

April Announcements

Thursday, May 1st - Beef and Forage Field Day in Rosepine, LA

Plan to attend the annual Beef and Forage Field Day in Rosepine, LA from 2 PM - 12 AM

Thursday, May 8th - 2008 Hay/Forage Day at the Southeast Research Station near Franklinton, LA

From 8:30 AM - 4:30 PM, the 2008 Southeast Research Station Hay/Forage Day will emphasize forage planting (especially legumes), harvesting and quality.



Animal Health - Spring Grazing Hazards



Producers grazing cattle on annual ryegrass and/or clover should watch for bloat, grass tetany and nitrate toxicity.

Bloat

Bloat can occur on forages that are high in protein and low in fiber such as ryegrass and clover. Immature plants are more likely to cause bloat than mature plants, and some animals are more susceptible than others. Some ways to prevent bloat are:

- Supplement with grass hay before beginning grazing and during grazing.

- Supplement with mineral or feed containing monensin or poloxalene.
- Start grazing clover when it is less than 50% of available forage to allow adaptation.
- Graze forages for a few hours a day at first, gradually increasing time on pasture each day.

Grass Tetany

Also called grass staggers or hypomagnesemia, grass tetany can be a problem on ryegrass pastures, particularly for lactating cows. It is common when grazing immature forages or forages undergoing rapid growth. Grass tetany also occurs in lactating cattle under nutritional stress, especially those not receiving adequate calcium, phosphorus and/or energy. Some ways to prevent grass tetany are:

- For herds with no previous history of grass tetany,

commercial mineral mixes with 10-15% magnesium should be available.

- For herds with past or current grass tetany problems, feed 1-2 ounces of magnesium oxide (MgO) per head per day. Talk to your extension agent about mixtures to ensure intake.
- Adequate intake is critical, no matter the supplement.
- Limit graze young forages or during periods of rapid growth.
- Avoid overfertilization with nitrogen and potassium.
- Add magnesium to fertilizer.
- Dust pastures with MgO.



April Checklist

Spring Calving

- For cows or heifers to begin calving around January 10th, bulls need to go into pastures on April 1st.
- Be prepared to remove bulls from heifers after a 45-60 day breeding season.
- Check condition of bulls during the breeding season. Provide supplemental feed if necessary.
- Continue to monitor cows. Provide supplements if necessary.

General Recommendations

- Keep a close watch on pasture conditions. Continue supplemental feed if necessary.
- If not done previously, fertilize summer pasture.
- Start watching for flies. Order fly control products to be ready when treatment is necessary. Consider tags or sprays used last year. Rotate between organophosphates and pyrethroids.
- Use any outside stores of hay; clean out storage areas for new hay.

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Nitrate Toxicity

Nitrate toxicity can occur on ryegrass pastures. Nitrate accumulates more readily in immature plants. It also accumulates in plants during periods of stress and decreased growth, such as during cool, cloudy weather, or during drought. Overuse of nitrogen fertilizer, acid soils and soils deficient in phosphorus also increase nitrate accumulation in

plants. Hay produced from toxic forages is also toxic. Ensiling can decrease the nitrate levels in forages. Some ways to prevent nitrate toxicity are:

- Limit graze young forages and forages undergoing stress/ decreased growth.
- Test all ryegrass hay for nitrates prior to feeding.
- Avoid overfertilization with nitrogen.
- Make sure to correct problems

with soil pH and phosphorus.



Economics of Creep Feeding Calves



Currently, with regard to beef calves, heavier calves are retaining a considerably higher percentage of their value when compared to their lighter counterparts. For instance, there may be only a ten to fifteen percent difference in the price/lb between a 450 and 750 lb calf. Many beef cattle producers are therefore exploring means to add additional weight on their calves economically and at the same time not placing too much expense involved with infrastructure (pens, water's, feed troughs, etc). In the last two weeks, I have received 4 phone calls from folks who are contemplating creep feeding calves.

Economics of Creep Feeding Calves, Cont'd from Page 2

According to DiCostanzo and Gill (2008) creep feeding is a way to provide nursing calves with supplemental nutrients. Typically creep feeds refer to mixed feeds, grain byproducts, and of course, high quality forages. A review of the literature would suggest creep fed calves weigh 40 to 60 pounds heavier than calves not offered any feed. At face value, this seems attractive because of calf prices, however, the most imperative factor to consider when creep feeding is the cost of gain involved with creep feeding. Dr. Harlan Ritchie, Professor Emeritus, from Michigan State University summarized creep feeding in the eighties, and offered examples of when to and when not to creep feed adopted from DiCostanzo and Gill (2008).

