

Bluestem Breezes
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What Producers Should Be Thinking About in November

While we often conduct the same procedures at the same time each year (breeding, calving, marketing, preg checking, vaccinating, etc.), it's good to take a look at other operations and compare.

Ask the "why" question. Is there a reason we've always done it this way? Does it make sense for my operation?

I am not telling you to change up your entire workflow. Do your homework and make sure there are good reasons to continue on or to tweak your procedures a bit. Are your cows at the appropriate body condition score throughout the year? Are you marketing your calves in a manner and a timeframe to receive the maximum paycheck? Are there additional ways to decrease your cost of gain?

As you take an in-depth look at the operation, check out these recommendations for spring calving cowherds in November, offered by K-State Extension Beef Specialist Dale Blasi.

Cowherd Management

Pregnancy check (if not already completed).

If candidates for culling were not selected in September or October, it should be completed now.

Consider feeding cull cows to increase body weight, value, and utilize cheap feedstuffs. Value of gain is equal to the difference between the ending value and beginning values divided by the gain. Compare this to cost of gain figures. When cost of gain is less than value of gain, profit will be realized.

Body Condition Score. Provide thin cows (body condition score 3's and 4's) extra feed now. Take advantage of weather, stage of pregnancy, lower nutrient requirements, and quality feedstuffs.

In late fall and early winter, start feeding supplement to mature cows using these guidelines: Dry grass 1½ - 2 lb supplement/day of a 40% CP supplement OR Dry grass 3 - 4 lb supplement/day of a 20% supplement OR Dry grass 10 lb good nonlegume hay, no supplement needed. Compare supplements on a cost per pound of nutrient basis.

Utilize crop residues. Average body condition cows can be grazed at 1 to 2 acres/cow for 30 days assuming normal weather. Available forage is directly related to the grain production levels. Limiting nutrients are usually protein, phosphorus, and vitamin A. Strip graze or rotate fields to improve grazing efficiency.

Discontinue feeding tetracycline if used for anaplasmosis control.

Calf Management

Participate in National Level Breed Association Performance Programs CHAPS, and(or) other ranch record systems.

Finalize plans to merchandise calves or to background through yearling or finishing programs.

Forage/Pasture Management

Plan winter nutritional program through pasture and forage management.

General Management

Document cost of production by participating in Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA) programs.

Review management decisions, lower your costs on a per unit of production concept.

Plan your marketing program, including private treaty, consignment sales, test stations, production sales, etc.

For more information, visit the Extension Office (215 Kansas, Courthouse, Alma; kamayer@ksu.edu; 765-3821). For Bluestem Breezes archives, check out wabaunsee.ksu.edu.