

Fenceline

by Jody G. Holthaus

Meadowlark Extension District Agent

Livestock-Natural Resources

Back during those snow storms we were thinking delaying calving season was a pretty good idea. Unfortunately, this crazy weather has yet to straighten out. Even though it can get pretty cold at night the longer days seem warmer.

Cows should be in optimum condition at calving and should maintain that body condition during the breeding season. Body condition scores at calving should be at 5 or better. Studies are showing us that cows having less than BCS of 5 or less at calving time have the lowest conception rates. First calf heifers that are lower than 5 are very likely not to get rebred. The desirable BCS prior to calving would be 5 to 7. Feeding cows to these body condition scores will not increase calf size or calving difficulties.

If you did not group your cows by body condition scores at weaning, and you are noticing some thinner cows, possibly younger cows. Now would be a good time to sort them off and provide them with supplemental feed. Provide all cows with a good mineral, free choice. Control parasites and diseases. Develop replacement heifers to BCS of 6 by calving time. Provide adequate protein and energy to young cows to improve breeding rate.

I have the BRANDS program which can quickly help evaluate winter rations for your beef herd. It's an easy way to see if you're meeting their needs, and can easily be tweaked if you want to use some different feedstuffs. Give me a call if you'd like to run some rations.