

NWLA MAKIN' BEEF NEWS



A bi-monthly newsletter for beef producers in northwest Louisiana intended to provide information that producers, regardless of herd size, can use to improve their profitability.

July - August Beef Cattle Management Tips

Below are some all-purpose management tips in an abbreviated format that cattle producers should consider for the months indicated. "General" management tips are intended to fit all situations while the "spring calving" and "fall calving" tips are for those specific calving programs.

Some producers are likely aware of each tip and have incorporated many into their management programs. Other producers may find these tips to be suggestions to consider in their future management.

Regardless, every producer will have to consider how a specific tip might be adapted to fit their individual situation, and some modification of the times provided will be expected. *Also, the severe drought that northwest Louisiana is experiencing will dictate some modification of the tips depending on the severity in each location.*

A more detailed description of management opportunities can be found in numerous AgCenter publications available in the local parish extension office or on the web. Additional scheduling and management details in a worksheet format are available on-line from the LSU AgCenter in the *Monthly Beef Cattle Management Calendar & Workbook* at: http://text.lsuagcenter.com/en/crops_livestock/livestock/beef_cattle/production_management/Workbook.

If you have questions, comments, or want more details, contact your local parish extension office or Allen Nipper using the information on the back page.

month	management	tip
July	general	1. Fertilize pastures as needed and based on potential rainfall
		2. Manage pastures and cutting intervals to promote young growth
		3. Monitor prussic acid or nitrate poisoning potential in stressed sorghums, sorghum-sudan hybrids, sudangrasses, and johnsongrass as well as in weeds such as pigweed and black nightshade
		4. Control brush and summer weeds in pastures
		5. Consider potential winter supplemental feed purchases
		6. Control internal parasites, pinkeye, and anaplasmosis
		7. Provide adequate water and shade; prevent heat-stress losses
		8. Rotate fly control program chemical classes
		9. Collect and analyze hay samples
	spring calving	1. Market cull bulls after breeding season
		2. Observe cows returning to heat; market open, poor performing cows
		3. Consider how to meet needs of highest nutritional requirement cows
		4. Consider creep feeding calves to reduce stress on cows
		5. Pregnancy check females about 60 days after breeding season
	fall calving	1. Select replacements; assign permanent identification; update records
		2. Plan heifer development program to achieve target weights
		3. Be sure bulls are in good condition; supplement as needed
		4. Determine calf marketing plans and options, as appropriate
	August	general
2. Fertilize pastures as needed and based on potential rainfall		
3. Manage pastures and cutting interval to promote young growth		
4. Monitor potential prussic acid poisoning in stressed plants as described in July tips		
5. Control brush and summer weeds in pastures		
6. Control internal parasites, pinkeye, and anaplasmosis		
7. Provide adequate water and shade; prevent heat-stress losses		
8. Rotate fly control program chemical classes		
9. Collect and analyze hay samples		

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month	management	tip
August	spring calving	1. Check fence security in weaning areas
		2. Begin calf preconditioning program
		3. Consult with veterinarian on vaccinations and boosters
		4. Pregnancy check females about 60 days after breeding season if not already done
	fall calving	1. Move cows to calving areas that are close to facilities and where they are easy to observe
		2. Check and organize calving supplies
		3. Monitor replacement heifer weights; adjust nutrition as needed
		4. Consider herd sire options for next breeding season

Cattle Water Concerns During A Drought

Drought conditions can result in situations where either water shortages or poor-quality drinking water or both can become an issue for cattle. Many ponds, creeks, branches, and sloughs used for water sources for cattle are now dry or the water is less than suitable for consumption. Water supplies from public or private wells may be reduced as well.



Non-lactating cows need about 8 to 10 gallons of water per day; those in the last three months of pregnancy an additional five gallons. Cows nursing calves require about 18 to 20 gallons of water per day. During high temperatures, cattle will require greater quantities. Water in shallow ponds or small water troughs can heat up and decrease water consumption.

Because cattle in pastures exceeding about 10 acres tend to drink as a group, available water may be depleted rapidly in hot weather without an adequate reserve supply. Water supply is considered adequate when the entire herd can drink within 20 minutes. Damage to troughs, floats, and piping can occur when cattle do not have an adequate supply and begin to bump and jostle the trough.

Producers should check animals often during periods of hot weather for dehydration and heat stress. Signs of dehydration from a lack of water are tightening of the skin, loss of weight, drying of mucous membranes and eyes with the eyes appearing sunken and dull. Classical symptoms of heat stress are rapid respiration and excessive drooling. Contact your veterinarian with any concerns you may have.

Poor-quality water (high level of suspended solids, objectionable taste, odor, or color) will result in lower water intake, but generally animal health problems are not directly caused by those factors. However, the resulting stress on the animal because of reduced water consumption will likely reduce productivity.



Bacterial contaminants and blue-green algae (actually a bacterial contamination) in water sources can result in diseases or poisoning of cattle especially during hot, dry periods. Excluding nutrient runoff into, and direct cattle access to, water supplies will tend to reduce the potential for both problems. Toxins from the blue-green algae will tend to concentrate on the leeward side of a pond so keeping cattle from drinking in that area may reduce the potential for toxicity. Reducing nutrient runoff and cattle wading in ponds will improve water quality so consumption is not limited.

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