educational Displays and Exhibits
- Student Poster Competition
- A Sampling of New Value-Added Beef Products

Welcome 10:00 a.m. — Jack Riley
- Research Update — Brad Johnson, Moderator
  Cow-Calf Research — Twig Marston
  Stocker Cattle Research — Dale Blasi
  Growing and Finishing Cattle Research — Jim Drouillard
  Carcass Traits: Breed EPDs and DNA Markers — Michael Dikeman
- Industry Remarks
  Challenges Facing Our Industry — Don Hineman, President, Kansas Livestock Association
  Keynote Address — Future of the Retail Meat Case — Chuck Jolley, publisher, Meat and Poultry Magazine

12:00 Beef Luncheon
Compliments of Exhibitors
- View Commercial & Educational Exhibits

1:00 p.m. Youth Speech Contest, Call Hall
  Topic: “The Role of Cattle Producers in Improving Demand for Beef.”

2:00 p.m. Focus Sessions, Weber Hall
- Actions to Prevent BSE in the United States Beef Industry — Kevin Varner, Jim Marsden, and Jerry Stokka
- Electronic Data Management in the Palm of Your Hand — Dale Blasi and Ben Brent
- Beef Carcass Grading — John Unruh
- Environmental Regulations Affecting Cow-Calf, Stocker, and Feedlot Operators — Joe Harner and Pat Murphy

3:00 p.m. Focus Sessions, Weber Hall
- Individual Animal Data Management Systems — An Answer to Information Overload — Bruce Young, Global Animal Mgt.
- Shipping Fever and Mycoplasmal Arthritis — Jerome Nietfeld and Jerry Stokka
- New Strategies for Estrus Detection and Synchronization — Jeff Stevenson and Sandy Johnson

2:00 p.m. Demonstrations
K-State Beef Cattle Research Center
3115 College Avenue
- By-products for Beef Production — Steve Paisley, Justin Sindt and Sean Montgomery
- So How Do They Make Those Molasses Blocks, Anyway?—Allen Trater and Nathan Pike
- Feeding Your Cows by Body Condition — Twig Marston and Frank Brazle
- A Tour of the Rumen — Bob Cochran and Evan Tietgemeyer
- Getting a Closer Look with Necropsy — George Kennedy and Brad DeBey

4:20 p.m. Awards Presentation, Weber Arena
  Winners of the Youth Speech Contest, Cow Body Condition Scoring Contest, and Graduate Student Poster Competition will be announced.

4:30 p.m. Special “K” Bull & Heifer Sale
Weber Arena
  75 performance-tested yearling Angus, Hereford and Simmental bulls. Choice of six pairs of heifers.
# Kansas Feedlot Performance and Feed Cost Summary*

Gerry Kuhl, Feedlot Specialist, Kansas State University

December 2000 Closeout Information**

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<td>136</td>
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Current Feed Inventory Costs: Mid-September Avg. Prices Range No. Yards

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<th>Avg. Price</th>
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<td>Corn</td>
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<td>Ground Alfalfa Hay</td>
<td>$95.52/ton</td>
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**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.

K-State, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating. All educational programs and materials available without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

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