SEPTEMBER 6TH, 2021

TRI-COUNTY LIVESTOCK NEWSLETTER

Serving residents of Anson, Stanly and Union County

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Upcoming Events

Title: Union County 4-H Livestock Show
Description: For more information contact Rachel Owens
Date: 9/18/21

Title: UCCA Field Day
Description: The Union County Cattlemen's Association will be holding a field day focusing on rotational grazing at Belle Terra Farms. 3101 Little Tom Starnes Rd Monroe, NC 28112 RSVP with Rachel Owens
Date: 9/25/21 Registration: 9:30 | Program: 10-12

Title: Stanly County Cattlemen's Association Meeting
Description: For more information contact Katelyn Stegall
Date: 9/27/21

For any meeting or program listed, persons with disabilities may request accommodations to participate by contacting the Extension Office where the meeting will be held by phone, email, or in person at least 7 days prior to the event.

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Livestock Show Highlights

Body Condition Score at Calving

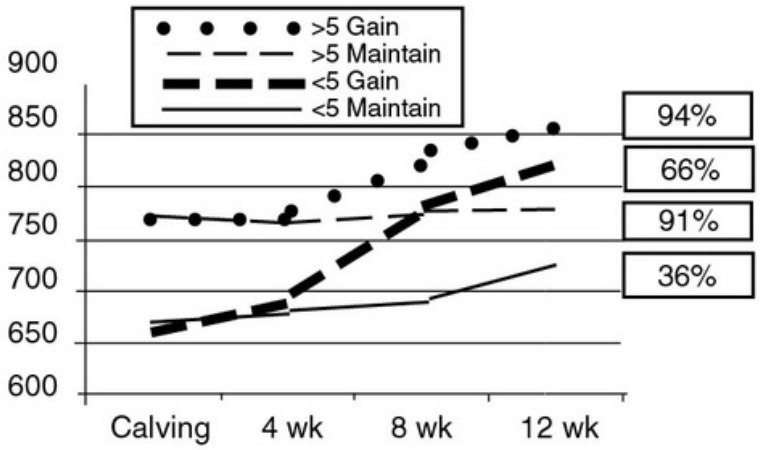
by Kinsey Everhart

Fetal development, delivery of calf, milk production, and reproductive tract repair are all stresses that require a considerable amount of energy. These stresses require the availability and utilization of large quantities of energy to enable cow to be rebred in the required 85 days. If energy intake falls below the amount needed to maintain body weight, stored energy and fat are used. After several weeks, a noticeable change can be seen in the appearance of the cow.

Body condition at calving is one of the greatest factors that influences rebreeding performance in the following breeding season. If cows are to maintain a calving interval of one year, they must conceive within 80 to 85 days after calving. Research shows that when both mature and young cows maintain body weight before parturition, they exhibited estrus sooner than cows that lost considerable body weight. The numeric system of body condition scoring is an excellent estimator of percent body fat in beef cattle.

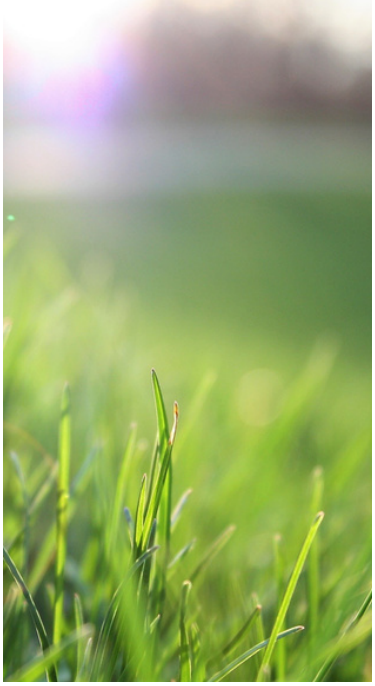
Oklahoma State University conducted a study on Hereford and Angus X Herford heifers. They evaluated the effects of body condition scores at calving and postpartum nutrition on rebreeding rates at 90 and 120 days postpartum. Heifers were divided into two groups in November and allowed to lose body condition or maintain body condition until calving in February and March. Each of these groups were further divided into groups that either gain weight and condition postpartum or maintain condition postpartum. The figure below illustrates the change in body weight of heifers that calved in a body condition score greater than five or those that calved in a body condition score less than or equal to 4.9. Thin heifers that were given ample opportunity to regain weight and body condition after calving actually weighed more and had a greater body condition by eight weeks than those heifers that had already had a good body condition at calving and maintained condition through breeding season. If you look at the rebreeding performance of this group (66%) it is significantly lower than the group that were in adequate body condition at calving and maintained condition through the breeding season (91%).

