

AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Gallatin County Farm News'n Such

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Timely Tips

Dr. Roy Burris, University of Kentucky Beef Specialist

Spring-Calving Cow Herd

- X Schedule spring or "turn-out" working in late April or early May - at the end of calving season and before the start of breeding season. Consult with your veterinarian about vaccines and health products for your herd. "Turn-out" working for the cow herd *may* include:
 - Pre-breeding vaccinations
 - De-worming
 - Replacing lost identification tags
 - Sort cows into breeding groups, if using more than one bull
 - Insecticide ear tags (best to wait until fly population builds up)
- Turn-out working of calves may include:
 - Vaccinate IBR-PI₃, Clostridial diseases and Pinkeye
 - Dehorn, if needed (can be done with electric dehorner and fly repellent during fly season)
 - Castrate and implant male feeder calves (if not done at birth)
 - De-worm
 - Insecticide ear tags
- X Bulls should have a breeding soundness evaluation (BSE) well before the breeding season. They should also receive their annual booster vaccinations and be de-wormed.
- X Choose the best pastures for grazing during the breeding season. Select those with the

best stand of clover and the lowest level of the fescue endophyte, if known. Keep these pastures vegetative by grazing or clipping. *High quality pastures are important for a successful breeding season.*

- X Start breeding yearling replacement heifers one heat cycle (about 21 days) earlier than cows for "Head-start" calving. Mate to known calving-ease bulls.
- X Begin breeding cows no later than mid-May, especially if they are on high endophyte fescue. Cows should be in good condition so that conception occurs prior to periods of extreme heat.
- X If using **artificial insemination**:
 - Check the herd at least twice daily (early morning and late evening) to observe cows in heat (Confining cows to a limited grazing area will ease this chore).
 - Use an experienced inseminator.
 - Make positive identification of cows and semen used. This will permit accurate records on date bred, return to heat, calving date and sire.
 - Good handling facilities and gentle working of the cows are essential.
- X Record identification of all cows and bulls in each breeding group.
- X Observe breeding pastures often to see if bulls are working. Record cows' heat dates and then check 18-21 days later, for return to heat.
- X Continue supplying a high magnesium mineral until daytime temperatures are consistently above 60 degrees F.

X Fall-Calving Herd

- X Pregnancy check the cow herd. Remove open cows at weaning time.
- X Let fall calves remain with cows during the spring “flush” of pasture for heavier weaning weights.
- X Plan marketing program for calves. Consider various options, such as maintaining ownership and backgrounding in a grazing program.
- X Weaned calves can be conditioned by feeding a complete dry ration for a short period of time after vaccinating, de-worming and implanting.
- X Initiate fly control for the cows when fly population builds up.

Stockers

- X Keep calves on good pasture and rotate pastures rapidly during periods of lush growth. Manage to keep pastures vegetative for best performance.
- X Control internal and external parasites.
- X Provide mineral mix with an ionophore.
- X Implant as needed.

General

- X Harvest excess pasture as hay. *Work around the weather and cut early before plants become too mature. Harvesting forage early is the key to nutritional quality.* Replenish your hay supply!
- X Clip pastures to prevent seedhead formation on fescue and to control weeds.
- X Rotate pastures as needed to keep them vegetative.
- X Seed warm season grasses this month.

Back to the Basics?

***Dr. Roy Burris, Beef Extension Specialist,
University of Kentucky***

Most of us tend to make situations more complicated than they really are. It is my opinion

that we could solve most of our problems if we just got back to basics. The solution might not be easy, but it could be simple.

Let’s look at the national news for a moment. The talk about the presidential election and the “possibility” of a recession keeps the airwaves busy. The events surrounding the presidential election make my head spin. We’ve got primaries, caucuses, proportional wins, winner-take-all and super delegates. I have a radical thought. What about one person – one vote? Just add ‘em up! This reminds me of the old saying that “a giraffe is just a horse put together by a committee”.

Now, what about the economy. The big debate concerns the technical definition of a recession. I’m not an expert there either but I’d bet most cattle producers would say that the purchasing power of their dollar has receded. Is it a recession? Who cares what they call it? We just say “things are tough” and keep going.

Here’s the problem. Corn is over six dollars a bushel, gasoline and diesel are getting higher every day (oil is over \$100 a barrel) and nitrogen fertilizer is off the chart. All of this follows a year of drought and feed shortage. We find ourselves vulnerable to another disaster. The most basic question is “how do we survive”?

In the short term, we must make sure that another drought doesn’t put us out of business. We have “zeroed-out” all of our feed reserves and our hay supply. We have to restock. Simply put ... “let’s make hay while the sun shines”. Take every window of opportunity that you get. Also, consider some warm-season hay crops so that we aren’t totally dependent upon making hay in the spring-time.

Ever since we started using big round bales of hay, some have flirted with disaster by storing all of their hay outside and not being able to carry any over. We should have the goal, and the ability, to keep an extra one-third of our annual hay needs stored inside for emergency feeding.

Consider an old barn or a new structure for hay storage.

