

Ready for the pre-season?

Are you ready for the pre-season? No, not baseball. I was thinking more along the lines of calving season. For those who calve in the spring, it is getting down to crunch time to make your preparations.

Get your nutrition program fine-tuned.

You may have been supplementing cows and still allowing them to do some 'picking' prior to calving. And that can work, but you need to make sure you are meeting protein and energy requirements for the cows entering the last third of gestation. Their protein and energy needs jump by 25% during the last trimester compared to mid-gestation and if those needs aren't met, cows can start going backward and losing weight at a critical time during fetal development. Cows should be getting around 9% protein and 56% TDN (Total Digestible Nutrients) to maintain weight and meet the needs of fetal growth. If your cows could use a little extra body condition, we need to make adjustments to the TDN to allow for some extra gain.

Vitamins are critical in the pre-calving time frame. In particular, Vitamin A and E are necessary. Both of these vitamins accumulate in colostrum, and because they don't cross the placenta from the cow to the calf, Vitamin A and E need to be in the feed for them to put it in the colostrum. Vitamin A deficiencies are related to diarrhea in newborn animals of multiple species, underscoring its importance to the newborn calves. Vitamin E deficiencies are associated with increased incidence of retained placenta, which can lead to uterine infections and poor chances of re-breeding. The B-vitamins are made by the rumen microbes in cattle and are not necessary to supply in a mineral or supplement program for the cows. There is no benefit of adding B-vitamins to the rations of cows pre-calving.

Mineral programs are equally important as the vitamins prior to calving. Minerals essentially work the opposite of vitamins in the cows. Minerals cross the placenta to the calf but are very low in colostrum and milk. Supplying a high quality mineral to the cow prior to calving will help build liver concentrations of minerals in the calf which allow the calf to mobilize those stores after birth. This is essential to allowing a calf to respond to the antibodies in the colostrum. The minerals help build more immune cells to fight off those early calfhood diseases and influence calf vigor. Availa-4 minerals from Zinpro in products available through your Dakotaland Feeds dealer help build the fetal stores of mineral and give your calves a good start.

Rumensin to the cowherd is something we have been talking about for about 10 years now. The benefits are pretty clear once you have tried it. The cows stay in better condition on less feed. The Cow Balancer R800 product comes standard with the Availa-4 trace mineral package and we have the option of adding the Diamond V Yeast Culture to help further boost colostrum quality. It is an excellent fit for putting through your mixer wagon in a high roughage cow ration so you can be confident all of the cows are eating their mineral. It is designed for ½ lb per head per day in a pellet form. By adding 200 mg of Rumensin per cow into the diet, you can save approximately 10% in feed consumption every day. Plus, you get the added benefit of cleaning up the calving area from coccidia when you start feeding Rumensin at least 30 days prior to calving.

In a Nutshell:

- * Get your nutrition program fine-tuned prior to calving
- * Supply adequate vitamin A and E prior to calving
- * Minerals are critical to building fetal liver mineral levels
- * Rumensin saves feed and clean up coccidia
- * Nutrient deficiencies take a long time to catch up to you
- * There is no substitute for good nutrition
- * One size does not fit all- we can customize to your needs

READY FOR THE PRE-SEASON?

Don't hurt the factory. With calf prices down from last year and economics being tight, it can be tempting to try to skip the mineral program. The problem with almost any nutrient deficiency is that you never see an immediate problem (other than with water). Nutrient deficiencies take a long time to catch up with you. What you think is saving you money, can actually cost a lot in the long run. It can mean less vigorous calves at birth, more challenges with scours or respiratory disease, poor cycling rate post-calving and then poor breed-up for the next calf crop. It takes a long time for the problem to show up. Preg checking isn't just the result of one day's work. It is the 364 days prior to that day that shows how good you have done all year.

There is no substitute for good nutrition. You can't put on an extra body condition score overnight. You can't make good quality colostrum through a needle. You can inject calves with vigor. You can't fix re-breeding rates through a needle. All of those things need to be taken care of every single day of the year. If only every problem could be fixed through a needle or just overnight, imagine the issues we *wouldn't* have!

One size does not fit all. I have had this thought in my mind for several days now and I have told many people that, "There is more than one way to skin a cat." Whatever the situation is on your operation, let us help you find something that works for you. If you are the one that has to do the work, whatever supplement necessary needs to fit your program. The best mineral in the world doesn't do any good if it doesn't make it to the cow.

Prior preparation prevents poor performance. Make sure the cows are in good body condition, supply a quality mineral and vitamin package, feed Rumensin to help improve your feed efficiency, and talk to your vet about a vaccination program and if any newborn calf products should be used in your herd. A little preparation now can help us put healthy calves on the ground in a couple of months and get the cows ready for next season.

Roxanne Knock, PhD

Take advantage of discounts on mineral! Dakotaland Feeds is offering discounts of **\$40/T off for RangeLand Pro Minerals, \$20 off per pallet of Wind & Rain weatherized mineral or mineral tubs (including Stress Tubs) and \$10/T off the Cow Balancer products and cow liquids** for orders placed by March 31, 2019.

What do you need to be thinking about this time of year?

- * Remember to **HEAT TAPE lines on liquid systems**- this keeps the line fluid. C&R Supply has videos on how to maintain the John Blue pumps at <http://www.crsupply.com/index.php/products/liquid-feed/>
- * Get prepared for calving- get chains, OB sleeves, lube, and calf puller in place and *colostrum replacement* on hand
- * Get Stress tubs for the first and second calf heifers before calving
- * Feed Rumensin to the cows to improve feed efficiency and to limit environmental coccidiosis prior to calving
- * Check with your Livestock Production Specialist to see if your ration is meeting the calves' needs and matching up with your feed resources
- * Check your water source and make sure it is not freezing up- poor water intake can limit performance
- * Get BQA (Beef Quality Assurance) certified if you are selling finished cattle
- * Inventory your projected feed resources and project your winter feed needs so you can plan accordingly