



# Cow-Calf Management Guide

## I. Last Trimester of Pregnancy (3 Months Before Calving)

**Management Objective**—Precondition cows to have strong, healthy calves and be ready to rebreed in 45 days.

**Biological cycle**—That series of events in the life of the cow from breeding and conception to weaning of her calf.

**Uterus**—The area of the female reproductive tract where the calf is carried during pregnancy.

**Heat period**—That stage in the reproductive cycle when a cow is receptive to the bull.

**Reproductive performance**—The measure of the regularity of production over a period of time.

**Nutritive requirements**—The nutrients that a cow requires for a given set of bodily functions.

### Points to Remember

- This is a very critical time in the *biological cycle* of the cow. The way she is fed and managed at this time will have a direct effect on her rebreeding schedule and the health of her calf. **CL331, 400**
- If a cow is to calve every 365 days, she must be bred within 83 days after calving. **CL331, 400, 406, 442**
- From calving until the *uterus* is in condition for pregnancy is approximately 40 days. This leaves only two *heat periods* for her to rebreed. The nutritional needs of cows increase rapidly the last 3 months of pregnancy. **CL331**
- A lack of feed intake is probably the greatest cause of poor *reproductive performance* in beef cattle. **CL319, 331, 333, 1130, 1170**
- The *nutritive requirements* of the cow are increased in late pregnancy because the fetus makes 70 percent of its growth in the last 3 months. **CL310, 331, 333, 380, 402**

**Quality**—A descriptive term of a feed in relation to that feed's ability to meet the nutrient needs of the cow.

**Energy**—A term used to describe the carbohydrate portion of a ration or feed.

**Protein**—An essential compound of all living organisms.

**Precalving**—Before the cow calves.

**Digestible protein**—The amount of the protein in the ration that is used by the animal.

**Fetal growth**—The growth of the unborn calf.

- Low *quality* winter feeds and poor management practices may allow serious nutritional disturbances to develop. **CL300, 301, 303, 305, 306, 313, 320, 330, 331, 619**
- Thin cows should be fed to gain weight during the winter. **CL331**
- Older and weak cows and first-calf heifers need extra feed. **CL331, 410, 413, 691**
- Underfed cows are slow to return to normal heat cycles. **CL331, 440**
- The level of *energy* fed before calving will affect the reproductive performance of beef cows. **CL325, 330, 331, 332, 333, 365, 370**
- Because the unborn calf is largely *protein*, the need for protein increases as calving time approaches. **CL300, 319, 370**
- “*Precalving*” nutrition of the mother cow has many important implications in the resistance of the calf to stress and disease. **CL300, 315, 325, 331**
- A dry, pregnant beef cow weighing 1,100 pounds would require about 18 pounds of dry feed per day and about three-fourths pound of *digestible protein*. **CL300, 310, 330, 370**
- Cows should be divided at this time and fed according to condition and age of the cow. **CL300, 720**
- Extra nutrients are required 90 days precalving to assure proper *fetal growth*, a healthy calf at birth, and a healthy mother that can milk. **CL315, 330, 331**

## Good Management Practices

1. **Divide cows for feeding.** To meet the feed needs of the different groups that make up the cow herd, you should divide them into groups with the same needs, such as first- and second-calf heifers, replacement heifers, older thin cows, and prime-of-life cows. **CL300, 380, 413, 601, 720**
2. **Provide mineral mixture free choice for all cows.** Trace mineral salt-phosphorus mixture should be provided at all times. Special minerals such as magnesium to prevent grass tetany or selenium should be added as needed. **CL300, 310, 312, 315, 628, 629**

3. Watch cows for:
  - **Prolapse**—Greatest incidence during last third of pregnancy. CL660
  - **Abortion**—Any abortions at this time should have a diagnosis if possible. CL603, 619, 636, 660, 662, 663, 675, 681, 683, 684
4. If you have external parasite buildup, provide control at this time. CL200, 212, 691
5. Handle cows as little as possible. Have good facilities design. CL601, 791, 792
6. Vaccinate cows before calving as scheduled in herd health program. CL200, 212, 605, 645, 654

## Plan Ahead

Prepare for calving.

- Get the hospital ready. CL447, 450, 602, 615
- Collect, clean, and repair calving tools and equipment. Have on hand all necessary sanitation equipment, obstetrical gloves, soaps, lubricants, etc. CL602, 615
- Have on hand some frozen colostrum, material for liquid supplements, bottles, nipples, probe feeder, etc. CL644, 646, 648, 649
- Repair calving facility and working pens. CL210, 790, 791, 792
- Review problems at calving. CL447
- Prevent nutritional problems. CL619, 627, 628, 629



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