

September 11, 2012

As stated in our August e-mail titled "Interpreting Hay Test Results", knowing quality of the hay fed can be used to make many decisions. This information is used to decide whether or not supplemental feeding is required to help the cows meet their protein requirements. If supplements are needed, calculations done using protein content of the hay determine how much and what kind of supplement should be given.

Once you know what type and how much supplement needs to be fed in order for the cows to fulfill their protein requirements, a winter feeding budget can be calculated. Using the same scenario used in the August e-mail we can accurately estimate how much per month it will cost to feed supplement to a cow in the winter months.

Based on her weight and dry matter intake, a 1200 lb. dry cow consuming 8% crude protein hay will meet her protein requirements without needing an additional source of protein. This hay alone will not meet the cow's protein requirements after she calves. To fulfill her requirements, supplement needs to be provided. Using simple calculations, we find that feeding 1.5 lb of 20% crude protein cubes per day, when fed with the hay, will ensure the cow is being supplied with the adequate amount of protein she requires. Using the price that is projected for this winter for a 50 lb bag of these 20% cubes, we find that we can expect to spend roughly \$10/cow/month in supplements when fed in conjunction with the 8% hay.

While daily feeding may be ideal in some cases, research has shown that every other day feeding, or even one day a week feeding is just as effective. This feeding method may be preferred for absentee land owners or in situations where the owner isn't able to go out and take care of his cattle on a daily basis. However, if this type of feeding is utilized, it is important to keep in mind that on feeding day, the cow needs to be fed not only for that day, but for the days she was not fed. For example, the cow in the above scenario requires 1.5 lb cubes/day to meet her protein requirements. If she is fed every other day, she would require 3 lb cubes per feeding. If she is fed once a week, she requires 10.5 lb cubes on that day.

Preparing a winter feeding budget ahead of time is very beneficial. It helps the producer develop a rough idea of whether or not it will be affordable to feed the whole herd through winter. If the producer finds that it is not feasible, there is still plenty of time to make culling decisions and adjustments to make winter feeding more affordable.

Contact Laura at Henderson County Veterinary Hospital if you have any questions or if you would like to know how to do the above calculations.

The Henderson County Beef Cattle Committee and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are sponsoring a Winter Pasture and Feeding Seminar next Monday September 17 at 6pm. For more information, or to pre-register on or before Friday September 14, please call 903-675-6130.