



Ten Tips to More Profitable Cow-Calf Operation

- 1 Wean Calves Early** - Heavier calves, better body condition and reproduction in the cow herd, plus better performance after calves are in the feed yard should give every rancher the right reasons to wean calves early. Weaning calves at 90 days of age (200 lb) resulted in less morbidity, increased ADG in the feedlot (+.33 lb), and improved feedlot feed efficiency compared to calves weaned at 152 or 205 days of age according to research conducted at the University of Illinois. Cows in the 90 day weaning group had higher body condition scores, and had 12% higher pregnancy rate than cows from the groups weaned at 152 or 205 days.
- 2 Precondition Calves** - Preconditioned calves are worth more than calves that have not been preconditioned. Why? Preconditioned calves have about \$40 per head LOWER cost of production in the feedlot. Improved feedlot performance, lower mortality and morbidity, lower medication cost and lower cost of gain result when calves are vaccinated, weaned, castrated, dehorned, and fed prior to being shipped to a feedlot. For best results: vaccinate against *Clostridial* organisms, castrate (knife cut), and dehorn when calves are 2-4 months of age. At 4-6 weeks before weaning, vaccinate against IBR-PI₃-BVD-BRSV using a chemically altered modified live vaccine that is approved for use in calves nursing cows. At weaning, vaccinate against IBR-PI₃-BVD-BRSV (true modified live vaccine), vaccinate against *Clostridial* organisms, vaccinate against *Haemophilus somnus*, deworm calves (Ivomec F), administer vitamin E injectable (1,000-2,000 IU). Use subcutaneous injections in the neck whenever possible. DO NOT USE intramuscular injections in the hindquarters!
- 3 Use Body Condition Scoring of Cows** - Excessively thin cows do not breed. Overly fat cows have increased metabolic problems and distocia problems. Body condition scoring is the best tool available to match feed to cow nutrient needs. Cows should have a body condition score (BCS) of 5 at calving (6 for heifers). Mature cows weighing 1050 lb at BCS 5, will weigh approx. 975 lbs at BCS 3, and 1125 lbs at BCS 7. Body condition scoring should be done 3 or 4 times per year and cows fed according to body condition. Overly fat cows (BCS 8 or 9) should be fed on a restricted energy intake. Cows in extremely thin condition (BCS 1-3) need supplemental energy to gain weight and maintain breeding seasons. Cows with BCS 4-6 are in good condition and should not need much supplemental feed, other than a high-quality mineral supplement and medium quality forages.
- 4 Cull Open Cows** - Cows are expensive incubators, but open cows represent an expense with no source of income. Cull open cows and replace them with heifers that can produce 1 calf every 12 months. Cull open heifers, too!
- 5 Feed Thin Cows** - Thin cows should be fed supplemental feed to bring their BCS to 5 at calving. Cows with BCS of 3 or 4 will not come into heat and will not breed without specially formulated supplemental feed. With these special breeder cubes, the cow will cycle and breed, but must be fed to higher body condition if the pregnancy is to be sustained. The benefit is having the cow calve with the rest of the herd.

From the code of the old west:

The length of a conversation don't tell nothin' about the size of the intellect.

6 Maximize Feed Resources - Utilize rotational grazing programs, creep feeding, and supplemental feeding of cows when needed. Legume hay is often the least expensive source of supplemental protein. Carrying capacity of pasture can be greatly increased by fertilization and rotational grazing. Supplementing cows on stockpiled grass pastures is often times less expensive than harvesting hay from those pastures. 12-month pasture systems can be used in which cattle are harvesting their own feed year-round. For many parts of the US, energy limits productivity - not protein. Do not supplement cows with expensive protein blocks unless forage protein content is below 7% (DM basis). Mineral supplementation with high-bioavailable sources improves reproductive performance of the breeding herd and immune system competence.

7 Manage Mineral Intake - Daily intake of mineral products needs to be monitored and adjustments made to maintain intake within prescribed ranges. If intake is too low, performance suffers. If intake is too high, cost of production is increased without increased performance. When intake of a mineral product is too high, provide supplemental salt or change to loose salt instead of blocks. To reduce consumption, move mineral away from water source and loafing areas. To increase consumption, place mineral near water and loafing areas, increase number of mineral feeders, and use block salt, or remove salt.

8 Retain Ownership - Feedlots buy feeder cattle for a price which shows some level of profit. Ranchers can usually make more money to retain ownership of their cattle and have them custom fed, rather than selling them. Calves that have been preconditioned will pay a bigger dividend to the rancher who retains ownership. Many feedlots in the high plains have retained ownership programs and feeder financing programs. Ranchers interested in retaining ownership of calves should contact BABY DOLL Nutrition Ltd. for names of feed yards close to the ranch that feed calves on a retained ownership program.

9 Clean/Replace Waterers - Water is one of the most overlooked nutrients. Developing a habit to regularly clean automatic waterers can improve performance, reduce sickness, and improved profitability. Send water sample for water analysis periodically to help identify potential problems before they become costly.

10 Use the BABY DOLL Program - No other feed program has the BABY DOLL advantages! We start with consistent quality. We use fixed formulas - no least-cost formulation. All products are designed for optimum performance with high levels of critical nutrients and based on years of ongoing research and development. BABY DOLL products exclusively use *Poly-Plex*[™] polysaccharide complex organic trace minerals for zinc, copper, manganese and iron to enhance immune system function and reproductive performance. These are the most bioavailable forms of these minerals. You will never see inferior, low bioavailable forms (oxides or sulfates) of these nutrients in BABY DOLL feed products. We formulate with high levels of vitamins A, D₃ and E, and we use premium ingredients like distillers dried grains, whey, fish meal, and alfalfa meal to provide proper nutrients and improve digestibility and palatability. When you read our feed tags, you'll see each ingredient listed in the order of inclusion in the formula and you'll find that we guarantee the levels of vitamins and minerals well beyond the AAFCO regulations.