**Did you know?**

- **Reproduction** is the most important factor affecting profitability
- **Reproduction** is 5X more important than growth rate, and 10X more important than carcass quality when it comes to profit
- **Body condition** has the greatest impact on reproduction**
- **Thin cows** are only half as productive in those in optimum condition. Thin cows at calving negatively affect:
  - Calf health up to and beyond weaning
  - Weaning weights
  - Breeding potential
  - Overall herd performance
  - Profit
- Every missed breeding cycle represents a 42 lb loss in weaning weight
CONDITION MATTERS

• The BCS of cows at the start of the winter feeding period is particularly important, and has a major effect on the amount and quality of feed required per animal.

• To improve one condition score, it takes a 1400 lb cow about 200 lbs of body weight gain. This is much more difficult to achieve during winter.

• To improve one BCS in 90 days requires 20% more energy; to do it in 60 days requires 30% more.

• Nutrient requirements increase 30 to 40% at calving.

• 82 days after calving is the most crucial period in the beef cow’s year. Not only must she nurse a calf, she must rebreed within 80 to 85 days to calve at the same time next year.

• The earlier you start improving condition, the easier (and cheaper!) it is to manage.

**How body condition score affects production**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BCS</th>
<th>Pregnancy rate (%)</th>
<th>Calving interval (days)</th>
<th>Exhibiting estrus 60 days after calving (%)</th>
<th>Weaning weight (lb)</th>
<th>Calf death loss (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>375</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>381</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>460</td>
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<td>86</td>
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<td>100</td>
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<td>75</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Protein supplementation may be effective if forage crude protein is less than 7%. While energy is usually the first limiting nutrient (especially in winter), protein may be limiting when feeding low quality forages.

Inadequate nutrition during the 90-day pre-calving period will cause lighter birth weights, poor colostrum quality, lower calf immunity and survival, decreased milk production and calf growth.

Feed represents 59-70% of production costs and nutrition has a major impact on reproduction—both essential to your bottom line.

**STRATEGIES**

Group cows and match nutritional needs.

Example:

Group 1 – Mature cows in good condition and heavily pregnant cows: average quality forage; supplementation with grain may be necessary in cold weather.

Group 2 – Bred replacements and second calf heifers: good quality forage; may require grain supplementation.

Group 3 – Thin and old cows: good quality forage and grain/pellet supplementation.

If cows are thin coming off grass, they will continue to be thin unless rations are adjusted to provide more energy and protein.

A cow’s nutrient requirements will increase about 30-40% with calving. Forage intake will increase about 30%. Cows reach peak lactation around six weeks post-calving. All of these factors mean increased energy requirements.

Nutrition levels of stored forages can vary 25 to 30% from year to year. Feed testing is a wise investment, and necessary to correctly balance rations. Visit www.bodyconditionscoaming.ca or consult a veterinarian or beef extension specialist for additional information on feed testing.