

## **JANUARY BEEF CATTLE/ FORAGE TIPS**

### **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, 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 supplement feed needs to be adjusted.
- Provide free-choice mineral and fresh water.

### **Spring Calving Herds:**

- Calving season will begin soon. 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 (MP391).
- Switch to a high magnesium mineral to help prevent grass tetany for lactating cows on spring pastures (Fact Sheet 3035).
- Castrate male calves at birth or at 3 months processing. Bull calves are usually discounted \$5 per hundred weight. Castration early in life is less stressful on the calf. Research with calves castrated at birth grow at similar rates of gain compared to their intact male pasture mates. In addition, male calves castrated by stocker producers following salebarn purchase are 2.5 times more likely to become sick than a steer calf purchased through a salebarn market.
- Don't forget to collect calving records. Valuable records for selection and management include: body condition at calving, calving difficulty score, calf gender, calf birth weight, and don't forget to tag calves - records are less valuable when they cannot be linked to animals and herds.
- 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 management
  - 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. Refer to Fact Sheet 2121

## **Weed control**

- Winter annual weeds such as buttercup, thistle, and henbit have germinated.
  - Late fall and winter spraying is very effective.
- For identification and control recommendations, refer to MP 522.

## **Hay management**

- Protect hay when feeding to reduce waste. Feed hay in rings to reduce hay waste. Unrolling hay increases hay waste unless it is done on a limit-feeding basis.
- Consider using a temporary electric fence wire to reduce waste from trampling and increases 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.

For more information on any of the above points, contact the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension office at 425-2335.