Management Considerations for March 2024

By Jason M. Warner, Ph.D., Extension Cow-Calf Specialist

Cow Herd Management
- Start post-calving nutrition programs for spring-calving females.
  - Begin lactation rations once first calving cycle is complete.
  - Make sure thin (BCS ≤ 4.0) females are on an increasing plane of nutrition going into breeding.
- Pregnancy check and wean fall-calving cows if not already done.
- Evaluate your mineral program for the coming spring and summer seasons.
  - What was your average consumption last year?
  - Do you need to make changes this year to achieve targeted consumption?
- Consider magnesium supplementation levels, particularly for lactating cows grazing wheat, rye, or triticale in the spring.
- If synchronizing females for breeding, schedule your protocols now in advance of the breeding season and mark your calendars.
  - Use the estrus synchronization planner available to you.
  - https://www.iowabeefcenter.org/estrussynch.html
  - Inventory your A.I. supplies and check your semen tanks.
- Evaluate herd bulls for BCS and adjust as needed prior to breeding.
  - Bulls need to be in a BCS ≥ 5.0 prior to the next season of use.
- Schedule breeding soundness examinations with your veterinarian.

Calf Management
- Market your fall-born calves if not already done.
- Schedule your spring calf working activities and visit with your veterinarian to discuss your calf health protocols.
- Monitor growth and pubertal development of replacement heifers.
  - Heifers should be having active estrous cycles prior to breeding.

General Management
- Make sure you complete your spring calving records!
  - Don’t forget late-calving females as you focus on other spring projects.
- Rethink your turn-out dates if pastures were stressed from drought last year.
  - Plan/adjust your feeding dates accordingly.
- Take inventory of any feed/orage that will be left over from winter.
- Cover piles or close bags if silage is left over and won’t be fed until fall.
- Clean up any soiled bedding or unused/wasted feed to reduce the breeding and development of stable flies as the weather warms up.
- Finish pasture management projects started last year:
  - Repair or replace fences as needed.
  - Burn if conditions allow, cut and pile trees, particularly Cedar trees!
  - Clean and repair tanks and equipment as needed so watering sources are working properly when cattle are turned out to pasture.
- If making bull selection decisions:
  - Review your herd performance relative to your marketing and genetic goals.
  - Study EPDs impacting your marketing and genetic goals and do your homework well before sale day.