



Beef Briefs

The Latest Information on Beef Cattle Nutrition



Feeding in a Winter Wonderland

Jack McCoubrey, The BEEF GUY

And what a winter it is, other than the big melt down around New Years, it has been a serious winter, some of the coldest temps in recent years. Then all this snow, been many years that I have never had to push the lane, done it more times than I can count this winter, us guys in the "banana belt" are surely getting our share of MOTHER NATURE's "good olde time winter", she can call it off anytime, I am ready for spring.

As of 26/01/09, 31 calves on the ground from 30 mama's, all is going fine, 18 to go, have calved 9 heifers, all unassisted, not accustomed to this, puller is on the wall, and can stay right there. Calves are healthy, vigorous and smart, remember the comments in the previous BEEF BRIEFS. The KENPAL BEEF GUY better have healthy, vigorous and smart calves, we have preached the recipe, and the recipe truly does work.

Wise mineral management, I am feeding KP NURSE COW with the organic selenium and the YIELD START "R", the organic Copper, Zinc and Manganese package.

Healthy placenta, retained for just a few minutes, calves up and on the tit, even in the -25 temps, had 6 calves

during that period, not all in under cover, surely a ball of steam when I got there, got some short ears but healthy calves.

I am well vaccinated with the regular 5 way in the summer and just before calving my cows/heifers got the latest version of scour vaccine. I firmly believe that my heifers do not have the highest quality of colostrum as my mature cows do, so all the calves from my heifers get a dose of HEAD START, the colostrum booster product, I have done this for years, have my reasons, if your looking for to do the same, call me, I will hook you up.

My cows and replacement heifers lost some condition while on cornstalks because of the severe weather, wet, cold, and windy, but since I have brought them off, last came Boxing Day, they have come up in conditioning through feeding the oats/peas/barley I harvested about the 13th of November, baled and wrapped, dame good feed, 111 bales, 1250 lb'rr'ss off 11 acres, girls like it, but not excited about it during the real cold weather, feed'n dry hay during that time. Have talked with other producers and they found the

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Inside this Issue

- Feeding In a Winter Wonderland - Jack McCoubrey
- Cold Weather and Calf Birth Weights
- Feeding time and it's Effects on Calving Time

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Crawford Farms, Glencoe*

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same, the wet stuff freezes if not consumed quickly and then the cows don't like a bunch of frozen stuff in their mouths.

My dry hay is O/K, likely as all the dry hay around, it was mature and the values are not there.

Some producers have analyzed their dry hay, comes back at 6-7% protein and decreased TDN, barely adequate under normal winters, surely not adequate for the kind of winter we are having.

So, my message, from my travels and observations;

#1. Don't be blind to the body condition score on your cows,

observe closely, and if you have hay as many of us, mature, had a rain or 2, looks great, but really is just bedding, your cows will be struggling to maintain body condition, supplement with corn, mixed

grain, distillers, gluten, corn screenings or something, with these severe temperatures, keep your cows fed well, they need extra, especially if they are in the open, it will pay you well.

#2. Cows/heifers struggling with body condition,

this is not the way for these mama's to enter calving season. Consequences are mammoth.

These cows will struggle at calving time, some producers assume that a thin cow will have a small calf, she may have a small calf, but, this calf will be as she, weak and anemic, immune system will be challenged, this thin mama cow will lack the normal energy and vigor during the calving process, her muscles will be weak and her colostrum for the new born calf will lack the vitality required to

get this new born calf off to a healthy and strong beginning. Through this, this calf is wide open for numerous ongoing challenges, purely the result of ill-fortified mama's colostrum, both in quantity and quality, I can honestly tell ya, "a wreck in the making" if you have not got your cows in shape, flesh wise and nutrition wise. You short them on Calcium, the result can be lack of muscle energy, slow to calve and prolap'zz, I can for sure say, that don't happen here at my place.

#3. Cold weather, I don't like it, cattle neither.

