

FEED HIGH QUALITY HAY AFTER CALVING

Good cow nutrition is crucial following calving to get cows rebred. Today let's review some guidelines to make sure we do the job right.

Cows need good feed after calving. Each cow experiences much stress after calving because she is producing milk for her calf and she is preparing her reproductive system to rebreed. As a result, nutrient demands are high. Energy requirements increase about 30 percent and protein needs nearly double after calving. Underfeeding reduces the amount of milk she provides her calf, and it can delay or even prevent rebreeding. And if it gets cold, wet, or icy again, nutrient demands can sky-rocket.

Winter grass, corn stalks, and other crop residues are low quality right now because these feeds are weathered and have been pretty well picked over. So it is critical that the hay or silage you feed will provide the extra nutrients your cows need.

Not just any hay or silage will do. Your cow needs 10 to 12 percent crude protein and 60 to 65 percent TDN in her total diet. If she is grazing poor quality feeds or eating grass hay, your other forages and supplements must make up any deficiencies.

Make sure your forage has adequate nutrients; if you haven't done so, get it tested now for protein and energy content. Compare this to the nutrient requirements of your cows. Then feed your cows a ration that will meet their requirements. But don't overfeed, either. That is wasteful and expensive.

In summary, avoid underfeeding after calving; it can delay rebreeding and slow down calf growth. Use good quality forages with any needed supplements to provide adequate nutrition. Your cows will milk well, rebreed on time, and produce healthy calves year after year.

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