

# 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.***

## January - February 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](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
January	general	1. Monitor body condition scores; adjust nutrition as needed
		2. Maintain feeding groups to help meet nutritional needs
		3. Monitor winter pasture stubble height; keep about 4"
		4. Limit graze winter pastures to stretch pastures and hay supplies
		5. Consider high magnesium minerals to prevent grass tetany on winter pastures
		6. If weathered hay or grain co-products predominate in rations, consider a mineral supplement with higher Vitamin A levels
	spring calving	1. Determine expecting calving dates to be ready for arrival of first calves
		2. Monitor pregnant cows, especially first-calf heifers, as calving date approaches
		3. Monitor replacements so they will be at 2/3 of mature weight at breeding
		4. Be sure new-born calves are dried off, receive colostrum within 6 hours, and are provided protection from weather
		5. Move pairs to clean pasture; monitor calves for scours
		6. Maintain good calving records; birth date and weight, dam identification
		7. Feed in the evening to encourage calving during daylight hours
fall calving	1. Calculate final calving percentage	
	2. Feed high quality hay / forage to lactating cows	
	3. Establish breeding season by putting bulls out with cows or beginning A.I.	
February	general	1. Monitor body condition scores to help ensure good rebreeding and calf performance
		2. Evaluate remaining winter feed supplies; adjust usage or purchasing plans
		3. Take soil samples from summer pastures and hay fields
		4. Begin to plan for summer fertilization program based on soil tests; consider availability and cost of fertilizer sources
		5. Continue high magnesium minerals on winter pastures
		6. Continue high Vitamin A if weathered hay or grain co-products predominate in rations
		7. If in good body condition, consider marketing cull cows as market improves
		8. Begin review of haying equipment needs, repairs, and supplies
		9. If conditions allow, consider prescribed pasture burns to increase forage quality and reduce weeds and brush

**table continued on next page**

<i>table continued from previous page</i>		
month	management	tip
February	spring calving	1. Consult with a veterinarian for pre-breeding vaccination needs
		2. Finalize heifer selection on breeding goals, performance, soundness, and disposition
		3. Determine number of bulls needed for upcoming breeding season
		4. Make bull selections; see May-June 2011 newsletter for purchase price comparisons
		5. Arrange for breeding soundness evaluations
		6. If using A.I., have ample semen and breeding supplies on hand
	fall calving	1. Determine percentage of cows returning to heat 40 days into breeding season
		2. Recheck bulls for breeding soundness if high percentage of cow return to heat
		3. Monitor bull condition; adjust nutrition as needed
		4. Consider limit-fed grain or winter pasture creep if cow lose excessive condition

### Stretching Hay Supplies - As Simple as Managing Losses

Most cattle producers want to stretch their dollars as much as possible. With limited hay supplies, they also want to stretch their hay. Stretching hay supplies not only helps lower costs but may be the difference between keeping their herd intact or having to sell some cows if they run out of hay.



Reducing hay losses is one way to stretch limited hay inventories. While any discussion of hay losses can cover a range of topics, losses due to storage and feeding will be the emphasis of this discussion. Storage losses for this feeding season have basically been established and probably cannot be reduced before feeding. However, with some planning now, it should be possible to reduce those next year. Storage losses can be in excess of 35% based on AgCenter research conducted about 30 years ago. Storing hay in barns, under tarps, or as individually net warped or plastic wrapped bales will reduce storage losses. In addition, when round bales are stored outside, losses will be lower if storage is off the ground, in a well drained area, and with bales placed end to end.

In some operations, feeding losses can be higher than storage losses. Research has demonstrated losses of up to 40% depending on how the hay was fed. The table below summarizes wastage data from several of those projects. These data were reported from different states, and any type of feeder was better than none. In general, round feeders are more efficient than linear ones. Cone feeders are more expensive but have the potential to reduce wastage to the greatest extent. The ground was likely frozen in some locations when the hay was fed. Losses with hay shredded and fed on the ground would be higher when fed on soft, muddy, and soggy ground common during most winters in Louisiana. Keep these losses in mind when considering feeding equipment purchases. If a cow should consume 23 lbs of hay per day and feeding losses are 30%, almost 33 lbs of hay have to be offered each day to account for the losses. Over a 120 day feeding period, each cow will then require more than one additional round bale to cover the feeding losses she creates. Can you afford not to change your management to reduce wastage that could equal an extra bale for each cow you feed this winter?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>feeder &amp; supply combination</li> <li>no feeder</li> <li>1 day supply – 12%</li> <li>7 day supply – 40%</li> <li>feeder</li> <li>1 day supply – 5%</li> <li>7 day supply – 6%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>feeder type; full feed</li> <li>cone – 3%</li> <li>ring – 6%</li> <li>trailer – 11%</li> <li>cradle – 15%</li> <li>fed on ground; full feed</li> <li>unrolled – 40%</li> <li>shredded – 18%</li> </ul>	<p>cone style feeder</p>
--	---	--------------------------

potential to reduce wastage to the greatest extent. The ground was likely frozen in some locations when the hay was fed. Losses with hay shredded and fed on the ground would be higher when fed on soft, muddy, and

soggy ground common during most winters in Louisiana. Keep these losses in mind when considering feeding equipment purchases. If a cow should consume 23 lbs of hay per day and feeding losses are 30%, almost 33 lbs of hay have to be offered each day to account for the losses. Over a 120 day feeding period, each cow will then require more than one additional round bale to cover the feeding losses she creates. Can you afford not to change your management to reduce wastage that could equal an extra bale for each cow you feed this winter?

If you received this newsletter via email you will continue to receive it unless you "unsubscribe." To unsubscribe from or subscribe to this bi-monthly emailed newsletter, send an email to the address below with "subscribe" or "unsubscribe" in the subject line.

December, 2011

Author  
W. Allen Nipper, Ph.D.

Extension Beef Specialist  
Research Coordinator  
Hill Farm Research Station  
LSU AgCenter  
318-927-2578 (office) / 318-355-1961 (cell)  
anipper@agcenter.lsu.edu

[www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com)

**Louisiana State University Agricultural Center**, William B. Richardson, Chancellor  
**Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station**, John S. Russin, Vice Chancellor and Director  
**Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service**, Paul D. Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director  
The Louisiana State University Agricultural Center is a statewide campus of the LSU System and provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.