

The Range Review

Bradford County Extension
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Upcoming Events:

- **Perennial Peanut Field Day**
NFREC – Marianna
September 18, 2008
- **Tri-County Fall Pond Management Workshop Getting Started: Introductory Pond Management**
Baker County Extension Office
September 25, 2008
- **Northeast Florida Beef And Forage Group 11th Annual Hay and Farm Field Day**
WW Ranch, Jacksonville
September 26, 2008
- For more information, call 904-966-6299

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Howdy from the University of Florida/IFAS Bradford County Extension Office.

In this issue of the Range Review I will continue to cover management strategies related to beef production, specifically those related to breeding.

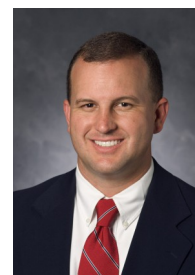
As the fall and winter months approach, developing a breeding plan can be useful in reducing the amount of time, labor and resources that must be devoted to breeding. Your breeding plan should include a well defined market end-point as well dates to perform each of its different functions. Maximizing pregnancies and ultimately weaning weights can make this next calf crop your best ever.

We have a number of events scheduled for September and I hope you can attend those that relate to your operation. If you would like to attend any of these programs, please contact my office to sign-up.

If you have any questions related to livestock and forages, or any other areas of agriculture, please feel free to give me a call at any time.

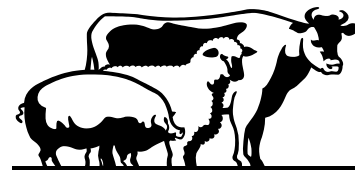
Timothy W. Wilson

Timothy W. Wilson
County Extension Director
Livestock and Forages



Tim Wilson
County Extension Director
Livestock and Forages

**Stop by any
time and see
how I can
serve you!**





Only select the oldest and heaviest heifers as possible replacements.

“Heifers have increased nutritional needs and may need to be fed separately from the cow



Proper heifer development can yield increased pregnancy rates.

Managing Replacement Heifers

Heifers are unique from mature cows since they must begin cycling for the first time, weigh about 65% of the mature weight at breeding and 85% of their mature weight at calving. Heifers must be maintained on a positive plane of nutrition to reach puberty and conceive during their first breeding season. Whether purchased or developed, replacement heifers require specific management considerations to optimize their reproductive capabilities.

Management practices should focus on developing heifers to breed early, deliver a calf, and rebreed during the subsequent defined breeding season.

When selecting replacement heifers, only the heaviest and oldest calves should be chosen. Age and weight directly effect puberty in heifers, and between the two, weight tends to have a greater effect on reaching puberty than age (Bagely, 1993). Heifers should be bred approximately three to four weeks prior to the cow herd. Since heifers will need more time to begin cycling after calving, only heifers that conceive early in the breeding season should be kept in the herd.

Heifers have increased nutritional needs and may need to be fed separately from the cow herd. Research from Oklahoma State has shown that heifers that had restricted nutrient intake for 14 days had prevented ovulation without altering body condition. Although the appearance of the females in this study had not changed, the ability to ovulate had been challenged.

Nutrition should allow for increased weight gains for replacement heifers; however; caution should be taken not to overly fatten heifers prior to breeding. Overly conditioned heifers may deposit fat in the udder leading to reduced milking ability as mature cows.

Weight is just one of many points to consider when developing replacement heifers. Proper growth is necessary to allow heifers the best opportunity to deliver a calf and rebreed early during the following breeding season.

Breeding Cattle During the Summer Months

Beef producers who calf in the late spring or have a year-round breeding season may need to consider when their breeding season takes place. Elevated summer temperatures can lead to heat stress in bulls resulting in reduced reproductive performance.

Researchers from Oklahoma State University have demonstrated that as bulls are exposed to elevated temperatures, resulting in heat stress, the percent motile sperm decreases from 75 – 80 % to less than 50% in some cases. Bulls that undergo breeding soundness exams are required to maintain a sperm motility rate above 70% to receive a satisfactory classification. Failure to do so would result in the bull failing the breeding soundness exam.

To prevent reduced conception rates, producers who breed during the summer months may consider moving the breeding season to a different time of the year; however, careful consideration should be given to when the “New” calving season will take place.

Producers who plan to continue breeding during the summer months can help reduce the effects of heat stress and overall stress by providing adequate shade, water and an effective fly control strategy. Producers who wish to convert to a controlled breeding season or adjust their current breeding season can contact the Bradford County Extension Office for educational materials to assist with this transition.

Factors Affecting Embryonic Loss in Beef Cattle

Beef cattle that are not confirmed pregnant, 45 to 60 days after the completion of the breeding season unnecessarily increase production costs and should be removed from the herd. There are a few situations which offer alternatives to the fate of these open cattle such as moving them to another breeding season, continuing to breed until they are pregnant then selling them as bred, or sending them to the stockyard as open. Whatever their fate, open cattle that stay in the herd increase feed and production costs without returning any revenue to the operation.

Embryonic loss in beef cattle can occur at any stage of development; however, most losses occur before day 8 of the pregnancy. Researchers with the USDA's ARS have reported that approximately 20% of pregnancies in cattle fail between day 7 and 16 of the pregnancy. If an embryo were terminated before day 8, the female would cycle as if she had never become pregnant; if it is terminated after day 8, then the cycle could be delayed (Knox and Kesler, University of Illinois).

Evaluating the pregnancy status of beef cattle provides beef producers the information they need to make informed management decisions.

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Beef Management Calendar

September

- Cut Hay!!!
- Check hay stores and test hay that will be used for winter supplementing.
- Keep an eye on commodities and by-product pricing. Buy in bulk when prices are low.
- Prepare for fall calving.
- Check mineral and water supply
- Start planning winter pasture needs, purchase supplies etc. Prepare winter grazing strategy and plant accordingly.

October

- Cut Hay!!!
- Finish planting winter grazing in prepared seed beds and begin overseeding winter annuals into pasture.
- Continue to monitor supplemental feed prices. Corn and by-product feeds like cottonseed are usually cheaper in the fall.
- Evaluate body condition score and adjust nutrition accordingly.
- Check mineral and water supply

(Source: Silcox and McCann)