

Cow Herd Management

HUNTER NICKELL, LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION AGENT

As we progress through the month of April, May is an important month for a spring and fall calving cow herds. Follow these tips from Jason Warner, KSU Cow-Calf specialist, on some management considerations for the month of May.

- If cows are marginal (BCS 4.0 – 5.0) going into breeding, possibly consider:
 - Supplementing 2-3 weeks prior to and through 1st cycle.
 - Using monensin (200 mg/hd/day) in feed supplements.
 - Temporary calf removal or a CIDR to initiate estrus in females.
 - Early weaning if BCS doesn't improve during the season.
- Pregnancy check and cull fall calving cows, if not already done.
- With higher costs, it's important to closely manage salt and mineral programs.
 - Record date and amount of salt and mineral offered and calculate herd consumption.
 - If consumption is 2X the target intake, then cost will be too!
 - Properly store bags and pallets to avoid damage and product loss.
- Continue to provide high magnesium mineral formulas to cows grazing high risk forages: wheat, rye, triticale, oats, bromegrass, and other cool-season forages.
- The estrus synchronization planner on KSUBeef.org is a helpful tool for scheduling synchronization protocols.
 - Order your A.I. supplies well prior to starting your protocols.
- Closely monitor bulls at the start of the breeding season for injury and to make sure they are aggressively covering cows.

Calf Management

- Calculate the value of gain relative to cost of gain for:
 - Implanting nursing calves and grass cattle.
 - Creep feeding nursing calves
- Finalize health protocols for spring-born calves and cattle going to summer grass.
- Consider supplementing or feeding replacement heifers for a period when initially turning to grass if they don't have post-weaning grazing experience and/or forage supply is limited.

General Management

- Reconsider stocking rates and turn-out dates for drought stressed pastures.
- Begin implementing early-season weed/invasive species control.

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- Use the Management Minder tool on KSUBeef.org to plan key management activities for your cow herd for the rest of the year.
- Employ multiple strategies and chemistries for controlling flies and insects.
- With high feeder calf prices this spring, consider price risk management tools.
- Make and evaluate important production calculations
 - Calving distribution (% 1st cycle, % 2nd cycle, % 3rd cycle)
 - Calving interval
 - % calf crop (# calves weaned/# cows exposed for breeding) for calves born in fall 2022.

Thank you to Jason Warner, KSU Cow-Calf Specialist for the information in this article. If you have any additional questions about the contents in this article, please contact Hunter Nickell at any of the Southwind Extension District Offices.

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