

With winter months just around the corner, producers should begin developing a winter feeding program for their cattle- most specifically for the females that will be used as replacements. The best winter feeding plan is one that utilizes available forage to its fullest potential, ensures that the nutritional requirements of the cattle are met, and is simultaneously cost effective for the producer. This week we will discuss some things that can be done to achieve this in your operation in order to produce healthy cattle that perform well in their environment.

Standing, or stockpiled, forage occurs when plant growth is allowed to accumulate in a field (usually in the fall) and is used for late fall and winter grazing. This type of forage management is wise, as it utilizes available resources without incurring unnecessary winter feed costs. The most effective way to graze standing forage is by rotational or strip grazing. These grazing methods reduce wasting, which then extends the length of the grazing period, therefore causing a shorter hay feeding period. If properly utilized, stockpiled Bermudagrass may provide the required nutrition for dry pregnant cows through January, a much cheaper alternative compared to feeding hay.

It is always important to know the nutritional quality of any feed or forage provided to your cattle, so you may then calculate whether or not it is fulfilling their requirements. If the stockpiled forage alone is not meeting the female's nutritional requirements, some supplemental feeding may need to take place. There are numerous feed sources available that provide cattle with supplemental nutrition. Each operation is different, so it is best to find the supplement that best meets your herd's needs. If you do not have enough stockpiled forage to last all winter and hay must be fed, you should thoroughly assess its quantity and quality. What are the female's nutritional requirements? What is the nutritional content of the hay that you plan to feed? Do you have enough hay to meet the female's requirements throughout the feeding season? These are all important questions that should be carefully considered now before winter feeding begins. This will allow ample time to prepare for winter feeding and supplementing if necessary. If you need help developing a winter feeding plan to meet the nutritional requirements of your cattle, please contact us.

The 2014 Winter Pasture Seminar will be held Tuesday, September 23 at the Senior Citizens Center in Athens. Registration for the program will begin at 5:30pm. You can pre-register on or before September 19th by calling 903-675-6130.

Thanks,

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