

# **COW/CALF CORNER**

## **The Newsletter**

**From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service**

**July 2, 2010**

**In this Issue:**

### **Notice to Cow Calf Corner Subscribers**

#### **Late Summer Supplementation with Protein**

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

#### **Seasonal Cattle Prices and Stocker Possibilities**

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

### **Notice to Cow Calf Corner Subscribers**

**The next Cow Calf Corner Newsletter will be published on Monday, July 12 and on Mondays thereafter.**

**In the event that Monday is a holiday, the newsletter will be published on Tuesday.**

### **Late Summer Supplementation with Protein**

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

Because condition at calving and breeding are so important, it may at first seem silly to begin worrying about cow body condition in the middle of summer. However, it must be remembered that there are few economical ways to increase body condition once winter has arrived. So, good body condition in the winter must depend on the nutritional program the previous summer. If on July 1, the cows are in good condition and are rapidly regaining weight lost the past winter, the program can run normally. If, on the other hand, the past winter was severe and cows are still thin on July 1, with every likelihood that they will be thin going into the next winter, thought needs to be given to the most economical method of improving condition before winter.

Weaning dates can be moved up; remember calves would be young and weaning weights will be reduced. A well-planned supplementation program may offer help. When forage is available, feeding small amounts of protein supplements during late summer can efficiently increase weight

and condition gain of spring calving cows (Table 1). Feeding as little as .6 lb/head/day of soybean meal, (about 1.5 lb/head, 3 times per week) during August and September increased cow weight by 25 lb. and improved condition score by .67 units.

**Table 1. Late Supplementation to Increase Weight and Condition of Spring Calving Cows**

(Source: OSU Beef Cattle Manual, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.)

Time Period	No Supplement	0.6 lb/day Soybean Meal
Aug 4 - Nov 9		
Weight change (lb)	27	52
Condition change	-.15	+.52
Milk (lb/day)		
Aug 4	6.5	3.9
Oct 10	6.7	5.6

A supplement level of 1 to 1.5 lbs/head/day would probably have been more desirable and provided greater weight increases. The important point is that during late summer, protein supplements can permit efficient increases in weight and condition when forage is available. If one waits until winter to try to increase cow weight, protein alone will likely not be sufficient and larger amounts of energy supplements or hay will be required. If weather conditions are very cold, it may not be economically feasible to increase condition during the winter.

## **Seasonal Cattle Prices and Stocker Possibilities**

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

Early July is not normally a time when we are talking much about buying stocker cattle. Typically summer cattle are already out and we are not thinking yet about fall stockers. Nevertheless, I am beginning to get questions about stocker cattle grazing prospects. I think the interest may be coming from two sources: first, forage conditions are generally very good around the country and there may still be some summer cattle going on pasture and, second, at least here in the southern plains, some producers may already be thinking about when they might want to buy lightweight cattle for fall and winter grazing.

Prices for stocker cattle have decreased from the spring highs but are at least \$10/cwt. higher than this time last year. The buy/sell margin is often the primary determinant of profit potential and the spread between stocker buy price and feeder sell price is more important than the general level of prices. With tight supplies largely in control of the market, buy prices tend to be relatively high compared to sell prices. It is critical for producers evaluate the margins offered in the market and to consider the price risk associated with future selling price compared to buying at today's prices. Feeder futures prices provide an indication of potential margins and an opportunity to lock in margins when offered by the market.

Fall and winter stocker producers may be wondering about the merits of buying lightweight cattle early in the fall versus later in the fall. Stocker calf prices usually are lowest seasonally in October. However, the timing of winter pasture establishment can affect that pattern considerably in Oklahoma. If wheat pasture is established early, increased demand for stocker cattle can mute the seasonal decline into October and November, particularly when feeder supplies are limited. An uptrending market over the course of a year will have the same effect, with fall prices decreasing less than expected compared to earlier in the year.

It is impossible to say what will happen this fall, but there is risk, from a buying perspective, that prices may not be as seasonally attractive as one might expect on average. I anticipate that there will be considerable interest in grazing wheat this fall and if wheat pasture conditions are favorable early there may be less seasonal weakness in calf prices in the fall. Producers will want to monitor feeder futures prices relative to stocker prices in late summer and early fall to see if attractive margins are offered. Producers with available forage and production flexibility may have an opportunity to benefit from earlier than usual stocker cattle purchases.

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services. References within this publication to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, service mark, manufacturer, or otherwise does not constitute or imply endorsement by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.