

Cow-Calf Checklist for October 2022

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Management Considerations for Beef Cow-Calf Producers – Now and Looking Ahead

Cow herd management - With continued volatility, consider opportunities to lock prices in, if possible, for co-products and commodity feeds. Understand what nutrients you are targeting to purchase and price feeds on a cost per unit of nutrient basis. If not already done, take inventory of and test harvested forages for the following: moisture/dry matter, crude protein, energy (NEm, NEg, and/or TDN), fiber components (ADF, NDF), macro-minerals (calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, and salt), nitrates and/or prussic acid when appropriate, and starch for silage crops. Calculate forage needs based on herd inventory, cattle weight, and days, and develop a plan to ensure that adequate harvested forage is available if grazing is limited. Body condition score cows to develop informed supplementation strategies (both spring and fall-calving herds). Targeted BCS at calving: 5 for mature cows, 6 for young females (2, 3, & 4 year olds). Consider utilizing crop residues for late-fall and winter grazing needs. Assess down grain in the field and be aware of nitrates and prussic acid (around the time of frost for sorghums). Check spring-calving herds for pregnancy status and cull the following: open or late-bred females, females with poor disposition, low milk producing females that wean light calves, females with undesirable teat/udder conformation, and unsound females (eyes, feet/legs). Review your marketing strategy for cull cows. Cows with a BCS ≥ 6.0 will likely sell well with current market prices. Look for opportunities to increase value by adding weight prior to market. Ensure bulls undergo breeding soundness exams prior to fall/winter service. Manage young and mature bulls during the offseason to ensure bulls are BCS ≥ 5.0 prior to the next season of use.

Calf management - If not already done, arrange to wean spring-born calves. Finalize plans to either market calves or retain and add weight post-weaning. If marketing calves, communicate your strategy to prospective buyers in advance. If retaining calves post-weaning: review your nutrition plan. Ensure you have sufficient forages available to match cowherd needs. Closely observe feed and water intake the first few weeks. Make sure all cattle have sufficient access to feed and water. Review/update health protocols as needed for weaned or new-born calves. Either consider supplementing fall-calving pairs or creep feeding fall-born calves to maintain calf performance on low- quality winter forages. For replacement heifers, manage your program to properly develop them prior to your given breeding time.

Forage/Pasture Management - Make plans for controlling invasive species for the next growing season. Winterize water sources if applicable. Work on fencing/facility projects as time/weather allows.

General Management - Develop and/or review your risk management plans for the coming year. Evaluate your short and long-term herd inventory goals with current conditions. Update lease arrangements as necessary. Schedule an annual meeting with your lender and insurance agent.

For more information, please contact the local K-State Research and Extension Office.

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