

March 2015 Issue 5 Eastern NE Cow Calf e-newsletter

### Mid Plains Beef Session - Preparing for the Breeding Season

April 2 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. UNL Ag Research and Development Center, 1071 County Road G, south of Mead, NE

Program Schedule: Lunch 11:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.

Program Speakers - 12:45 p.m. -3:15 p.m.

Breeding Soundness Exam and Trich Testing of Bulls -Dr. Richard Randle, UNL DVM

Keep vs. Cull -What to do with problem cows -non calvers, late calvers, last calf -Dr. Kate Brooks, UNL

Extension Livestock Economist

Pasture Lease Provisions -Al Vyhnalek, Platte Co. Extension Educator

Cost is \$10 if registered by March 27 or \$15 at the door. Pre-register by contacting Saunders County Extension Office 402-694-8030 or email Lindsay Chichester at lchichester2@unl.edu

### Dietary changes needed for early lactation beef cows

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Beef cow owners have known for years that body condition at calving time is a critical determinant in the re-breeding performance of the cows during the next breeding season. Another key factor that impacts return to estrus cycles and re-breeding is the maintenance or loss of body condition after calving and before breeding. Cows losing body condition after calving and before the breeding season will be slower to return to heat cycles and rebreed at a lower rate. Therefore it is necessary that the cow manager understand the change in nutrient requirements of beef cows as they change from gestating cows to early lactation cows.

Using an example of a 1200 pound cow in late gestation, one can examine the nutrient increases as she delivers the calf and starts to lactate. A 1200 pound late gestation cow requires 1.9 pounds of crude protein daily and 12.9 pounds of Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN). She can consume voluntarily 24 pounds of dry matter feed/day. The same cow after calving will weigh at least 100 pounds less (birth weight of calf, placenta, and fluid loss). An 1100 pound cow in early lactation requires 2.9 pounds of protein each day. That is a 52% increase in protein needs. Her energy requirements go up substantially as well. She needs 16.8 pounds of TDN each day (if she is an average milking beef cow). This represents a 30% increase in energy intake per day. Her daily dry matter intake also increases from 24 to 29 pounds but this represents only a 20% increase.

As we examine this example it is very clear that the cow will voluntarily consume a small increase in dry matter, however her needs in protein and energy both increase in larger percentages. Therefore an increase in both diet quality and quantity is necessary after calving to insure that body condition is maintained into and through the breeding season.

Management questions to consider: Am I meeting the nutrient requirements of my lactating cows? Have I saved my highest quality forages for my lactating cows? What is the protein and energy content of the feedstuffs I'M feeding my lactating cows? What is an average body condition score for my mature cows at calving? What is an average body condition score for my first calf heifers and 3 year old cows?

