Managing Feed Needs while Controlling Costs

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The answer is very simple.......
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Can’t get something for nothing
Cow energy requirements

90-120 critical days

Month After Calving

Energy Requirement % TDN

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
40 42 44 46 48 50 52 54 56 58 60
# Biological Priority for Nutrients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Milk Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Reproduction</td>
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</tbody>
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**Bottom line** - need to calve at BCS 5+ & maintain body weight post-calving
Feed needs

Feed costs
Currently we are going down an unknown road with no milestones, no guard rail and with limited visibility
Increasing Production Costs

- Impact of the big three
  - Fertilizer, Feed and Fuel
- “I can’t afford to fertilize my hay or pasture this year!”
- “No point in taking a soil test, I can’t afford the fertilizer!”

Kevin Ferguson 2011
Good financial records can at least lift the fog
U.S. Average Cow/Calf Cash Production Expenses

* Includes interest costs and a pasture rental charge.

Source: Livestock Marketing Information Center – Updated March 2011
Impact of herd size on cow costs
Annual operating costs per cow Eastern Uplands

USDA, Economic Research Service, 2010
Annual operating costs per cow Eastern Uplands

$419

54%

USDA, Economic Research Service, 2010
2011 ????
Where to economize?
A key difference between high and low profit beef herds is the annual costs of harvested feed.
Harvested feeds

- Cost of production and harvest
- Storage loss/cost
- Feeding loss
- Buy vs produce
- Capital Investment
Reduce Harvested Forage

Key Concepts
- Cow nutrient requirements
- Forage amount & nutrient supply

Key Options
- Stockpiled fescue
- Rotational grazing
- Annuals
- Crop Residues
Unrolling hay

Reduce overfeeding

Reduce winter mud

Increase dispersion of nutrients over farm

Hay rings vs unroller
Forage Test

- ASAP after harvest
- If shelter is limited, cover the best and earliest produced…. Identify & record location
- Match hay to stage of production and nutrient need
- Shop for supplements which balance hay
Comparing the Value of Feeds

- Need to calculate price corrected for nutrient concentration differences

Ex. 48% CP Soybean Meal @ $400 per ton
\[0.48 \times 2000 = 960 \text{ lbs of CP}\]
\[\frac{400}{960} = 41.6\text{¢ per lb of CP}\]

22% CP Corn Gluten Feed @ $180 per ton
\[0.22 \times 2000 = 440 \text{ lbs of CP}\]
\[\frac{180}{440} = 40.9\text{¢ per lb of CP}\]

- The more expensive feed is the more economical source of protein

- Need to consider energy, physical form, storage
Mineral options

Match forage mineral content, generally-
low in copper marginal in phosphorus
no benefit of feeding Hi-mag beyond spring
Summary- Nutrition Economics

- Meet cow’s nutritional needs (120d are critical)
- Maximize use of grazed forages/residue
- Minimize use of harvested forages
- Remember the balance of inputs and outputs related to forages and grazing management
- Test forages
  - Quality pays
  - Not everything needs the best
Summary— Nutrition Economics

- Consider purchasing hay
- Need to shelter at least 50% of hay crop
- Unroll hay rolls whenever possible
- Shop and purchase feed as cheaply as possible
  - don’t forget to include waste & added labor
  - Match supplement to nutrient need (protein or energy)
- Match mineral program to cow needs & programs
ARE WE DRIVING THE CATTLE OR ARE THEY DRIVING US?

COWBOY PHILOSOPHY
The road ahead will require both production and financial expertise.
Questions