

# Corner Post CONVERSATIONS

**K-STATE** | Midway District  
Research and Extension

## "AS I SEE IT"

As I type this on September 1st in my office, I catch myself reflecting on the volatile summer of 2023. Drought's iron grip remains steadfast on the entire state of Kansas. Despite the drought, cattle markets achieved high's rarely duplicated with 550 pound steers bringing far north of \$3 per pound. Data from Patrick Linnell of CattleFax shows As of July, nearly 46% of the U.S. cow herd resided in a state with moderate or worse drought conditions. This is only modestly better than the 49% last July and up from the recent low of 30% in May. For perspective, an average of 24% of beef cows have been in drought during July over the last 40 years.

With cattle market high's not seen like this since 2014, it would stand to reason that the market is ripe for expansion. If the drought persists however, this expansion will likely be limited to those areas with rain. We are right in the middle of late season fly control issues, with this year seeming particularly bad. What are you using to control flies? Don't forget to remove fly tags once they have reached the end of their usable life to prevent resistance. Please remember to change the class of your fly tags and insecticide type yearly. I am in the middle of planning livestock programming for the 2023-2024 year. If you read this and have a program that you would like to see covered, please Email me at [cllaflin@ksu.edu](mailto:cllaflin@ksu.edu). If you submit an idea to me by November 1st, you will be entered into a drawing for a prize! If I can be of assistance to you as you prepare for the fall run, please let me know. Don't forget I offer nutrition consultation, ration building, herd visits, and feed testing services! I look forward to working with you!

**CattleFax 550 LB Steer Price**



CattleFax.com



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This newsletter is designed to provide you with timely information on relevant issues facing livestock producers today. If I can assist you moving forward please contact me. Looking forward to working with you!

September 2023/October 2023

# MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

## Cow Herd Management for Spring-Calving Cow Herds:

### Weaning, Body Condition, and Pregnancy Rates

1. If not already done, make plans for weaning calves.
2. Test your forages and have feedstuffs on hand prior to weaning.
3. Check and clean waterers and prepare weaning/receiving pens.
4. Evaluate cow BCS at weaning. Record BCS scores in a place easy to reference
5. Use BCS to strategically supplement cows during fall, if needed.
6. Female nutrition requirements are lowest at weaning so weight and BCS can be added more easily in early fall rather than waiting until closer to calving.
7. Schedule pregnancy checking and fall health work if not already done.
8. How were pregnancy rates relative to last year?

### Nutrition

1. Do we need to re-think our fall/winter nutrition program?
2. Evaluate the cost of gain relative to the value of gain when making feeding and marketing decisions for cull cows.

### For Fall- Calving Cow Herds:

1. If not already done, review your calving health protocols as needed.
2. Have calving equipment cleaned and available to use as needed.
3. Plan to adjust your nutrition program to match needs of lactating cows.
4. Plan your mineral supplementation for this coming fall and winter.
5. Record date and amount offered and calculate herd consumption.
6. If consumption is 2X the target intake, then cost will be too!
7. Schedule breeding soundness exams for bulls used for fall service.
8. Monitor BCS, particularly on young bulls.
9. If bulls are BCS  $\leq$  5.0 after summer breeding, consider supplementing to regain BCS going into fall.

# MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- Continued -

## Cow Herd Management for Spring-Calving Cow Herds:

### General Management

1. Schedule any pre-weaning vaccination or processing activities if not already done.
2. Consider the economic value by implanting nursing fall-born calves and weaned spring-born calves.
3. If not already done, schedule your breeding protocols for fall replacement heifers in advance of the breeding season.
4. If synchronizing with MGA, make sure intake is consistent at 0.5 mg of melengestrol acetate per hd per day for 14 days, and remove for 19 days prior to administering prostaglandin.



### Calf Management

1. Take inventory of and begin sampling harvested forages for fall feed needs.
2. Be aware of possible presence of molds and other anti-nutritional compounds in hay harvested at higher than typical moisture levels.
3. Test for nitrates and prussic acid when appropriate.
4. If grazing crop residues following harvest, keep the following in mind:
  - a. The bottom 1/3 of the stalk is where nitrates accumulate. o Be aware of prussic acid in new regrowth of sorghum plants, and the time around frost is the greatest risk.

## TIPS FOR PRE-CONDITIONING CALVES

by Clint Laflin, Midway Extension Livestock Agent

As college kids leave home for the first time, it is important that they transition with a plan that includes being current on immunizations, following good study habits, establishing self-control at the buffet counter and having financial support in place so they have the greatest chance for success in their new environment.

In much the same way, calves are most successful in transitioning off the farm when they've had good care, are current on their vaccinations, and have been exposed to the challenges of a changing diet. For the experts at the Kansas State University Beef Cattle Institute, many of these factors occur before weaning to minimize the stress of change.

"The goal of any pre-conditioning program should be to prepare the calf for the next event in its life," said Bob Weaber, K-State beef cattle extension specialist. Pre-conditioning refers to the care the calf gets on the ranch before it's weaned and before it enters the feedlot or a stocker operation.

From a health standpoint, vaccinations should be given while the calf is still nursing its dam, said K-State veterinarian Bob Larson.

"The best immune response to vaccinations will happen when the calves are not stressed and they are not carrying a parasite load," Larson said. He added that immunity often does not reach effective levels until about three weeks after the vaccines are administered. Another step in preparing the male calves is to have them castrated. The veterinarians advise cow-calf producers to take care of that early in the calf's life. "Castrating calves when they are two to three months of age causes minimal stress, allowing them to recover quickly. But the older the calf is when he has that done, the more it will challenge him," Larson said.

Along with taking care of the animal's health needs, the experts said it is important to train the calves to eat from a feed bunk and locate the type of water source they will see during the next phase of life. "If the calves get dehydrated and aren't eating, then their immune response will be weakened," Larson said.

Part of that preparation may include letting them drink from a cattle waterer instead of a pasture pond, Weaber said. Exposing them to grain prior to weaning will help them make the transition to the backgrounding operation easier, as well. Backgrounding refers to co-mingling weaned calves of a similar age and continuing to grow them prior to entering the feed yard.

To build the best pre-conditioning program, the experts recommend the following:

- 1) Prepare the calves for their new environment by exposing them to new water sources and feed.
- 2) Manage the nutritional needs of the calves.
- 3) Minimize stressors prior to weaning.
- 4) Stimulate immunity through a vaccination program that matches the disease challenges those calves are going to face.
- 5) Create a comprehensive plan for understanding optimum pre-weaning activities.