



COW SENSE CHRONICLE

SEPTEMBER 2016

FALL READINESS CHECKLIST

Greetings from Bozeman! The MSU campus is buzzing again with students, a sure sign of fall. Are you and your cow herd ready?

- Are your corrals and working facilities in good shape and ready for an influx of cattle? Dust can aggravate respiratory disease issues like summer pneumonia, so if you have a way to wet down dusty pens, your cattle and your crew will probably be grateful.
- Does your current calf pre-weaning vaccination program meet your needs? Weaning will probably be the most stress your calves have experienced in their life, and that stress puts a lot of pressure and demand on the immune system. Set your calves up to be successful before, during, and after weaning. Contact your local veterinarian for vaccination program options and to find out what works best for your situation.
- How do the cows look coming into weaning? The post-weaning time period is a great time to critically evaluate cow body condition. Are there thin cows who might benefit from being sorted off and run for a time with the young cows? The post-weaning time period during the cow's second trimester is when her nutrient requirements are lowest. Putting weight on thin cows is least expensive and most efficient at this time. Speaking of body condition, you might take a look at your herd bulls, too.
- Evaluate your culling and replacement policies. Are you keeping cows that aren't paying for themselves? Hopefully pregnancy status goes without saying, but open cows should head down the road. Soundness, age/teeth, udder structure, and calf quality are all important to consider as well. If you raise your own replacement heifers, consider their development program. Are you satisfied with the approach you've been taking, or would you like different results from your heifer development program?

- If you've been reading Cow Sense Chronicle for any length of time, hopefully I've convinced you that testing your hay for nutrient analysis is a critical component of a nutrition plan. It's hard to manage if you don't measure first! From your forage test results, you can build a more accurate and economical winter feeding plan. Do you need to purchase supplement? Does your high-protein second cutting need to be diluted with a lower quality hay to more optimally match cow requirements? Do you have enough hay? Does your grain hay have a cautionary level of nitrates? If so, do you have a feeding plan to avoid nitrate toxicity problems?
- Are you happy with your mineral supplementation program? Adding a mineral panel to those hay tests will help you to know more about mineral intake - and don't forget the minerals in water! Contact your local MSU Extension office for assistance with forage and water sampling and testing. I recommend a year-round mineral program.
- How are your herd bulls faring after the breeding season? Most bulls will lose 100-300 pounds during the breeding season. Mature bulls might 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. It's recommended that bulls be in body condition score 6 at turnout. Do you have a plan to ensure bulls will be ready when you need them next year? 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 turnout 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.
- Fall is a great time for parasite control. Contact your veterinarian if you have questions about what products to use or about changing up your protocols to reduce resistance. Did you use fly tags this summer? Remove them at the same time as you pregnancy check and/or administer parasite control products.

Have a great September - thanks for reading!