

March 2016 Issue 17 Eastern NE Cow Calf e-newsletter

Mid Plains Beef Session - Moving Your Herd Forward

Tuesday, March 29, 2016 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

UNL Ag Research and Development Center, 1071 County Road G, south of Mead, NE

**Program Schedule: 10:30 a.m. Nebraska BQA: Animal Health Stewardship and
Veterinary Feed Directive – Rob Eirich, Ext. Educator
12 Noon Lunch
12:30 p.m. Positioning Your Herd to Use Reproductive Technologies-
Drs. Dave Hardin and Richard Randle, UNL School of Veterinary
Science
2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Cattle Working Facilities Tour and Demonstration of
Bud Box, BQA practices for handling cattle**

Fee is \$25 if registered by March 21 or \$40 at the door on March 29. Fee includes BQA certification for 2 years, meal and handouts. Pre-register by contacting Washington County Extension Office 402-426-9455 or email Steve Tonn at stonn2@unl.edu

Feeding the First Calf Heifers After Calving

One of the challenges is providing a high quality diet to first-calf heifers after calving. In many situations, the energy needs are not met and the first calf female loses weight and body condition from the time of calving to the start of the breeding season.

Energy is the primary nutrient regulating reproduction. Undernourished heifers are delayed in their resumption of estrous cycles. Energy available to postpartum heifers includes energy eaten every day and energy reserves in the form of fat and muscle (body condition). First-calf heifers should be in body condition score 6 at calving.

The pounds of protein or energy needed by first-calf heifers compared to a mature cow at the same stage of gestation or lactation are not all that different. However, the percent of the diet that needs to be protein or energy between these two groups of females is different.

The difference is because of the amount of feed/forage that they can eat. The mature cow can eat more feed compared to the younger female. This difference becomes even more important before and after calving for first-calf heifers. Research conducted at the University of Nebraska reported in 2004 Nebraska Beef Report that first-calf heifers have a 17% reduction in feed intake beginning 3 weeks prior to calving and potentially lasting for up to 3 weeks post calving.

For this reason, first-calf heifers should be managed and fed separately from the mature cows. The first-calf females post calving need to consume a diet that is at least 62% TDN and 10-11% crude protein, depending on the level of milk production.

Forage testing is the cheapest nutritional strategy available. Knowing the quality of our forages is necessary because many of our hays will not meet the first-calf heifer's energy needs. A high

energy feed may need to be supplemented. Corn, distillers grains, gluten feeds, 20% cube, or silage may be good choices. Make sure that the protein requirement is met, especially when corn or silage is fed.

To complement a higher energy diet, also feed an ionophore to heifers. An ionophore gives heifers more energy per mouthful, particularly in late gestation and early lactation, to optimize what she can get out of the forage. Research has shown that by feeding an ionophore her postpartum interval can be shortened.

The young beef female poses challenges, but she is the future of your cow herd. Don't short her after calving, especially don't skimp on energy. She has enough challenges between calving and the beginning of the breeding season. Don't over feed her, but give her the opportunity to be a productive part of the herd.

Management Questions to Consider:

Do I know the quality of my forages?

Do I separate young cows from mature cows?

What is my least cost energy supplement for my heifers and cows?

What is the body condition score of my first-calf heifers at calving? Breeding?

Additional resources:

- [UNL Beef website: beef.unl.edu](http://beef.unl.edu)

- [UNL BeefWatch \(monthly e-newsletter that you can subscribe to\):
http://newsroom.unl.edu/announce/beef](http://newsroom.unl.edu/announce/beef)

- [UNL BeefWatch Podcasts \(these are more intimate chats with some of the authors of the BeefWatch articles, you can also subscribe or download them\):
http://beef.unl.edu/beefwatch-podcast](http://beef.unl.edu/beefwatch-podcast)

Additional resources:

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