

For Immediate Release

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Beef Cow Nutrition after Calving

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Welcome to March. New calves are arriving daily. Winter is past, for the most part, and spring is just around the corner. Pastures are beginning to green up.

March is a difficult time to feed beef cows, however. Cows are beginning to chase the new grass, even though there isn't enough available to meet their nutrient needs. Hay quality may not be adequate to meet nutrient demands of lactating cows either. For example, milk production increases mature cow energy requirements by over 30% and protein requirements by 50%. These nutrients are usually supplemented by grain or grain by-products, but these supplements are expensive.

Even though supplementation is expensive, allowing lactating cows to lose body condition now is even more expensive due to the reduction in reproductive performance in the upcoming breeding season. This was described in a recent article in *Drovers CattleNetwork.com* by Dr. Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist. The following comments are taken from his article.

An Oklahoma trial illustrates the vulnerability of cows that calve in the body condition score of 5. Two groups of cows began the winter feeding period in similar body condition and calved in very similar body condition. However, after calving and before the breeding season began, one group was allowed to lose almost one full condition score. The other group of cows was fed adequately to maintain the body condition that they had prior to calving. The difference in rebreeding rate was dramatic (73% for cows that lost body condition vs. 94% for cows that maintained body condition). Again this illustrates that cows that calve in the body condition score of 5 are very vulnerable to weather and suckling intensity stresses and ranchers must use good nutritional strategies after calving to avoid disastrous rebreeding performance.

As this Oklahoma research indicates, supplementation is expensive but not as expensive as losing 21% of next year's calf crop due to rebreeding failure. Contact me at the Extension office in Warsaw at (660) 438-5012 if you would like more detailed information on beef cow supplementation programs tailored to your operation. University of Missouri Extension is an equal opportunity / ADA institution.