BEEF COW SUPPLEMENT DECISION GUIDE

Does each cow have all she can eat in the pasture?

YES
Forage supply is adequate

NO
• Forage supply is inadequate; energy deficient
• Reduce the forage needs of herd by lowering stocking rate and/or feeding supplement

What color is the forage?

BROWN
Protein is likely <7% and limiting forage intake and digestion

GREEN
No supplement
• Protein is sufficient
• Energy is sufficient

Are cows in adequate body condition (i.e., ≥4.5)?

YES
Supplement with ≥32% CP
• 0.1 to 0.3 % BW/day
• improve rumen efficiency
• price $/lb CP

NO
Supplement with 28-32% CP
• 0.25 to 0.40 % BW/day
• improve rumen efficiency
• provide extra energy
• consider $/lb CP and $/lb TDN

GREEN
Supplement energy with <20% CP
• 0.4 to 0.8 % BW/day
• Protein is sufficient
• Energy is deficient
• Price $/lb TDN

BROWN
Supplement with 20-28% CP
• 0.3 to 0.5 % BW/day
• Energy is deficient
• Protein is likely <7% and limiting forage digestion
• consider $/lb TDN and $/lb CP

If forage shortage is severe
Supplement with <20% CP
• 0.4 to 0.8% BW/day
• Price $/lb TDN

*This decision guide is a general tool and is not as accurate as measuring actual forage quality and quantity to develop a strategic supplementation program for a specific class of cattle.