



BY RACHEL ENDECOTT, BEEF CATTLE SPECIALIST

COW SENSE CHRONICLE

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WINTER MANAGEMENT OF HERD BULLS

Greetings from Bozeman! As I write this, we are experiencing a polar vortex and our first taste of winter weather. This month, I'm going to expand on one of the bullet points from last month's Cow Sense Chronicle: winter management of herd bulls.

How do your bulls look this fall? Are they recovering well from breeding season, or do some need a little extra? Mature bulls may be able to get by on an all-forage diet, but young bulls should be around 75% of their mature body weight by the time they are 2 years old. For example, let's say you bought a 1250-pound yearling bull this spring, and he lost 200 pounds during the breeding season and he weighs 1050 pounds. If you expect him to weigh 2000 pounds at maturity, he needs to gain 450 pounds to weigh 1500 pounds (0.75×2000) by the time he turns two.

While it is important for thin bulls to achieve optimal body condition, it is also important not to overfeed bulls. Fat layers around the scrotum can interfere with temperature regulation, negatively impacting semen quality and production. Overfeeding can also lead to foot problems and soundness issues, and out-of-shape bulls are less likely to hustle to breed cows when turn out time rolls around.

I recommend that bulls receive a year-round mineral supplementation program just like the cows. Trace minerals like copper, zinc, manganese, and selenium, along with vitamins A and E are important antioxidants that can prevent sperm damage from stress.

Protection from inclement weather is a critical factor in winter herd bull management. Frostbite can hinder a bull's ability to raise and lower the testicles for proper temperature regulation. While mild frostbite has a good recovery rate, severe frostbite can leave a bull infertile. Ensure that bulls have the ability to get out the wind and are not lying on unbedded, frozen ground.

Bulls should not be overlooked when it comes to herd health and vaccinations. Contact your veterinarian for assistance in designing a program that makes sense for your operation. Giving bulls plenty of room to exercise and to allow for the pecking order to sort out are other steps to ensure bulls make it through winter and are ready to breed cows for you next spring.

Have you heard about Holy Cow Ranches? This non-profit offers a unique way to help others in need. Learn more about it below.



Holy Cow Ranches is a new non-profit organization that exists to aid both families and individuals who find themselves in seasons of food insecurity. They build self-sustaining ranches and raise cows in order to have a continual supply of beef to give away to those in need. HCR has designed their program to benefit fellow hardworking men and woman and to empower them to continue their efforts to get back up on their feet. They do so by taking some of the burden of providing food off of their shoulders.

Holy Cow Ranches is uniquely designed to be a network of ranchers, cowboys, businesses, farmers, like-minded individuals, landowners, churches, and other non-profits who all join together to get the beef from the pasture to the plate. HCR has provided an outlet for the community at large to pull together and take care of each other rather than rely on outside sources.

There are many ways to partner with this unique cause. One of the most common ways for ranchers to get involved is by donating bred cull cows. Here's how it works: A rancher loans bred cull cows, HCR raises the calf off of them and that calf becomes a part of the HCR herd. They then breed the cull cow back and take them to the sale barn to sell on the rancher's behalf the next fall. After that first year everything the rancher gave is given back to them and they have helped build Holy Cow Ranches herd.

This highlights just one of the many win/win opportunities to help out Holy Cow Ranches. There are many more ways to get involved and become part of helping out those who are slipping through the cracks. To find out more information on how to help please check out www.holycowranches.org or call J.T. Heaps at (406) 223-0274.



The Collegiate Stockgrowers at MSU are raffling off "Cow Heaven", a Harvey Rattey bronze cast by Boyer Bronze! Proceeds from the raffle will support club educational activities. The winner will be drawn at the Grand Finale Banquet at the Montana Stockgrowers Association Convention on Saturday, December 13, 2014 (need not be present to win). Tickets are \$10 each or 6 for \$50. If you'd like to purchase tickets, contact a Collegiate Stockgrowers at MSU member or the CSG-MSU advisor, Ra-

Questions for Rachel?
rachel.endecott@montana.edu
406-994-3747