Research purely shows that;

Cold weather conditions will result in increased birth weights, so, you guys calving in the next month or so, "COME TO ATTENTION", here is information I dug up for your review;

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Cow Calf: Cold Weather May Increase Calf Birth Weights

No sooner did I mention that the winter has been warmer, yet still stressful, that we were hit with almost 30 days of below average temperatures. Producers have often felt that calves are bigger after cold winters. Is this really true? Often it is hard to compare one year to the next as bulls and nutrition change which can affect calf birth weight. However, several studies indicate that exposure of dams to cold conditions can result in increased birth weights of offspring.

What does the research indicate?

Some of the early work in this area was with sheep. Shearing ewes before they lamb is a common practice to reduce soiling of wool, make it easier for lambs to nurse, and reduce space needed in lambing sheds. Researchers noted that lambs from winter-shorn ewes were heavier at birth and were more vigorous than lambs from unshorn ewes.

Properly conducted research on weather effects on birth weight in cattle is limited. However, in the 1990's researchers from Nebraska conducted a study on birth weight and dystocia as impacted by winter weather. During six years, data was collected from March calving heifers of similar breeding that were all bred AI to the same calving-ease Angus bull (same bull used all years). The research group kept track of average and wind chill temperatures from December – February of each year. All calves were weighed and any heifers requiring assistance were noted. Birth weights were heaviest and calving difficulty greater in the coldest years (Table 1). They found almost a 1:1 relationship between decrease in average temperature and increase in birth weight of the calf. For every one degree drop in average or wind chill temperature there was roughly a one pound increase in calf birth weight.

One of the years did not seem to fit. The winter of 1995-1996 was relatively warm, but calf weights and dystocia were increased. When the researchers reviewed the weather data, they found that January '95-'96 was much colder than average. Therefore, they concluded that this one month in late gestation was sufficient to affect birth weight.

Why does birth weight increase?

One theory behind increased birth weights of offspring from cold exposed dams relates to blood flow. It is well established that when exposed to extremely cold temperatures, mammals shift blood flow from extremities and skin to major internal organs. This survival mechanism assures that essential organs (brain, heart, liver) continue to function normally even in cold weather. As a result of this shift in blood flow, it may result in greater blood flow, and therefore, nutrients to the fetus. However, short-term cold exposure in women actually decreased blood flow to the fetus. Another theory was that voluntary feed intake was increased in dams exposed to cold. While ruminants can compensate to some extent by increasing intake during cold weather, it probably does not explain all the increase in birth weight.

More recently, several groups have found metabolic changes in cold stressed ewes. These metabolic changes result in increased availability of glucose, IGF-I, and IGF-II to the fetus. Glucose and the two insulin-like growth factors (IGF) are important regulators of fetal growth. Some studies also indicate an increase in brown adipose tissue, the fat that is used in the first days of life to produce heat, in newborns. Increased size, enhanced energy availability, and greater brown adipose tissue are positively correlated to newborn calf survival during cold weather.

Source: John B. Hall, Extension Animal Scientist, Beef, Virginia Tech

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Research Shows

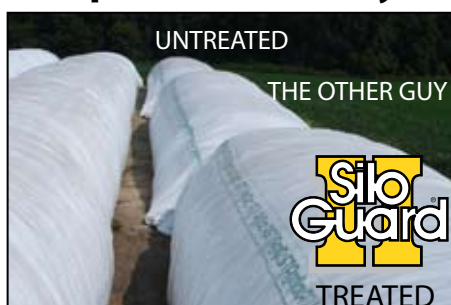
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#4. Feeding late day, calving in the day time, does it work?

I communicate with a whole bunch of producers, many do feed late day to facilitate day time calving, and there has been

research done to support these beliefs. Me, I feed all the time, since I am away most all days, I like calving during the night, have done it for years, wake up every 3 hours, and convince myself I better go to the barn and check, I do. I have the odd

calf during the day, most early A/M, but the professional guys, big numbers, they feed late afternoon, early evening, have a great nights sleep and are busy during the day. Here is some data;

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Night Time Versus Day Time Feeding Influences Time Of Calving

It is generally accepted that adequate supervision at calving has a significant impact on reducing calf mortality. Adequate supervision has been of increasing importance with the use of larger beef breeds and cattle with larger birth weights. On most ranching operations, supervision of the first calf heifers will be best accomplished in daylight hours and the poorest observation takes place in the middle of the night.

