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Year 'Round Supplementation Improves Pasture Utilization

It's been a challenge raising registered Angus cattle through the last 13 years of drought on the Bradley 3 Ranch in the Texas Panhandle.

"We've changed a lot of management over the last five or six years to cope with the drought," says James Henderson, one of the ranch's three owners.

Much of these changes has been in managing pastures and forage on the ranch, explains Henderson. "What we do now is we typically take the cattle off of all of our native pastures during the growing season and use that as stacked forage in the winter."

"We're a fall calving herd, and so we'll calve on those native pastures, and raise those calves. We have about 1,000 acres of Old World bluestem grass that's been divided into some paddocks. We'll move the cows into an intensive rotation grazing on that during the growing season, and we utilize the native pastures mostly as dormant forage in the winter and early spring."

Henderson says there are about 400 cows that are run on the 12,000 acre ranch. Bradley 3 Ranch sells about 200 Angus bulls per year. We also raise our own replacement females, so at any given time on the ranch, we're probably going to have 800 to 900 head of cattle."

Year 'Round Supplementation

One of the big management changes has been the implementation of year around supplementation with Purina® Sup-R-Lix®. "The Sup-R-Lix program that we're using on these cows really helps us a lot because we're maintaining body condition on the cows all the time, rather than trying to regain body condition."

Henderson says the cattle have access to Sup-R-Lix all year long. "We keep it out year 'round. In times when forage is good they don't consume hardly any at all. Other times when forage isn't as good, they will eat more."

"We're getting a whole lot better utilization of our pastures with Sup-R-Lix than before and that's allowed us to increase our stocking rates even in drought," explains Henderson.

Another advantage is that the ranch saves money in delivery costs by using Super-R-Lix. "Compared to a program of delivering cubes, the delivery cost of the Sup-R-Lix is about \$35 a head less on an annual basis.

Henderson's cattle have been on the year around Sup-R-Lix program for three years. He worked with Purina Cattle Nutritionist Kelly Sanders and Purina Field Representative John Gardner to help implement the program.

"We've worked a lot with them, and they've spent a lot of time here at the ranch," he says.

Henderson believes that Purina "is light years ahead in technology of any other feed company that I've talked to and they have a philosophy that fits really well with ours. They believe if they do the proper job of teaching, training, educating, and servicing, the product will sell itself, and we've always felt the same about our business.

Purina also has helped with nutrition programs for bull development, according to Henderson. "We're in the cattle genetics business, so obviously selling bulls is our paycheck. Purina has done a really nice job in helping us properly develop them."

The ranch uses Purina's Accuration®/Cattle Limiter, in combination with forage, for developing and conditioning bulls for greatest reproductive success, Henderson says.

Bradley 3 Ranch also uses Purina's Wind and Rain™ All Season Minerals that have been specifically designed to include multiple nutritional formulations to meet cattle need regardless of forage quality.

"Everything that we're using on the ranch is Purina," says Henderson.

It's difficult to know exactly when to provide supplements for your herd. You can't always tell when forage quality has changed, but your cows know. And with Purina's Intake Modifying Technology®, it just makes sense to be sure supplements are always available to you herd. They will consume a supplement only when they need it. Purina products with IM Technology will help you keep your cows in proper body condition for their life stage, get maximum value from your forage, increase the efficiency of your operation, and save you money on your overall feed bill in the process.

Contact your Purina dealer today to learn more about the benefits of year-around supplementation or for more information about Purina's other cattle nutrition products and programs.

Why It's Important to Have Supplements Always Available

Having nutritional supplements always available for your cattle to utilize during critical times can pay dividends.

Not meeting nutritional requirements of heifers and cows during the last third of pregnancy and the first 60 days of lactation, for example, can cost producers great economic loss, according to an Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet on winter supplementation of beef cows¹.

"Breeding animals not fed properly during these stages of production can be expected to exhibit low birth-weight calves, poor conception rates, greater calf death loss, longer intervals between calving and re-breeding, and depressed weaning weights of calves.

"Maintaining an acceptable body condition score throughout the year will help to minimize these losses."

Results of University of Nebraska research, reported in the Journal of Animal Science in 2007², showed that strategically supplementing cows with protein while grazing dormant winter range late gestation not only positively affects the cow, but has lasting affects on their heifer calves weight and reproductive performance.

