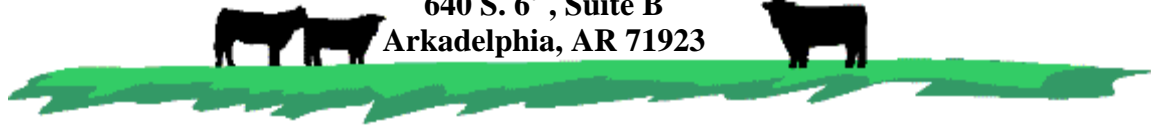


BEEF FORAGE NEWSLETTER
JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH 2008

Clark County Extension Service

**640 S. 6th, Suite B
 Arkadelphia, AR 71923**



Pasture Calendar

January

- Graze winter annual pastures carefully.
- Soil test.
- Purchase clover seed for February/March planting.

February

- Plan weed program – get sprayers ready.
- Fertilize fescue and small grain.
- Plant red, white clovers – always inoculate.
- Lime for spring plantings.
- Kill little barley in Bermuda grass with herbicide.

March

- Fertilize cool season grasses.
- Scatter manure (overseed with clovers first)
- Feed a high magnesium mineral to minimize grass tetany.
- Control little barley, buttercup and other winter annual weeds.

Soil Test Your Hay Field

With the high cost of fertilizer, fields should be tested yearly to assure what is needed. Most producers know the variety of the hay field and keep good records of their production. But most don't realize what nutrients are removed per ton of forage dry matter. The Arkansas Forage Database Average from 1985–1996:

Removal Amounts (pounds per acre for ever ton)

	N	P ₂ O ₅	K ₂ O
Bermudagrass	40	12	44
Bahiagrass	31	8	34
Fescue	36	14	50
Legumes/Grass	39	12	43

As you can see, the higher the production, the more remove occurs. If you are not replenishing the nutrients removed, your production will decrease. The Arkansas Soil Test form asks what your production level is or what you would like it to be. The recommendations are then based on the amount of nutrients in your soil compared to the amount that it takes to grow the amount of forage you would like to harvest. Lime will also play an important part of this question. If the pH in your hay field is below 5.6 production levels and the ability for the plant to use the fertilizer to the best of its capability will be below normal. The minimum desired soil test levels for hay production are: pH – 5.6 to 6.5, fertilizer efficiency P – 60 for root growth, and K – 200 for plant persistence and yield. With the rising cost of inputs to produce a crop, any tool that can help you save money is a benefit that we need to use. If you have any questions about soil testing, call us at 870-246-2281.

Best Management Practices for Small Cow/Calf Herds



Arkansas has approximately 940,000 beef cows on 26,000 farms, which means the average beef cow-calf operation has 36 cows. Eighty percent of the beef cow-calf farms have less than 50 cows, which is typical of the southeastern United States. Producers with cow-calf herds with less than 50 cows were concerned with rising production costs and a decreasing opportunity to buy land. Without the economy of scale needed to spread costs over a larger herd, the profitability of the small cow-calf herd becomes questionable, especially with increasing feed, fuel and fertilizer costs.

The following management practices a producer with a small number of cows can implement that can improve time management and beef production efficiency and hopefully profitability are:

BEEF PRODUCTION PRACTICES

A. Managing a short calving seasons to 75 days is one of the most important steps toward increasing efficiency and profitability. A controlled calving season concentrates activities that save time and labor.

Advantages of a controlled breeding season are:

- Reduces the number of times cattle are gathered for vaccinating, castration, pregnancy testing, parasite control, weaning, etc.
- Markets a uniform and heavier calf crop.
- Optimizes the feeding program. Since all cows are in the same stage of production (pregnant, lactation, etc.), supplemental feeding to improve cattle performance is more efficient.
- Uses forages. With a short breeding and calving season, calving and rebreeding can occur during times of peak forage quality and quantity.
- Allows the use of cow herd performance records to select replacement heifers and identify poor performance cows for culling.
- Reduces calf mortality. Checking calving cows and heifers frequently can increase the number of live calves.

B. Leasing a Bull Rather Than Owning A Bull:

Bulls can cause problems for producers with a small cow-calf herd. Problems may include having inadequate paddocks to secure a bull.

Also replacing fences, mineral feeders, feed bunks, waterers, etc. that get torn up by bulls; and replacing bulls to prevent inbreeding, if small cow-calf herd producers raise their own replacement heifers.

Bull leasing may be an option for producers with small cow-calf herds. A bull leasing program can improve genetics while reducing the capital investment and operating expenses needed for acquiring and keeping a breeding bull year-round.

C. Purchasing Replacement Heifers Rather Than Raising Them:

The total cost of developing a replacement heifer can be quite high. Producers need to carefully weigh the advantages of home-raised heifers against their costs. When evaluating the cost of home-raised heifers, a number of items should be considered.

These items include costs of production (feed, veterinary cost, mineral supplementation, utilities, labor, bull or AI cost, etc.), opportunity cost of operator labor and owned feed resources, pregnancy rates from the first breeding, death loss, cull income (non-breeding culls, culled yearlings, etc.), initial weight and growth rate and heifer value at weaning.