The easiest and most practical method of inhibiting night time calving at present is by feeding cows at night. The physiological mechanism is unknown, but some hormonal effect may be involved. Rumen motility studies indicate the frequency of rumen contractions falls a few hours before parturition. Intraruminal pressure begins to fall in the last 2 weeks of gestation, with a more rapid decline during calving. It has been suggested that night feeding causes intraruminal pressures to rise at night and decline in the daytime.

In a Canadian study of 104 Hereford cows 38.4% of a group fed at 8:00 am and again at 3:00 pm delivered calves during the day, 79.6% of a group fed at 11:00 am and 9:00 pm delivered calves during the day. A British study utilizing 162 cattle on 4 farms compared the percentages of calves born from 5:00 am to 10:00 pm to cows fed at different times. When cattle were fed at 9:00 am, 57% of the calves were born during the day, vs 79% with feeding at 10:00 pm. In field trials by cattlemen utilizing night feeding when 35 cows and heifers were fed once daily between 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm, 74.5% of the calves were born between 5:00 am

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and 5:00 pm. In the most convincing study to date, 1331 cows on 15 farms in Iowa were fed once daily at dusk, 85% of the calves were born between 6:00 am and 6:00 pm. Whether cows were started on the night feeding the week before first expected calving, OR 2 to 3 weeks earlier, made no apparent difference in calving patterns.

On many large ranches, it is physically impossible to feed all of the cows after 5:00 pm. In those instances, the ranch manager should plan to feed the mature cows earlier in the day, then feed the first calf heifers at dusk. The heifers, of course, are the group of females that are of greatest need of observation during the calving season.

Various means have been employed to effectively reduce animal loss at calving time. Skilled personnel should be available to render obstetric assistance and neonatal care to maximize percentage calf crop weaned in the cattle operation. Currently, evening feeding of cattle seems to be the most effective method of scheduling parturition so assistance can be available during daylight hours. Calves born in daylight also have the added benefit of warmer air temperatures and on sunny days absorbing radiant heat from the sunshine.

Source: The Cattle Network Newsletter, December 10, 2008

#5. WHERE HAVE THE COWS GONE?

I am hearing a prediction of a few percent drop in cow numbers across the continent, well, there is surely more than a few percent drop in cow numbers here in Ontario, a 25% drop has occurred in the past 12 months, big drop, there is no doubt. Come fall, the calf run will be small, in fact the calf run could be grim, and a "rude awakening" for those that have taken too much for granted.

Cows are a 24/7/365, we do get a little break during pasture time, but, one thing is clear; dedication, liking cows and a view for the future, is the reason why me and you are still here, "I like my cows" and I am convinced we will have "our day, and not that far away"! Just this weekend, I have calls from 2 producers about selling their cows, "have you got any

buyer's?"

Well, I can surely say, we have more sellers than buyers, and as many of you have heard me say, "cash your RRSP's and GIC's and buy cows", just ends up, I cashed mine, got my cows, MA didn't cash her's, I tried to convince her to do so, she would not listen, I have not asked her how many cows her mutual funds would buy now, but, for sure it is 1/2 as many cows now as 6 mos ago.

#6. CHECK YOUR MINERAL FEEDER!

Prices have dropped at KENPAL, \$3/BAG on the best beef cow mineral in the business KENPAL BEEF NURSE COW, I have used it for, and you have heard and read this before, 22 years, and never have bought a bag or block of salt. Coming into calving time, mineral and vitamin deficiencies

have proven to result in calving difficulties, lack of muscle tone, lack of calf vigor and smart'zz, poor quality colostrum, health and long term well being of both mama and calf, and breeding back time.

Short changing your cows on nutrition to cut costs, the result is reverse; you will cut your potential revenue BIG TIME, calving problems, weak calves, retained placenta, poor re-breeding time.

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