

148 East Main Street • Piggott, AR, 72454 • 870-598-2246 • [www.uaex.edu/clay](http://www.uaex.edu/clay)

January 8, 2020

### **Tips for Fall Calving Herds:**

- January is the middle of the fall breeding season. Check bulls to be sure they are maintaining body condition and are still sound (feet, legs, eyes, and etc). If bulls seem to be disinterested, perhaps rotating bulls would be helpful.
- If the heifer breeding season began 30 days prior to the cow breeding season, the heifer breeding season should be coming to an end.
- Check body condition to determine if supplemental feed needs to be adjusted.
- Provide free-choice mineral and fresh water.

### **Tips for Spring Calving Herds:**

- Calving season may begin towards the end of this month or the first of next month. Being prepared for calving is very important: OB gloves, OB lubricant, esophageal feeder, bottle and nipple, chain straps/chains, calf puller, sterile syringes and needles, batteries for flashlight or spotlight, old rags or blankets, toolbox to keep calving equipment, colostrum replacement, electrolytes, etc. Make sure all items are in good working order, haven't expired, etc.
- Be prepared to make feed adjustments for nursing cows. Lactating cows require a 10-11% crude protein and 58-60% TDN diet. See MP391.
- Switch to a high magnesium mineral to help prevent grass tetany for lactating cows on spring pastures. See [Fact Sheet 3035](#).
- Castrate male calves at birth or at 3 months processing. Bull calves are usually discounted \$5 per hundred weight at sale. In addition, bull calves castrated by stocker producers following sale barn purchase are 2.5 times more likely to become sick than a steer calf purchased at the same market. Castration early in life is less stressful on the calf. Research with calves castrated at birth shows they grow at similar rates of gain compared to their intact male pasture mates.

- Be sure to collect calving records. Valuable records for selection and management include: body condition at calving, calving difficulty score, calf gender, calf birth weight.
- Remember to tag calves - records are less valuable when they cannot be linked to animals and herds.
- If heifers were bred 30 days prior to the cow herd last year, the heifer calving season should be in full swing.
- Vaccinate replacement heifers 30 to 60 days before breeding season.
- Now is a good time to evaluate and select sires for the spring breeding season for both mature cows and replacement heifers. Easy calving bulls are very important for breeding replacement heifers.
- Provide free-choice mineral and fresh water.

### **Forage/Grazing Management Tips:**

#### **Pasture Management**

#### **Soil Fertility**

- Winter is a good time to correct imbalances in pH
- Soil fertility and pH should be monitored regularly
  - Correcting pH will take several months so it is wise to check lime requirements before next year's growing season.
  - Collect at least 15 subsamples per pasture using a zig-zag course
  - Mix the subsamples then submit one composite sample to the county extension office.
  - Use appropriate crop code for proper fertilizer recommendations.
- Refer to [Fact Sheet 2121](#).

#### **Weed Control-**

- Winter annual weeds such as buttercup, thistle, and henbit have germinated.
- Start spraying pastures where there were problems in the past. Late fall and winter spraying are very effective.

- For identification and control recommendations, refer to MP 522.

### Grazing Management

#### **Stockpiled fescue:**

- Use grazing methods that avoid trampling of forage and ensure high forage utilization, such as strip grazing.
- Strip grazing improves forage utilization and may double the number of grazing days compared to continuous grazing.
- Refer to Fact Sheet 3133.



#### **Winter annual small grains/cereal ryegrass:**

- Begin grazing once canopy reaches height of 8 inches.
- Use grazing methods that avoid trampling and ensure high forage utilization, such as rotational grazing or limit-grazing (limiting cow access time to annuals).
  - Under limit-grazing, cows are routinely pastured on dormant pasture or fed hay in a dry-lot but are allowed to eat their fill from a limited-access winter annual pasture several times per week.
  - Limit-grazing of beef cows and calves on a mixture of wheat/rye/ryegrass (planted at 0.2 acre of per head) for two days per week produced the same cow, calf, and rebreeding performance as cows fed unlimited hay plus a supplement.
  - Limit-grazed cows also consumed 30 percent less hay during the winter-feeding period.
- Refer to Fact Sheet 3064.

### Hay Management

- Protect hay when feeding to reduce waste. Unrolling hay increases hay waste. Feed hay in rings or use limit-feeding techniques.
- Consider using a temporary electric wire fence wire to reduce waste from trampling and increase utilization of the hay.
- Unroll the bale, then string up an electrified polywire down the length of the line of hay.
- Place the wire about 30 inches high over the hay. Cattle will line up as if eating at a feed bunk.
- Feeding hay in various locations around a field is a cost-effective way of maintaining, or possibly increasing soil P, K, and organic matter.
  - Each bale of hay contains substantial amounts of fertilizer nutrients and can enrich feeding areas.
  - On average, a typical 4x5 round bale has a fertility value approaching that of 100 lbs of 17-17-17 fertilizer.



If you have any questions give me a call.

Sincerely,

Allison Howell, County Extension Agent – Agriculture