Cows should have a body condition score of 5 to 6 at calving. First calf heifers should have a body condition score of 6 at calving. After losing condition, it can be very expensive and difficult to regain body condition after calving to achieve an acceptable rebreeding percentage.



Overseeding With Winter Annuals

by Katelyn Stegall



When thinking of ways to manage feed costs, overseeding warm-season pastures with winter annuals may be an option. Overseeding pastures with winter annuals such as rye, annual ryegrass, oats, wheat, certain legumes, or a blend of these can be beneficial for both the animals and for the producer.

There are several benefits associated with overseeding pastures with winter annuals. For starters, winter annuals can extend the forage production of a pasture by roughly two months. Instead of a pasture being productive for just 6-8 months, you could have a productive pasture for 8-10 months. This can reduce the need for supplemental feeds during the winter months. Planting these winter annuals can also cut down on hoof damage in pasture, especially in wet winter months when the ground is soft and more susceptible to hoof damage. Another benefit of overseeding these winter annuals is the added nutritional value. Winter annuals produce high quality forage, even higher than that of some warm season grasses, so your animals will be able to graze higher quality forages for longer periods of time.

There are a few things to keep in mind for a successful overseeding of winter annuals. Seed to soil contact is very important, so there are steps you should take to ensure proper seed to soil contact. Grazing down or mowing your summer pasture is important before overseeding, as it prevents shading and can increase the establishment rate. It is also important to pay attention to planting dates for what variety you use, and wait until growth of summer grasses has slowed to overseed if you can to cut down on competition for these other growing forages.

The most commonly used winter annuals for overseeding are rye, wheat, oats, and annual ryegrass. Rye is the most common, and is cold-hardy and matures quickly. Wheat is similarly cold-hardy, but matures later than rye.Oats are the least cold-hardy of these, and will mature roughly around the same time as wheat. Planting oats can be risky, but if done in the proper time frame can be a great forage for your animals. Annual ryegrass will perform best in wet soils, and will produce high quality forage from March to May. For planting dates for all of these, contact your local Extension Agent, or the North Carolina Forage Planting Guide.

Soil fertility is very important for a good stand of winter annuals. If you have not done a soil test in your pastures in the last 3 years, you should get this testing done. This will determine fertilization needs, and help to plan nitrogen applications once a stand is established.

It is important to be patient, and wait until you have a stand of 6-8 inches to graze these winter annuals. If possible, a stubble height of 4-5 inches should remain after grazing an area to ensure regrowth. Something else to look out for is under grazing in the spring. The growing season of some warm season grasses and winter annuals like rye can overlap, so the pastures will need to be heavily grazed or mowed for hay.

For more information or questions about planting winter annuals, contact Katelyn, Kinsey, or Rachel!

Fall Armyworm Control in Pastures

by Rachel Owens

Fall Armyworm Larvae
Photo by Mikalya Grahm

This year there have been several reports of fall army worms damaging pastures. As the name suggests, these pests make their appearance in the late summer or early fall. These insects can destroy a pasture in a very short period of time, sometimes with the damage seeming to occur overnight. They feed on the leaf blades of pasture grasses, leaving behind only tough stems. This defoliation can stress and weaken pastures, leading to brown patches in the field that can rapidly increase in size. This damage reduces hay yields and forage available for grazing. They often travel in waves, searching for new forage.

Scouting for the fall armyworm is important, as they can very quickly become a problem. Be on the lookout for small striped larvae that range in color from light green to almost black. They have a distinctive “face” marking that looks like a light-colored inverted “Y”. These larvae feed for about 14 days before pupating into the adult moth. The last four days are when they eat the most and can do the most damage. In order to scout for the armyworm, look closely at the ground and ruffle the grass to dislodge any armyworms. Count the number of larvae within a square foot area. Do this at multiple sites throughout the field. If you average more than 3 caterpillars that are ¼ inch or longer per square foot then you have reached the threshold for treatment.

In addition, you can look for the typical warning signs of an infestation. When the larvae are small, they start by eating the underside of the leaves without eating all the way through, leaving the clear epidermis intact. This leaves a translucent patch on the leaf blade, usually by the tips. This can create a pale frosted appearance in a field in the early stages. Knowing what to look for can save a hay cutting.

Treatment for fall armyworm in pastures can include spraying or simply harvesting hay before the armyworms consume it all. If you decide to harvest in response to an armyworm infestation, make sure you do so immediately and that you have good hay-making weather. If you wait a couple of days the armyworms will harvest your field for you. It only takes them a few days to leave a field barren. Products that are approved for pastures can be found in this publication from NC State. Always be sure to read and follow all pesticide label warnings and directions.

Don’t wait until your grass is gone before making a decision. Scouting frequently and taking quick action can help save your pastures and hay fields this fall.