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Watch nutrition/care for both cows and bulls in the final weeks of winter

Yes, February is just starting, and we're already thinking of spring; however, we can't forget that we still have some cold winter weather to deal with. While we haven't had to deal with excessive snow yet, the severely cold weather we had in January may have had impacts on your cow herd.

Once again, many producers are having to feed poor quality hay or corn stalks this winter. This type of forage can keep a cow's rumen filled and her appetite satiated, but it does not provide adequate nutrition. In order for the cow to maintain her body condition as well as provide for a growing fetal calf, she will need supplemental nutrition. This is true

especially in late gestation if the severe cold persists.

In order to support the growing fetus and maintain body condition, cows will need supplemental protein and energy if they are consuming poor quality forage. Additionally, as we observed last year, cows may need supplemental vitamin A and E since poor quality forage lacks these vitamins and any liver stores the cow accumulated last summer have been used up.

Larger calves possible

Another potential outcome of the severe

cold weather is larger calves at birth.

During times of severe cold, increased calf growth can be observed. This is thought to be primarily a result of increased blood flow to the core of the body in response to cold in the peripheral circulation. This increased blood flow provides the calf with extra nutrients that result in increased growth.

Decreasing feed to the cow won't alter this growth and can lead to weak cows.

Cow producers should be aware of the potential for increased birth weights and be ready to assist cows during calving as we may have more dystocia problems this year

If you are calving this February, make sure that wind breaks are in good condition to provide adequate protection for the cows and calves. Also provide extra bedding in calving areas to keep calves warm.

Protect bulls, too

Finally, don't forget your bulls. It is not uncommon after a cold winter such as this to have some bulls with frostbite-damaged scrotums and/or testicles. Provide bulls an area with protection from the wind as well as adequate bedding to keep their testicles protected.

Additionally, provide bulls with adequate feed to maintain their condition through the winter. Bulls that lose weight over the winter will need to put on extra weight before the breeding season. This can have adverse consequences if they are fed too hot of a ration prior to breeding.

Keep an eye on the condition of your cattle as we finish out the winter and adjust feeding as needed. It looks like another good year for cattle prices if you can get a healthy calf on the ground this spring.

Keeney's Corner

ABC Genetics Private Treaty bull sale beginning Feb. 20, 2014

After thirty years, we have reached the final segment of our journey on the road to greater consistency and predictability in maternal parent stock. As a reflection of this accomplishment, there is no longer a reason to have a public auction; all of our bulls are the same price and priced relative to April live futures; currently $1500 \times \$1.30 = \1950 . While some phenotypic differences will always exist in a breeding line, the genotype is such that no recognizable difference in breeding value exists in our bulls. Our selection priority has been for the maternal components of improved profitability; fertility {a 96% preg rate on all 250 spring calving 2013 females}, fewer problems, and efficiency of production by breeding and utilizing complimentary types in commercial production.

Our bulls are for sale exclusively to commercial producers; the only thing a registered breeder could accomplish with our cattle is dilute any prepotency. An understanding of closer breeding and of the need to separate selection into maternal/paternal lines as done by competing meat species is imperative to appreciating our program. Those still clinging to traditional phenotypic selection may come early and privately sort until satisfied; but rest assured that the last bull chosen in a pen has the same potential breeding value. All bulls will pass a breeding soundness test; any further guarantees are in the price and the pedigree is in the name Keeney Angus. The sale begins Feb 20, 2014; bulls can remain here until May 1, 2014 at the purchase price. We sell bulls over a number of states; and help arrange delivery at cost. Volume discount. Further information and cattle breeding discussion can be found at www.keeneyscorner.com.

Keeney Angus

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