The three-year Nebraska study showed that 88 percent of heifer calves from cows supplemented with protein during the last trimester achieved first-service pregnancy, compared with 45 percent of heifers out of cows that received no supplementation.

"Protein supplementation of cows grazing dormant Sandhills range during late gestation resulted in heifer progeny with increased body weight from weaning through 3 years of age," the research showed. "Perhaps more importantly, heifers from protein-supplemented cows had greater pregnancy rates and were more likely to calve in the initial 21 days of their first calving season."

References

1. <http://ohioline.osu.edu/as-fact/0001.html>
2. Martin, J. L., Vonnahme, K. A., Adams, D. C., Lardy, G. P., Funston, R.N. Effects of dam nutrition on growth and reproductive performance of heifer calves. J. Anim. Sci. 85:841-847. 2007.

Take Precautions When Introducing Newly Purchased Seed Stock

Health, nutrition considerations important when introducing new animals.

To help prevent the introduction of contagious diseases into your herd, bovine veterinary experts recommend that newly arriving cattle, such as seed stock, should be isolated for a minimum of 30 days.

Other recommendations to help you manage newly purchased seed stock include:

- Purchase seed stock only from herds in which adequate disease-prevention measures are practiced.
- Request health records for all incoming animals.
- Observe animals closely each day during the isolation period for early signs of disease.
- Sick animals should be isolated for at least one week or until all signs of disease are gone.
- Testing for common diseases, such as BVD and Johnes's disease, should be done early in the isolation period so the results will be available before the animal is put with other cattle in your herd.
- Deworming and vaccinating these animals are worthwhile practices.

Pay attention to nutrition

Nutritional considerations also are important to help you get the most from your investment in new seed stock. Bulls, for example, need to be fed to meet nutritional needs and ensure reproductive performance. Bulls that are either under- or over-fed will have lower sexual performance.

Bull nutrient needs differ depending upon age, size and activity level. For example, because yearling bulls are still growing, their nutritional requirements are higher than a mature bull.

Supplemental feed may be necessary to meet the nutritional requirements of young bulls or bulls that are on pasture. The nutrient requirements of bulls at various expected mature weights, body weights and average daily gains are listed in the accompanying table.

Table 1. Nutrient Requirements of Yearlings and Breeding Beef Bulls

Expected Mature Wt.	Body wt., lbs	Average Daily Gain, lbs.	Daily Dry Matter Intake, lbs	Total Digestible Nutrients, lbs.	Crude Protein, lbs.
	900	0.44	22.0	11.0	1.3
		3.12	21.5	17.2	2.2
1,700	1,300	0.44	29.0	14.5	1.6
		1.55	30.7	18.4	1.8
	1,700	0.00	32.9	15.1	1.8
		0.44	35.5	17.8	1.9
	1,000	0.40	23.8	11.9	1.5
		3.49	23.2	18.6	2.4
2,000	1,500	0.49	32.3	16.2	1.8
		1.73	34.1	20.5	2.0
	2,000	0.00	37.2	17.1	2.1
		0.49	40.1	20.1	2.1
	1,200	0.54	27.3	13.7	1.6
		3.84	26.6	21.3	2.7
2,300	1,700	0.54	35.5	17.8	2.0
		0.91	37.5	22.5	2.3
	2,300	0.00	44.5	20.5	2.3
		0.54	47.0	23.5	2.4

Don't overfeed and try to ensure that the bulls get adequate exercise. Overfeeding and lack of exercise not only wastes feed and money but it reduces fertility.

Herd bulls must be kept in good condition to be fertile and sexually active. According to the University of Arkansas Extension Service, a body condition score of 6 (where 1 = very thin and 9 = obese) is a good target for bulls at the beginning of breeding. Bulls in a body condition score of 6 are in high moderate condition with considerable fat cover over the ribs and tail-head and firm pressure needed to feel the spine.

Purina Mills has a variety of products, including highly palatable, complete nutritional diets and well balanced nutritional supplements to help with the nutritional management of cow-calf herds, including helping you provide adequate nutrition for newly purchased seed stock.

Visit with your Purina representative, who can help you determine which products best fit your beef production system and goals.