

WINTER FEEDING MANAGEMENT CRITICAL FOR BEEF CATTLE

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The wintering period for beef cattle is critical from both a management and cost standpoint. This year, management decisions are complicated due to weather conditions which have caused the hay crop to be highly variable (mostly poor) in quality. Following are some management and feeding practices that should be considered:

1. Evaluate feed resources and put feeding priorities on feeding to meet feed needs of various production classes. Feed lowest quality forage to mature, dry pregnant cows during late fall/early winter (mid-pregnancy). Feed medium quality forage to dry cows during late pregnancy. Feed highest quality forage to young calves, lactating cows and replacement heifers.
2. Evaluate the herd and if feasible, sort into production classes and feed to meet nutritional needs as outlined above.
3. Evaluate the condition of the cows and sort and feed as outlined.
 - a. In order to rebreed on time following calving, cows should be in an "average to good" (5 to 6) body condition at calving.
 - b. Those cows that are "thin" (4 or less) in condition should be sorted from the other cows and fed so they can reach a condition of "average" to "good" (5 to 6) by calving.
4. For those cows and beef females that are "average" to "good" in condition, the following feedstuffs and rations are suggested:
 - a. Weaned heifer calves (Fed to gain 1.5 lb. per day):
 1. Full-feed of mixed legume-grass hay (11 to 12 lb.) plus 5 to 7 lb. grain.
 2. 5.0 lb. mixed legume-grass hay plus 30 to 35 lb. corn silage.
 - b. Coming 2-year old pregnant heifers, thin 3-year olds and thin mature cows:

1. Full-feed of mixed legume-grass hay (20 to 30 lb.) plus concentrate, according to body condition.
 2. 45 to 55 lb. corn silage plus 3/4 lb. soybean or cottonseed meal.
- c. Dry Cows, mid-pregnancy:
1. 20 to 25 lb. grass hay (supplement only if needed to improve body condition).
 2. 40 to 45 lb. corn silage plus 0.75 lb. soybean meal or cottonseed meal.
 3. 1 to 2 acres corn stalks per cow plus free-choice hay (supplement as needed, probably emphasize protein with corn stalks).
 4. Full-feed dry corn stover (18 to 22 lb.) plus 10 lb. mixed legume-grass hay.
- d. Dry Cows, late pregnancy (to gain 0.75 lb. to 0.90 lb. per day):
1. 25 to 30 lb. mixed legume-grass hay.
 2. 50 to 55 lb. corn silage plus 0.75 lb. soybean meal or cottonseed meal.
- e. Lactating Cows
1. Full-feed of mixed legume-grass hay plus grain if needed.
 2. 60 to 80 lb. corn silage plus 1 to 2 lb. soybean meal or cottonseed meal.
- f. Herd Bulls:
1. Full feed of hay or silage plus grain as needed to maintain average to good body condition (Body Condition Score 5 or low six - but avoid making bulls fat).
 2. Coming 2-year old bulls that completed their first breeding season in thin condition will require 10 to 13 lb. of grain plus a full feed of hay or a full feed of corn silage plus 1.0 lb. of soybean meal, cottonseed meal or commercial blend.
- g. Rule of thumb to raise a thin cow's condition by one score, i.e. 4 to 5, she will need to gain at least 125 lb. during the last 90 to 100 days of pregnancy. To accomplish this, feed some extra concentrate. Following

are some example rations:

1. 25 lb. mixed legume-grass hay plus 6 lb. grain.
 2. 55 to 60 lb. corn silage plus 1 lb. soybean or cottonseed meal.
- h. Offer a properly balanced salt-mineral mix free-choice to all classes of breeding cattle. Be sure that it contains magnesium oxide - especially for brood cows that are approaching calving and/or recently calved.
5. For the most efficient and economical winter feeding program, test forage for nutrient content. Rations can then be developed that will meet the cattle's nutrient needs. Don't guess, forage test.