A list of situations when creep feeding maybe economically beneficial:

1. Calf prices are high relative to feed prices
2. Fall-born calves
3. Dry lot cow operations
4. Calves from first-calf heifers
5. Forage for cows is limited
6. Milk production is limited
7. Maximum weight in calves is desired
8. Male calves
9. Large-frame, late maturing calves
10. Calves will be finished by the cow-calf producers on a high-grain diet

A list of situations when creep feeding should be highly scrutinized:

1. Feed prices are high relative to calf prices
2. Heavy milking cows
3. Forage is abundant
4. Heifer calves
5. Smaller-framed, early maturing breeds
6. Spring calves
7. When calves are to be backgrounded on a high-roughage diet
8. When creep-fed calves are discounted (fleshiness)

Relative to the above, the primary issue all should have currently with creep feeding is the fact that

feed prices are historically high relative to calf prices. A question that has been asked often is what kind of feed:gain would one typically see when creep feeding. Oklahoma State researchers summarized 31 trials of free-choice creep feeding (Table 1.).

Table 1. Summary of 31 trials with free-choice creep feeding

	Creep	No Creep
Total Gain, lbs	279	221
Daily Gain, lbs	1.83	1.45
Total creep/calf lbs	524	-----
Lb creep/lb added gain	9.0	-----

With regard to gain, creep fed calves outperformed non crept calves by 58 pounds and had a 0.4 advantage in average daily gain. Based on the data presented, on averages calves were crept for 5 months. The importance of this table is the amount of consumed feed necessary to put on a pound of gain. In this research summary, 9 pounds of feed was necessary to put on the added weight gain. Based on \$250/ton feed (perhaps a low estimate) in order to add the extra 58 pounds, \$65.50 is the approximate input cost, or in other words, a cost of gain \$1.12/lb. Using these figures, creep feeding in 2008 is a losing proposition.

Realize, however, that this data is compiled from free-choice creep feeding systems and not ones that are limit-fed. Reports do suggest that the economics are considerably more advantageous when using a limiter. Data from Oklahoma State suggest that a high protein creep fed at one pound per day (cottonseed meal with 10% salt) enjoyed an efficiency of 3.3 lbs of feed to one pound of gain, although limited creep fed calves only gained 30 lbs more than calves not receiving creep for a 133 day period. Dr. Wayne Wyatt, Iberia Research Station, Jeanerette, Louisiana, reported similar results on creep feeding fall born calves. Dr. Wyatt also included Bovatec to the creep feed and reported no additional gain using the ionophore.

Economics of Creep Feeding Calves

One positive to creep feeding is short term post-weaning performance of calves when compared to calves not receiving any creep. Creep fed calves gain 0.2-0.3 lbs more than non creep fed calves. However one report also documented greater shipping loss in calves receiving creep.

However based on documented research, high feed costs and just marginal advantage in limit-fed systems, creep feeding is not economically feasible at this time.

In all, producers are beginning to understand that in order to be profitable; they must put as much weight as possible on their calves before marketing.

Dr. Jason Rowntree, PhD
LSU AgCenter Beef Extension Specialist

Southeastern cattle vs. Midwestern cattle

Scientists from Iowa State University and representatives from Certified Angus Beef analyzed data from 27,538 calves from 15 states fed at ten Iowa feedlots through the Iowa Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity over six years (2002-07). Their primary objective was to determine if area of origin (Southeast vs Midwest) influenced feedlot performance and carcass traits. Five Midwest states (9,310 calves) and ten Southeast states (18,228 calves) were represented.

Calves were sorted and harvested when they were visually evaluated to have 0.4 inches of fat cover. A significantly higher percentage of the southeast versus Midwest calves (21.57% and 19.02%, respectively) of the black-hided Angus calves eligible for the Certified Angus Beef® Program (CAB®) were accepted. When considering feedlot and carcass traits and all associated costs, the southeast calves had a profit/head of \$48.63 versus \$37.31 for

Midwest calves. Southeast calves had fewer health problems, higher CAB® acceptance rates, and more profit/head while Midwest calves tended to have better feedlot performance. One reason for this is southeast calves were 70 days older than Midwest calves when entering the feedlot. There was no difference in delivery weight. In all, this data is supportive that Southeast calves can perform comparatively to their Midwestern counterparts.

Louisiana Market Report - January 2008

Cattle receipts for the month of March came in at 14,994 head, compared to 18,711 for the month of February, and 17,131 a year ago.

Feeder steer prices for the month of March were steady to 7.00 lower. Feeder heifers sold from steady to 11.00 lower. Slaughter cows steady to 4.00 lower, with some increased demand in late March, with cows trading from 1.00-2.00 higher.

Price Comparisons:	Late March	Late February	Year Ago
500-550 lb steers	102.00-117.00	105.00-123.00	111.00-123.00
550-600 lb steers	95.00-101.00	100.00-118.00	105.00-120.00
500-550 lb heifers	94.00-100.00	96.00-110.00	102.00-119.00
550-600 lb heifers	94.00-107.00	90.00-107.00	92.00-106.00
Boning Cows	50.00-59.50	49.00-57.00	42.00-52.00

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