GENERAL BEEF CATTLE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

A. Herd Health – A herd health management plan is vital to profitable beef production. Many animal health problems can be controlled with good management, proper nutrition and vaccination against infectious diseases. Beef cattle vaccination programs vary, depending upon the type of beef cattle operation (commercial cow-calf, purebred, stocker, etc.) and the area of Arkansas. It is important to contact a local veterinarian to determine the correct herd health program for the herd. For cattle to reach their performance potential, they must be healthy.

B. Castration – Steer calves are preferred over bull calves. In 2005, the average selling price for bull and steer calves was \$117.93 and \$124.20 per cwt., respectively. Therefore, bull calves were discounted \$6.27 per cwt. compared to steer calves. Bull calves should be castrated, if not intended for breeding purposes. Castration is best done when the calf is young.

C. Implanting – Growth-promoting implants are compressed pellets or slow-release devices placed

under the skin of the ear. They have been used throughout the U.S. cattle industry for more than a quarter of a century to improve rate of gain and feed efficiency. Research trials have shown that proper use of implants returns at least \$10 for each \$1 invested.

D. Internal and External Parasite Control – The need to control internal parasites will exist as long as cattle are grazing pastures. However, parasite levels are not the same on all pastures or in all cattle. Heavily stocked pastures generally have a higher parasite burden than lightly-stocked pastures.

E. Mineral Supplementation – Cattle require the proper balance of water, energy, protein, vitamins and minerals to achieve optimal levels of production. Cattle usually require some form of mineral supplementation during all times of the year. The required minerals are divided into major (macro) and trace (micro) minerals.

F. Pregnancy Testing - The cost for pregnancy checking is minimal when the expense of carrying an open cow for a year is considered. Short-term pregnancies are difficult to detect, so it is best to wait at least 45 days after bulls are removed to pregnancy test.

G. Body Condition Scoring - Scoring cows for body condition when calves are weaned provides a basis for determining nutritional needs prior to the upcoming calving. Body condition scoring can be carried out regularly and satisfactorily in circumstances where weighing may be impractical.

H. Working Facilities - Good working facilities pay for themselves in that they are very important to the producer with a small cow-calf herd. Frequently, labor to help work cattle is limited, and the producer finds himself/herself working cattle alone or with limited help.

I. Forage Testing and Supplementation

Buying the right kind and feeding the right amount of supplemental feed is important. If a producer with a small cow-calf herd invests time and resources to supplementing cows, knowing the correct type and amounts of supplement to feed is important. A forage test reveals the nutrient contents of hay. Knowing the nutrient composition of hay allows for the comparison between hay nutrient levels and the nutrient requirements of the cattle being fed. Forage analysis helped reduce supplemental feed cost on ABIP farms from \$43 per 1,000-pound cow in year 1 to \$31 in year 5.

This represents just a portion of the management practices for small herds that can bring big rewards. If you would like a copy of the Fact Sheet FSA3117, which highlights the entire Best Management Practices, talking more in depth about these and more, please contact the office.

To the Table

Kris Elliott, County Extension Agent –
Family & Consumer Sciences



CUCUMBER RANCH STEAKS

Ingredients:

- 4 beef shoulder center steaks (Ranch Steak),
cut 3/4 inch thick (about 5 ounces each)
- 1/2 cup finely chopped seeded cucumber
- 1/4 cup prepared ranch dressing
- 1 tablespoon garlic-pepper seasoning
- 1 small tomato, seeded, diced (optional)

Instructions:

1. Combine cucumber and dressing in small bowl. Set aside.
2. Press garlic-pepper seasoning evenly onto beef steaks. Place steaks on grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill covered, to desired doneness, turning once.
3. Serve steaks with cucumber sauce. Garnish with tomato, if desired.

This program is open to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status or any other legally protected status. Persons with disabilities requiring alternative means for communication of program information should notify the County Extension Office as soon as possible prior to the event.

Sincerely,

Jerry Clemons
County Extension Agent- Staff Chair
jclemons@uaex.edu

ANIMAL SCIENCE NEWSLETTERS GO ELECTRONIC

The Extension Service Animal Science Department will now have the following newsletters available to producers through email. If you would like to receive one or all of them, please send an email to sallen@uaex.edu, and tell her which ones to which you want to subscribe.

Here is the list of newsletters available and information about them:

ANIMAL SCIENCE NEWSLETTER – New for 2008. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide the latest information for all livestock species (beef cattle, dairy cattle, goats, horses, etc) and grazing and forage management. Other articles will include livestock 4-H information and issues.

BEEF CHAMPS – Published in February, May, August and November. Beef Champs addresses beef cattle and forage production management, beef cattle health, genetics, nutrition, grazing management and production practices.

BEEF CATTLE RESEARCH UPDATE – published in March, June, September, December. This publication provides the latest in current issues and research involving the beef cattle industry.