



Cull Cow Feeding and Management

Cull Cows

- 4-7% of cows will come back open
- 15-25% of income may come from cull cows
- Require more bunk space
- Can gain 3-6 lbs/day
- Implant!

IN THIS ISSUE:

BCS and Weak Calves

Scour Shots, Preg Check ..

Feb Specials!

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When it comes right down to it, the most profitable cow is the pregnant cow. But, even under ideal conditions, 4-7% of cows come back open every year. Most likely, the open cow is going to hit the road; become a cull cow. Age, temperament, injury and low productivity can also cause cows to fall out of the herd. Although a cull cow does represent a loss versus producing a calf, she is a profit center and needs to be treated as such. Between 15 and 25% of beef enterprise income may come from cull cow marketing. Thus it's essential to manage and market cull cows to maximize returns. However, cull cows are often marketed shortly after weaning, or preg checking, which is coincidentally the lowest price in the yearly cycle. Cull cow prices are typically highest going into calving season. So,

the challenge is marketing cull cows during the most optimum time at the best weight and carcass composition.

Perhaps the most important aspect of cull management is selecting healthy, injury free cows for feeding. It's also important to ensure the cow is not pregnant. Pregnancy will increase maintenance energy requirements and reduce feed efficiency and gain. Injured cows will also reduce profitability by impacting gain and efficiency. More importantly, injured or downer cows will not be accepted by the sales barn or packing plant. A fair amount of research has been conducted to determine the most advantageous strategy for feeding cull cows. Compared to feeding calves or yearlings, cull cows will require more bunk space, between 18-24 inches per head. During moderate to cool weather, mature cows will also require between 6-8 gallons of water per day. Perhaps the most important aspect of cull cow feeding is to transition to a high-energy finishing diet as quickly as possible. A typical feedlot diet, containing byproducts and minimal roughage, is appropriate for finishing cull

cows. If the diet and feeding strategy are well designed, cull cows can be expected to gain between 3.0 and 6.0 lb/day. However, mature cows also require greater feed inputs than a typical finishing calf. Mature cull cow intake may approach 3% of her body weight. Feed efficiency may be as poor as 10:1. Compensatory gain is a major driver of cull cow gain and efficiency. Thus, cows fed for longer periods of time, perhaps on a lower energy diet, will rapidly become less efficient, and less profitable. However, compensatory gain is a function of fatness. Thinner cows will produce a greater average daily gain, but also require more time in the lot. It is realistic to assume cows will require at least 2 months on feed to gain 1 body condition score, or about 100-125 lbs. An appropriate implant strategy is also essential to profitable cull cow feeding. Consult with your nutritionist to design a feeding and implant strategy to best fit your marketing goals.

To read the rest of this article please go to www.GPLC-Inc.com or ask your Sioux Nation rep to get you a copy of the GPLC newsletter.

Cow Body Condition Score and Weak Calves



This fall brought obstacles not only for farmers but for cattlemen as well. Constant rain and muddy lots put a lot of producers in the position of delaying the weaning of their calves. To make matters worse pastures were not in the best condition and did not offer the best of nutrition for lactating cows. The end result is thin cattle.

One thing we often see in years when cow condition coming into calving season is

less than ideal is an increase in the number of weak calves.

The best way to avoid this is to make sure your cows and heifers go into calving season with a BCS (body condition score) of 5-6. If your herd is on the thin side now is the time to talk to your Sioux Nation Field Marketer about formulating a ration that will improve their BCS leading up to calving.

If your herd is thin and time is not on your side in terms of

adding weight prior to the start of calving focus on the colostrum intake and keeping those calves warm, paying special attention to getting to those calves prior to them getting chilled.

Take the time before your calving season begins to make sure your facilities are ready, make sure you have good drainage and an ample supply of bedding. Stock up on colostrum and other calving supplies.

Reminder!

If you are within a month and a half of calving now is the time to switch to a calving mineral!

Scour Shots, Preg Testing and Pour-On by Mick Harding, DVM

Now is the time to get scour shots into cows. Six to eight weeks prior to calving is ideal. Those producers that move groups of cows that have calved out of calving area in 2-week intervals may eliminate the need for scour vaccinations (Sand Hills Method).

Now would be a good time

to preg test your cows. When doing this you can effectively give your scour shot and pour them for lice and worms. Approximately 5% of pregnant cows will cycle so if you cull based on seeing cows in heat you will sell pregnant cows.

The scour vaccines available include Scour Boss 9, Scour

Guard 4K/C and Guardian. If you are currently using a vaccine that is working for you I do not recommend switching vaccines.

Some producers may deal with a Type A Clostridium problem. There is a commercial vaccine by Novartis available as a prevention of Type A disease.

February Special!!

⇒ **\$.40 cash discount per ton on Precision Minerals and Exacta Tub Refills.**

⇒ Book your mineral needs now through Feb. 28th

⇒ Book your needs for now through the end

of summer 2010 and get Feb. pricing.

⇒ Free delivery brought to you at your request

⇒ Must take delivery of booked mineral by June 30th 2010.

⇒ Precision line of min-

eral includes, Gestation, Co-Prod Mineral and Calving/Breeder mineral. The Calving/Breeder mineral is available with CTC, Rumensin, Hi-Mag and IGR.