

March 27, 2015

AGRIVIEW

By: Rick Hirsch
County Extension Agent

The percentage of body fat in beef cows at specific stages of their production cycle is an important determinant of their reproductive performance and overall productivity. The amount and type of winter supplementation required for satisfactory performance is greatly influenced by the initial body reserves, both protein and fat, of the cattle at the beginning of the wintering period.

Profitability in the cow-calf business is influenced by the percentage of cows in the herd which consistently calve every 12 months. Cows which fail to calve or take longer than 12 months to produce and wean a calf increase the cost per pound of calf produced by the herd. Reasons for cows failing to calve on a 12-month include disease, harsh weather and low fertility in herd sires. Most reproductive failures in the beef female can be attributed to improper nutrition and thin body condition. Without adequate body fat, cows will not breed at an acceptable rate. The general adequacy of diets can be determined by a regular assessment of body condition.

Variation in the condition of beef cows has a number of practical implications. The condition of cows at calving is associated with length of post partum interval, subsequent lactation performance, health and vigor of the newborn calf and the incidence of calving difficulties in extremely fat heifers. Condition is often overrated as a cause of dystocia

in older cows. The condition of cows at breeding affects their reproductive performance in terms of services for conception, calving interval and the percentage of open cows.

Body condition affects the amount and type of winter feed supplements that will be needed. Fat cows usually need only small amounts of high protein (30 to 45 percent) supplements, plus mineral and vitamin supplementation. Thin cows usually need large amounts of supplements high in energy (+70 percent TDN), medium in protein (15 to 30 percent), plus mineral and vitamin supplementation.

Body condition or changes in body condition, rather than live weight or shifts in weight, are a more reliable guide for evaluating the nutritional status of a cow. Live weight is sometimes mistakenly used as an indication of body condition and fat reserves, but gut fill and the products of pregnancy prevent weight from being an accurate indicator of condition. Live weight does not accurately reflect changes in nutritional status. In winter feeding studies where we live weight and body condition commonly decreases proportionally more than live weight, implying a greater loss of energy relative to weight.

The upcoming Cattleman's Cow-Calf Clinic will address these issues as well as market forecasts, weed control, and fed beef challenge as well as other topics. There will be a virtual feedlot tour along with lots of commercial exhibitor booths and several breeds of cattle on display including Angus, Braford, Charolais, Longhorns, Miniature Herefords, Simbrah and Wagyu.

Scheduled for Thursday, April 2nd at the Henderson County Regional Fair Park Complex, registration will begin at 3:00 p.m. with the program starting at 3:30. There is a \$15.00 per person registration fee which includes a barbecue dinner.

Speakers include Dr. David Anderson, Professor and Extension Economist - Livestock Marketing; Dr. Jason Banta, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist; Dr. Davey Griffin, Assistant Professor and Extension Meat Specialist and Clint Perkins, Wood County Extension Agent.

1.5 continuing education units will be provided towards the recertification of private, commercial and non-commercial applicators license.

To pre-register for this clinic, please call us at 903-675-6130 so that we will have an accurate count for the dinner.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- April 2nd - Cattleman's Cow-Calf Clinic - 3:00 p.m. - Henderson County Fair Park Complex, Athens - \$15.00/Person - 1.5 C. E. U.'s**
- April 6th - 11th - Henderson County Livestock Show - Henderson County Fair Park Complex - Athens**

Rick Hirsch is the Henderson County Extension Agent - Agriculture for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. Visit our web page at <http://henderson.agrilife.org/>.