We also need to manage our pastures to take advantage of legumes and minimize our use of nitrogen fertilizers. Clovers will also improve the nutritional quality of pastures and hay.

Our long-term adjustments are just as basic. We need to match cattle genetics to our farm's available forage resources. We continue to select cattle for "more frame-more milk" with little concern for the nutritional cost or, more importantly, the effect on reproduction. If you really want bigger calves, use a moderate-sized, efficient cow and a terminal cross sire. Rediscover crossbreeding.

We have the genetic information to help make breeding decisions but we abuse their intended use. EPD's are tools which allow you to make a more informed decision. They are not an end in themselves. Why do we always think that a large number must be better?

Take cow size and milk production, for example. What happens if we keep using bulls with bigger numbers for yearling weight and milk EPD's? These two things have a dramatic effect on nutritional needs of their off-spring. If you don't meet the cow's nutritional needs, they don't rebreed. It's that simple.

Does cow efficiency really matter? Let's consider two different cows in the first 60 days of lactation. First, a 1100 lb cow with a body condition score (BCS) of 5 and producing 15 lb of milk daily could have her nutritional needs met with 24 lb of average hay and 3 lb of corn. The second, a 1400 lb cow with a BCS of 4 (needs to gain around 80 lb before breeding) and producing 30 lb of milk daily would need about 18 lb hay, 12 lb corn and 1.3 lb of soybean meal, for example. So you say the second cow will wean a bigger calf. Maybe, but she won't wean anything if she doesn't get pregnant. It is time to select bulls and order semen for spring breeding. The trend, as I see it, is that

most of us will select Angus bulls for example, with yearling weight EPD of greater than 100 and milk EPD of well over 30. Where does that put us in terms of reproductive efficiency? Do we really think that we'll see cheap corn anytime soon?

Let's just get back to the basics and stay focused on functional cattle which produce efficiently under our management and our environmental conditions with a minimum of extra attention. Keep it simple.

Shortening the Calving Season: A Success Story

Dr. Les Anderson, Beef Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky

Most producers will agree that having a short breeding and calving season has advantages. Research has shown that controlled calving improves weaning weight, reproductive rate, cow performance, production efficiency, and profitability. Even though most producers would like to have a short, controlled calving season, most find it difficult to accomplish.

Last year, the University of Kentucky conducted a demonstration in cooperation with Mr. Wendall Gabbard in Jackson County. Our goal was to shorten the calving season of Mr. Gabbard's cowherd from 10 months to two, 60 day calving-seasons; one in the spring and one in the fall. Cows in this herd calved from Feb until November. We decided to establish a group of cows that would calve in March and April and a group of cows that would calve in September and October.

We began this demonstration in the Fall of 2006. Cows that calved from February 1st to May 1st were selected for the spring herd (20 cows). The remaining cows were selected for the fall calving herd (24 cows). Most of the cows selected for the fall calving herd calved in October and November. Estrus was synchronized in this herd by inserting a CIDR[®] (Pfizer, Inc.) device into the cows for 7 days immediately preceding the

bull turnout. The day after the CIDR devices were removed, the bull was turned out with the cows. The bull used was a mature bull and had passed a breeding soundness examination.

The results of this trial were very interesting. Pregnancy rate was fantastic as 23 of the 24 cows conceived. Unfortunately, two of the cows were observed aborting before calving. All 21 of the cows calved from September 11th to November 11th. Eighteen of the cows calved in the first 40 days. Certainly, Mr. Gabbard was pleased with the reproductive performance of his cowherd and remarked that this was the heaviest set of calves he has ever had.

The following breeding season, Mr. Gabbard simply turned a bull out with his cows. Of the 21 cows in the fall calving herd, 18 conceived within the first 30 days of the breeding season, two conceived the next cycle and only one cow was open. Obviously, once this cowherd was “straightened out”, cow reproductive performance remained high.

Inserting a CIDR device for 7 days prior to bull turnout can help shorten the breeding and calving season. The cost of the CIDR devices is usually about \$10 per cow. However, based upon the breeding performance and weaning weight achieved in Mr. Gabbard’s cowherd, we estimated that using the CIDR devices returned approximately \$110 per cow.

May Market Update *Kenny Burdine, Livestock Marketing Specialist, University of Kentucky* New month, same old story. Feeder cattle markets remain very volatile as they watch the developing feedstuff situation. The March crop planting intentions report showed a larger than expected shift to soybeans this year. New crop prices for corn and beans really favor corn right now, but wet weather is preventing corn planting and driving prices upward. The April 28th crop progress report showed only 10% of the corn in the US planted compared to 20% in 2007 and over 30% historically.

Although feeder cattle prices have remained volatile, they aren’t that far from where they were two months ago. This is especially true for heavier feeder cattle as can be seen in the chart below. Feeder cattle prices are being supported by strong fundamentals outside of the grain market. Feeder cattle supplies remain low this spring and live cattle futures for the fourth quarter remain well above \$1 per lb.

Markets will stay volatile though the spring and summer as we monitor planting progress and the development of the corn crop. As always, Memorial Day will be a crucial holiday as it is often seen as a good measure of beef demand strength. Producers should look for opportunities on these price run-ups to price or protect a portion of cattle backgrounded over the summer.

