

## **Energy, Energy, Energy**

Are you one of the lucky ones with pasture to graze? As you start and progress through the breeding season, are you sure your pasture is providing the right nutrition this year? The answer may surprise you.

Regardless of whether you breed cows on good looking green grass or have virtually no grass, cows are at a higher risk than usual this year of ending up open. Research shows that cows on an increasing plane of nutrition are bred more easily than those on a declining plane of nutrition. So it might be smart this year to do some extra supplementing to make sure your cows get bred.

The supplement needed, though, may not be what you expect. Most of the time when we supplement cows, we provide protein. This year, at least during late spring and early summer, your cows might need energy or TDN even more than extra protein.

Cows are likely to be short on energy if they're grazing pastures that are still in drought. They definitely are deficient in both energy and protein if they are being fed primarily hay or corn stalk bales, especially if the hay isn't alfalfa. While cows grazing lush green grass might more than meet their energy and protein needs now, if it becomes hot and dry like last summer and grasses go dormant later in the breeding season, cows could need extra energy, or protein, or both.

Getting cows extra energy may not be simple, however. High starch feeds like corn grain often reduce digestibility of the roughage in the diet, so they aren't the best choice. Better are digestible fibers like corn gluten, distillers grains, or soyhulls that provide energy much more efficiently, but availability and storage can present challenges.

If you are uncertain about the diet your cows are getting, check with an extension educator or a nutritionist. Supplements may be expensive, but open cows are even worse.

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