

# COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

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## **Oklahoma wheat pasture idling in neutral**

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Beautiful fall weather this past week was a welcome relief to wheat pasture producers. Driving around western Oklahoma the past few days confirmed two impressions for me. First, there is a lot of wheat, some ready to graze and, with the moisture we have received, there will abundant wheat pasture very soon. Secondly, it is still very wet. Every wheat field I drove past had water standing in low spots, terraces and swales. Some of the wheat has turned a bit yellow due, I suspect, to a lack of sun. With a few days of sunshine, the fields will dry and the wheat pasture will be off to the races.

Sunshine also helped kick-start feeder markets, at least for stocker calves. Though corrals are still sloppy, the weather this past week was much more favorable for receiving stockers. Oklahoma auction prices for four-weight steers were higher by \$9-11/cwt. last week. Prices for steers 550 pounds and up were mostly steady with the previous week. Auction volume jumped sharply last week, up 27 percent from the same week last year. This follows the two middle weeks of October when Oklahoma auction volume was down 34 percent from the same two weeks one year ago. Total combined Oklahoma auction volume last week was up 83 percent over the prior week.

The largest Oklahoma auction runs typically occur from late October through the middle of November. Seasonally large auction runs are expected the next three weeks. However, I expect considerable stocker demand to match larger supply and most likely hold prices steady with about equal chances of moving higher or lower. With ample wheat pasture virtually assured at this point, producers may stock wheat pastures a bit heavier than usual leading to additional stocker demand in the coming weeks.

The first Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (OQBN) sale of the fall season was held Thursday, October 25 in Woodward, Oklahoma. Though cattle numbers were somewhat limited, OQBN calves brought significant premiums over non-weaned, unvaccinated calves. Wet, sloppy weather this fall has shined a light on stocker calf health and OQBN sales provide an opportunity to source stocker calves less likely to have health problems.

Upcoming 2018 OQBN sales include:

November 6	OKC West, El Reno
November 7	Cherokee Sales Co, Cherokee
November 13	McAlester Stockyards, McAlester
November 14	Payne County Stockyards, Perkins
November 17	Blackwell Livestock, Blackwell
November 29	Woodward Livestock, Woodward
December 4	OKC West, El Reno

## **Maintain body condition between calving and the breeding season. (“Don’t let ‘em slip”)**

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

On a recent drive through Northeast Oklahoma and Southeast Kansas, numerous fall-calving cows and calves were observed from the highway. The cows were mostly in good body condition (body condition scores of 5 and 6) and many had adequate quantities of standing warm season forages available to them.

Body condition score at calving is the single most important trait determining when a cow resumes heat cycles and therefore when she is likely to re-conceive for the next calf crop. However, it is also very important to avoid condition loss between calving and the breeding season to maintain excellent rebreeding performance. Fall calving cows normally are in good body condition when they calve in September and October. Body condition changes from the time the cow calves until she begins the breeding season can also play a significant role in the rebreeding success story. This appears to be most important to those cows that calve in the marginal condition score range of "4" or "5".

A two-year Oklahoma State University study shows the impact of losing body condition in the period from calving to the start of the breeding season. This study was conducted with spring-calving cows, but the “lesson-learned” applies to fall calving cows as well. Seventy-five cows in year 1 and seventy cows in year two were randomly allotted to LOSE body condition from calving (beginning February 11) until mid April or MAINTAIN body condition during the same time frame. Cows were exposed to fertile bulls for 90 days each year starting May 1. Pregnancy rate was determined at 70 days after the breeding season. **Cows that were fed to maintain body condition from calving until the beginning of the breeding season averaged 94% pregnant, while those that calved in similar body condition but lost nearly one full condition score were 73% rebred.** The body condition that was maintained throughout late

pregnancy until calving time must be maintained until rebreeding to accomplish high rebreeding rates.

By studying the nutrient requirement tables for lactating beef cows, we can learn that an 1100 pound cow needs about 2.5 pounds of crude protein per day. She should receive approximately 1 pound of protein from the standing grass and/or grass hay she consumes free choice. Therefore we need to provide 1.5 pounds of protein via supplements. If we are feeding a high protein cube such as a 40% protein supplement, she will need about 3.75 pounds of supplement daily. If the supplement is a 30% supplement then 5 pounds per day will be needed. Maintaining the body condition through the breeding season should be rewarded with a high percentage calf crop the following year.

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