	Week of Feb 28 th	Week of April 24 th
400 to 500 lbs	\$119.47	\$112.58
500 to 600 lbs	\$111.88	\$108.48
600 to 700 lbs	\$103.52	\$100.30
700 to 800 lbs	\$96.29	\$95.25
800 to 900 lbs	\$91.09	\$91.92

KY Feeder Steer Prices: Medium and Large Frame #1’s
Kentucky Livestock and Grain Report (2-28-08 and 4-24-08)

UK COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY — COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

Beef Quality Assurance

(BQA) Meetings

Now REQUIRED in order to receive any cattle-related Phase I Cost Share Money

Meeting Dates (you need only attend one meeting)

April 29, 7:00 PM

May 12, 7:00 PM

All meetings will take place at the Gallatin County Extension Office

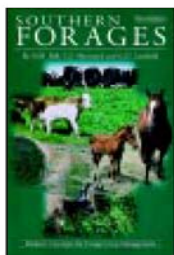
Please bring a check in the amount of \$5 made out to the Kentucky Beef Network. NO cash can be accepted.

Call 567-5481 for information

Ten Keys To A Profitable Forage Program

Forage typically accounts for over half the cost of production of forage-consuming animals and provides most of their nutrition. Thus, it has a major impact on both expenses and income. The basic commodity is forage and animals are the harvesters or consumers. Efficient forage production and utilization are essential to a profitable operation.

- I KNOW FORAGE OPTIONS AND ANIMAL NUTRITIONAL NEEDS.** Forages vary as to adaptation, growth distribution, quality, yield, persistence, and potential uses. Also, various types and classes of animals have different nutritional needs. Good planting decisions require knowing forage options for the land resources and nutritional needs of the animals.
- II ESTABLISHMENT IS CRITICAL.** Good forage production requires an adequate stand of plants. Mistakes during establishment often have long-term consequences. Use of high quality seed of proven varieties, timely planting, and attention to detail lead to establishment success.
- III SOIL TEST, THEN LIME AND FERTILIZE AS NEEDED.** This practice, more than any other, affects the level and economic efficiency of forage production. Fertilizing and liming as needed help ensure good yields, improve forage quality, lengthen stand life, and reduce weed problems.
- IV USE LEGUMES WHENEVER FEASIBLE.** Legumes offer important advantages including improved forage quality and biological nitrogen fixation, whether grown alone or with grasses. Every producer should regularly consider on a field-by-field basis whether the introduction or enhancement of legumes would be beneficial and feasible. Once legumes have been established, proper management optimizes benefits.
- V EMPHASIZE FORAGE QUALITY.** High animal gains, milk production, and reproductive efficiency require adequate nutrition. Producing high quality forage requires knowing the factors that affect forage quality and managing accordingly. Matching forage quality to animal nutritional needs greatly increases efficiency.
- VI PREVENT OR MINIMIZE PESTS AND PLANT-RELATED DISORDERS.** Diseases, insects, nematodes, and weeds are thieves that lower yields, reduce forage quality and stand persistence, and/or steal water, nutrients, light, and space from forage plants. Variety selection, cultural practices, scouting, use of pesticides, and other management techniques can minimize pest problems. Knowledge of potential animal disorders caused by plants can reduce or avoid losses.
- VII STRIVE TO IMPROVE PASTURE UTILIZATION.** The quantity and quality of pasture growth vary over time. Periodic adjustments in stocking rate or use of cross fencing to vary the type or amount of available forage can greatly affect animal performance and pasture species composition. Knowing the advantages and disadvantages of different grazing methods allows use of various approaches as needed to reach objectives. Matching stocking rates with forage production is also extremely important.
- VIII MINIMIZE STORED FEED REQUIREMENTS.** Stored feed is one of the most expensive aspects of animal production, so lowering requirements reduces costs. Extending the grazing season with use of both cool season and warm season forages, stockpiling forage, and grazing crop residues are example of ways stored feed needs can be reduced.
- IX REDUCE STORAGE AND FEEDING LOSSES.** Wasting hay, silage, or other stored feed is costly! On many farms the average storage loss for round bales of hay stored outside exceeds 30%, and feeding losses can easily be as high or higher. Minimizing waste with good management, forage testing, and ration formulation enhances feeding efficiency, animal performance, and profits.
- X RESULTS REQUIRE INVESTMENTS.** In human endeavors, results are usually highly correlated with investments in terms of thought, time, effort, and a certain amount of money. In particular, the best and most profitable forage programs have had the most thought put into them. Top producers strive to continue to improve their operations.



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Prepared by the authors of *Southern Forages*: Dr. Don Ball, Auburn University; Dr. Carl Hoveland, University of Georgia, and Dr. Garry Lacefield, University of Kentucky. The Third Edition of *Southern Forages* is available from the Potash & Phosphate Institute, 655 Engineering Drive, Suite 110, Norcross, GA 30092-2837. Phone (770) 447-0335. Price \$30 + \$4 shipping & handling.

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