

## COW/CALF CORNER

**The Newsletter**  
**From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service**

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**Stocker Purchase Considerations for Winter Grazing**  
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Stocker producers generally have a number of choices regarding stocker cattle purchases including the initial weight, quality and gender of animals. In some situations, there is more profit potential in buying “bargain” cattle that will require more health management and rely less on gain. In other situations, the most profit potential comes from buying “Cadillac”, high quality animals that are healthy and ready to maximize gain performance. The appropriate choice for a particular producer will depend a number of considerations including management factors such as labor and expertise to provide health management for mismanaged, highly stressed or lower quality cattle; to the quantity and quality of feed resources available; along with current market conditions. In the case of dual-purpose winter wheat, the length of grazing period available is also a critical consideration.

With a significant acreage of late planted winter wheat in Oklahoma, many producers are only now buying stockers for winter grazing. The available time period is dwindling and there may be only 80-90 days of grazing before First Hollow Stem (FHS) dictates removal of the cattle in

order to harvest the grain crop. If producers are in a position to decide now about grazing out the wheat then another 75 or so days of grazing are available. With average relationships between stocker purchase prices and feeder selling prices, 80-90 days is barely enough or sometimes not enough time for a stocker enterprise to become profitable. The time required to make a stocker enterprise feasible is determined by the amount of rollback between the purchase price and selling price as well as cattle quality as reflected in average daily gain and health.

Prices for lightweight stockers have increased somewhat the past month while heavy feeder prices have remained mostly flat. The result is a somewhat unusual price relationship that may offer an opportunity for winter stocker producers to take advantage of a short winter grazing season. While there is a substantial price rollback for lightweight stockers, there is a break at about 600 pounds for steers (roughly 550 pounds for heifers) above which there is relatively little price rollback. This dramatically impacts the value of gain for different beginning weights. For example, using weighted average prices and weights from Oklahoma City for the past week, the average value of a 200 pound total gain for a 425 pound beginning weight steer is about \$0.32/lb. For a 475 pound and for a 525 pound steer the value of 200 pounds of gain is about \$0.53/lb. For a 575 pound steer, the value per pound of a 200 pound gain jumps to \$0.74/lb. and for a 625 pound beginning weight steer, the value per pound of gain (200 pound total) is \$0.86/lb.

These values suggest that producers may benefit by buying heavier animals which will have a higher value of gain and greater profit potential in a short winter grazing season. A short grazing period also favors using high quality, healthy animals that will gain quickly. Both steers and heifers appear to have this price break for heavier weights at this time. Of course, the animals will not actually be sold until February or March and the market may correct the price relationship by that time. However, current March Feeder futures values make it possible to lock in the higher value of gain now.

### **Prepare for a Successful Calving Season**

Dave Sparks, DVM, Area Food Animal Quality and Health Specialist and Glenn Selk, OSU  
Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

Someone once said “that *Success* occurs when *Opportunity* meets with *Preparation*”. Planning and preparing ahead for next spring’s calving season can help increase the chances of success. There are several key preparation steps that would be good to conduct in November or December to insure success in February, March, and April.

**Equipment:** Before calving season starts do a walk-through of pens, chutes, and calving stalls. Make sure that all are clean, dry, strong, safe, and functioning correctly. This is a lot easier to do on a sunny afternoon than on a cold dark night when you need them

**Protocol:** Before calving season starts develop a plan of what to do, when to do it, who to call for help (along with phone numbers), and how to know when you need help. Make sure all family members or helpers are familiar with the plan. It may help to write it out and post copies in convenient places. Talk to the local veterinarian about the protocol and incorporate his/her suggestions. Your veterinarian will be a lot more helpful when you have an emergency during the kids' school program if you have talked a few times during regular hours.

**Lubrication:** Many lubricants have been used and one of the best lubricants is probably the simplest – non-detergent soap and warm water.

**Supplies:** The stockman should always have in his medicine chest the following: disposable obstetrical sleeves, non-irritant antiseptic, lubricant, obstetrical chains (60 inch and/or two 30 inch chains), two obstetrical handles, mechanical calf pullers, and injectable antibiotics. Do not forget the simple things like a good flashlight with extra batteries and some old towels or a roll of paper towels. It may be helpful for you to have all these things and other items you may want to include packed into a 5 gallon bucket to make up an obstetrical kit so you can grab everything at once.

**Read and Learn:** Study your lesson about preparing for the calving season by downloading and reading the Oklahoma State University Extension Circular called “Calving Time Management for Beef Cows and Heifers.”

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5171/E-1006web.pdf>