MO Farm Bureau Summer Commodity Conference

Feeding Cattle in a Drought Year

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Goal: Reduce mouths to feed

Secondary Goal: Rest pasture
Early Weaning

• **Drying cows off reduces nutrient requirements by 40%**
  - Every 2.5 days a calf is weaned saves a day of grass for the cows.

• **How to recapture “normal” weaning weight**
  - 2-3 lb ADG very easy to achieve during backgrounding
    • 5 lb of good quality hay, 7 lb of grain/byproduct and 1 lb of protein supplement very simple yet effective diet
  - Make sure they have AMPLE access to water if you’re weaning in August-September
  - I’ve had LOTS of experience doing this. Very confident in 100 day old calves staying healthy and gaining weight efficiently
Culling

• Non-productive females have to go!!!
  – Hard to feed a cow very long for what a preg check costs
  – Producers will be lucky to feed cows for under $1.50 a day if relying on hay plus supplement

• Hard sell if producers have invested in genetics
  – Get rid of the rogue cows
    • Bad eyes, udders, feet, disposition
If We Plan to Feed Through This

- Feed Intake
- Energy (Fat, Fiber, Starch)
- Protein
- Minerals
- Vitamins
- Additives & Supplements
Equipment Inventory

- Time
- Labor (*mother in law does not count!!!*)
- Sacrifice pasture
- Bunks
- Feed storage
- Feed mixing
- Hay handling equipment
The Need for Hay Sampling
Waste Less Hay
EA Deluxe Hay Bale Unroller For 4 & 5 Ft Wide Bales With Stands
In a 5 ft diameter round bale

33.1% of the bale is in the outer 6”

26.4% of the bale is in the next 6”

19.9% of the bale is in the next 6”

13.2% of the bale is in the next 6”

7.4% of the bale is in the inner 6”

http://nwdistrict.ifas.ufl.edu/phag/2016/05/13/hay-bale-size-really-does-matter/
How Many Days of Hay

• Base hay feeding on cow weight: 3% of estimated body weight per day
  – If hay supply is ample

• Example: 1,200 lb bale, 1,400 lb cow (42 lb of hay)
  – Bales are 10% water, so discount weight to 1080 lb
  – One bale will feed 27 cows for one day
  – For easy math, I assumed 40 lb of hay per cow

• Estimate weight based on size of bale and density
  – Google “how much does a round bale weigh”
Poor Quality Hay

- Hay below 55% TDN or 7% CP will need supplement
  - Target 0.5-1.0 lb of crude protein per day
    - Example: 5 lb of a 20% protein supplement

- This is where distillers grains shine
  - Source of both protein and energy

- 5-6 lb of an energy supplement will correct energy deficiency
  - Don’t be afraid to double this if you’re feeding straw, corn stalk bales, or hulls as your forage source
If Hay is VERY Scarce

• Discourage the use of **ONLY** corn, unless you are willing to feed twice a day and will weigh out feed
  – Managing high starch feeds as the primary energy source for cattle diets requires skill

• **Assume you have 30 cows** (Pregnant fall calvers)
  – Unroll half a bale in the MORNING
  – Feed 9 lb of 50:50 corn & byproduct blend (wheat midds, soyhulls, gluten pellets) in the EVENING
  – Free choice salt and mineral
  – Use a drylot or pasture as your sacrifice area
    • Rest pasture as much as possible over the next 60 days
If Hay is VERY Scarce

• Assume you have 30 cows (spring calvers)
  – Unroll half a bale in the MORNING
  – Feed 18 lb of 50:50 corn & byproduct blend (wheat midds, soyhulls, gluten pellets) in the EVENING
    • Might feed half with the hay and half in the evening
  – Free choice salt and mineral

• These feeding rates are flexible. If cows flesh up quickly (30 days), reduce feed offered by 10-20%
  – I erred on the side of too much feed
Minimum Hay to Feed

• 10 lb of hay is a VERY safe place to start
  – We can go lower, but the risk of bloat & founder increase

• $85 a bale hay makes it tough to pencil out
  – 50% TDN hay @ $140 a ton = $0.16 per pound of TDN
    • Cows need 18-25 lb of TDN per day
      – $2.88 to $4.00 a cow per day
  – 85% TDN byproduct supplement @ $175 a ton delivered
    • $0.11 per pound of TDN (31% COST SAVINGS!!!)
    • Math is off because I assumed 90% dry matter for hay and byproducts ($0.14 and $0.10 if you do my numbers w/ out DM adjustment)
Ideal “Grain Mix”

• Does not exist in this period
  – What can you feed efficiently?
  – What can you store?
    • How much?
  – Price?
  – What has worked in the past?

• 5-6 lbs of corn max per cow per day

Work with your local feed dealer!!!
Questions for Feed Dealer

- **Can they do custom mixes?**
  - Potential for cost savings
  - Downside is little guidance on feeding rate, other issues
    - Worth it for LARGE operations in my opinion

- **What size loads do they deliver?**

- **Unloading equipment needs?**
  - Augers

- $200+ a ton feed makes more sense to me than $85 /bale hay right now
  - More nutrients and more consistent than unfamiliar hay
Drought Corn Silage

• Historical pricing “in the bunker” per ton = 10x corn bushel price
  – Nitrate test important, especially if N fertilization aggressive
    • Fermentation reduces nitrates 40-60%

• Nutrient content 75-90% of well eared silage

• Very close to meeting cow nutrient requirements
  – 65% TDN & 9% CP

https://beef.unl.edu/cattleproduction/droughtcornsilage
Silage Moisture Affects Feeding

- Dry Matter
- Water
Figuring Silage Feeding

- Ideal silage is 35% dry matter and 65% water
  - This fluctuates!!! Keep an eye on it

- We need 13 lb of TDN for gestating cows and 20 lb TDN for lactating cows
  - Silage is 65% TDN
  - $13 / 0.65 = 20$ lb of dry matter
  - $20 / 0.35 = 57$ lb of silage “AS-FED”
Final Thoughts

- Our biggest problems will be
  - Overcomplicating nutrition
  - Paralysis by analysis
- Hay is overpriced right now!
- Water is a huge concern too
- Focus on the big need: MEET ENERGY REQUIREMENT
  - 13-20 lb of TDN per day. Get hay tested!
- We are here to help. Call anytime!
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