# 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.***

## November - December 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 |
|---|---|---|
| November | general | 1. Monitor body condition |
| | | 2. Begin to group cows into winter-feeding groups |
| | | 3. Consult with veterinarian on deworming needs / strategies / products |
| | | 4. Consider final expenses and income for year to meet tax objectives |
| | | 5. Plant any remaining winter annual pastures based on rainfall potential |
| | | |
| | spring calving | 1. Consider if weaned calf growth rates are acceptable |
| | | 2. Replacement heifers should be gaining about 1 to 1.5 lbs / day |
| | | 3. Be aware of any early calving dates |
| | | 4. Check bred heifers frequently and separate from mature cows before calving |
| | | 5. Provide additional nutrition to bulls in less than adequate condition |
| | | 6. Consider bull purchases; see May-June 2011 newsletter for cost comparisons |
| | | |
| | fall calving | 1. Process calves as needed |
| | | 2. Maintain good calving records |
| | | 3. Locate cow-calf pairs in clean pastures to minimize health problems |
| | | 4. Provide good nutrition to lactating cows |
| | | 5. Begin high magnesium supplement 30 days before grazing winter annuals |
| | | 6. Collect any yearling data needed |
| | | |
| December | general | 1. Use winter annual pastures efficiently by limiting grazing time |
| | | 2. Group cows on body condition to determine grazing needs |
| | | 3. Consider energy supplementation during cold, wet conditions |
| | | 4. Consider high magnesium minerals when grazing lush winter pastures |
| | | 5. Be conscience of signs of grass tetany |
| | | 6. Consider need for a holiday feeding schedule |
| | | 7. Plan next tax year's budget and cash flow estimates |
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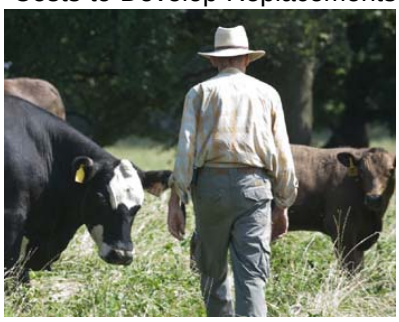
|---|---|---|
| **month** | **management** | **tip** |
| December | spring calving | 1. Check expected calving dates, especially with first calf heifers |
| | | 2. Supplement first calf heifers and cows with BCS below 5 as needed |
| | | 3. Move cows to calving areas close to facilities and where easier to observe |
| | | 4. Arrange BSE with veterinarian |
| | | 5. Maintain good calving records; ID, birth date and weight; dam ID, age |
| | | 6. Monitor replacement weights; adjust nutrition to reach target breeding weight |
| | | 7. Begin plans to separate herd into groups to manage calving / feeding needs |
| | | 8. Organize and have calving supplies on hand and ready |
| | | 9. Consider herd sire options for next breeding season |
| | | |
| | fall calving | 1. Manage and organize calving breeding records |
| | | 2. Locate cow calf pairs in a clean pasture to minimize health problems |
| | | 3. Monitor calves for scours |
| | | 4. Consult with veterinarian for pre-breeding vaccination program |
| | | 5. Breed heifers earlier than cows |
| | | 6. Rotate herd sires |
| | | 7. Heifers should be on increasing plane of nutrition before breeding |

## COMPARE COST OF RAISING REPLACEMENTS VERUS PURCHASING

Many producers are now facing or have recently faced a decision on whether to sell all or part of their herd due to diminishing feed supplies, primarily pasture and hay, and corresponding increases in feed prices. If a producer has invested their time, effort, and money into the development of a cow herd with the genetics desired, the heifers typically will be the more advanced and valuable than the cows from a genetic standpoint.

What does a producer have invested in those animals? If individual farm records are not sufficient to determine that value, a spreadsheet developed by Dr. J. Ross Pruitt in the AgCenter's Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness can be used to provide an estimated value. It is available on the AgCenter's webpage at: www.lsuagcenter.com/en/crops_livestock/livestock/beef_cattle/marketing_economics_business/ by clicking on the "Costs to Develop Replacements Heifers" link. The next page will provide a "XLS" link for the spreadsheet and a "PDF" link for instructions.



The total cost to grow a heifer to maturity was about $1,300, based on July, 2011 prices. If the prices and availability of hay are shifted from on-the-farm production to purchased hay at $165 per ton, the total cost will increase about $330 per heifer. While no other inputs were changed, the spreadsheet will allow you to make other changes that you feel are warranted on your operation.

While it is unknown what the replacement heifer market will be in the next year or so, most producers and economists feel it will increase compared to current prices. The real question is will the price increase more than the $330 per head price that it would take to maintain heifers already owned by the producer? Also, will the quality of any purchased replacements be the same as those currently owned? If any purchased heifers produce calves with lower weaning weights than currently expected, then the increased cost to keep raised heifers is offset to some extent. These are important questions that you need to consider as you make decisions now related to the future of your herd.

Similar spreadsheets are also available on the AgCenter's website that will provide cash flow estimates and projected budgets (Louisiana Cow/Calf Budget link) as mentioned in the December "general" tips section above.



October, 2011

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