

HARDING COUNTY AG NEWS

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2008 has been an eventful year in the ag industry from losing our TB status to the implementation of COOL and Premise Registration. It has also been a challenging year with the financial and commodity markets taking a downward turn. 2009 will see many new changes. A new president will take office, and a brand new congressional delegation will take the reins for New Mexico. I hope that they will work with the livestock industry in New Mexico.

There are many things going on in the ag industry right now that will affect producers at a local and national level. If you all have questions with anything, please feel free to give me a call.

TB Status

As most of you are aware, the Livestock Board has submitted an application to USDA requesting split-state status. This means that if approved, there will be a smaller, regionalized area subject to the rules and requirements for moving cattle. The rest of the state will be business as usual. They are shooting for a March 1, 2009 agreement.



Forage Sample Analysis for Harding County-Supplementing Fundamentals 2008

If you recall, in 2004 monitoring sites were set up throughout the county as a better means for determining loss for FSA programs. As a bonus, the clippings were sent to be analyzed for nutrient content. 2008 marks the 5th year of reporting the nutrient analysis of the forage samples. We will do this each year hoping that it will aid you in your supplementing decisions. If you have questions about a site nearest you, please call the office.

These values are on a dry matter basis representing ranches from one end of the county to another. Samples were taken on October 27 and 28.

2008 Forage Sampling Data- Harding County

#	CP%	ADF%	TDN%	Calcium	Phosphorus	Aluminum	Copper	Iron	Manganese	Molybdenum	Zinc	RFV
1	4.56	44.59	42.35	0.29	0.06	377	5.7	327	28.7	0.73	15.6	71
2	7.04	39.16	49.68	0.48	0.11	301	6.56	392	43.5	1.09	17.1	82
3	5.33	42.43	45.27	0.33	0.05	459	6.39	276	39.5	0.81	12.7	70
4	3.67	45.34	41.34	0.2	0.07	172	3.89	134	25.8	1.2	9.02	69
5	4.73	43.21	44.21	0.43	0.09	310	5.1	212	40.4	1.4	12	72
6	4.06	44.39	42.62	0.39	0.08	390	3.93	354	67.9	1.91	9.15	69
7	5.36	40.65	47.67	0.48	0.05	1170	7.78	679	80.7	1.44	15.2	77
8	6.77	42.75	44.84	0.44	0.12	622	6.48	382	95.3	1	17.5	75
9	4.16	44.84	42.01	0.36	0.09	238	4.22	122	33.7	1.38	10.2	69
10	4.65	46.3	40.04	0.41	0.07	430	6.82	215	28.6	0.72	17.7	65
11	5.94	43.1	44.36	0.27	0.06	300	4.73	220	30.6	0.46	14.1	68
12	7.05	38.66	50.36	0.41	0.11	565	6.77	379	48.8	0.86	15.5	79
	5.28	42.95	44.56	0.37	0.08	444.50	5.70	307.67	46.96	1.08	13.81	72.17

It is ironic to note that in 2007 CP averaged 5.27%. In the 3 years before that, CP averaged 4.42% (2006-4.36, 2005-3.97, 2004-4.93). It is interesting that it was actually this high in 2008, as a good portion of the county had very little moisture until August and there was little leaf growth. This chart indicates that we should be supplementing protein in amounts that help increase forage digestibility. When crude protein levels are below 7%, we should start to think about supplementing. That is pretty much every winter in Harding County. In order to determine how much to feed and how often, ask yourself a simple question:

Do my cows have grass to eat in the pasture? If yes, is it brown or green? If green, don't feed. If brown, protein is likely deficient and inhibiting digestion. Feed a high protein supplement greater than or equal to 32% CP at .1-.3% of body weight per day. If forage is inadequate, de-stock. Then determine if green or brown. If green, supplement a 20% or less CP source at .4-.8% of body weight per day, as energy is deficient. If brown, supplement a 20-28% CP source at .3-.5% of body weight per day. If forage shortage is severe and brown, supplement with a 20% or less CP source at .4-.8% of body weight per day and then hope it rains.

This is simply a guide to help, and is not perfect. It simply says to use high protein in small amounts/d if you have grass and higher energy in larger amounts/d if you don't.

Higher protein feeds will cost more per ton than higher energy feeds because corn and other cereal starches are usually cheaper. However, it is useful to figure cost on a \$/lb CP basis because you will feed less of it and hopefully get more bang for your buck on a daily forage utilization basis.

Remember that these comments are for cows. Growing and developing animals may require more energy for their growth and maintenance requirements.

Mineral supplementation is a tricky issue. I would pay attention to the Phosphorus, Copper, and Zinc. The requirements for cattle are: **.18-.22% for P, 10-12ppm for Cu and 30-40ppm for Zn.** This data shows that

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all 3 of these are deficient (copper marginal). We all know that this country is low P, and most folks that feed a mineral have the required P in it. Furthermore, Cu and Zn deficiencies have been the blame for low immune response in calves from NE New Mexico. That, and the fact the high Fe and Mo levels can inhibit them from working. Ironically, some folks don't have any trouble with health in their calves and don't even feed a mineral. It is a very regional issue (even pasture to pasture).



A New Era

The above information is provided to you for your own information and is simply a generic guide. People have different philosophies on supplementing and most have been centered on cheap grain sources. Cheap grain led to relatively cheap feed supplements, which in turn lead to more feeding, which in turn leads to habit. Feeding cows has become habitual for the agricultural industry because of corn averaging 2\$/bushel the last 25 years. Welcome to 2009. Folks, cheap grain is a thing of the past in light of "alternative energy-mania". Who would have thought that 3.50\$ corn, 8.00\$ soybeans, and 2.00\$ gas would be a blessing? We have accepted these prices as "good" because we were dealing with 6.50\$ corn, 4.00\$ gas, etc. The point is, commodities go up and down but we are in a higher threshold and retail has trouble coming down after absorbing a higher margin. Our president elect is a huge ethanol supporter coming from the corn haven state of Illinois. It will be interesting to see what happens to grain prices after the new year kicks in and if bankrupt ethanol plants get a bail out boost to keep corn as the king of commodities.

If you're a pivot grain farmer, you're happy. If you're a beef raiser in Harding County, you have to find ways to reduce your feed bill. High supplement prices are here to stay, so change your habit. I am not saying don't feed at all. Cattle have to perform to their genetic potential and you have to take care of them. However, you can tweak things based on stage of production, class of cattle, protection in pasture or no protection, etc. Here are some ideas to consider.

1. Base your feeding decisions on body condition, not emotion.

It is easy to want to give Bossy a little extra when she does not really need it for the same reason you get that second helping of cake and don't really need it. If her condition is holding up where it needs to be, she is doing fine.

2. Consider stripping calves early.

This may not always work, but these late August rains and warm falls can give you the opportunity to get cows to some green prior to winter dormancy. They can fill up and put on weight prior to cold weather and recover. With a little luck, under conservative stocking rates, these cows are flushed and can stay in good flesh all winter and won't have to be fed until calving. A cow in good shape the 3rd trimester recovers easier than bringing a thin cow back to par after calving. The negative side of this is losing pounds of calf. Make sure the feed savings is more than the additional income of more pounds weaned, especially in this time frame where additional weight is rewarded.

3. Consider calving later.

A lot of folks are talking about the merits of calving later. You can mull this one over for yourself. When I say later, I mean May and June as a lot of folks are already calving in March and April in this country. I know profitable ranchers that calve in January, profitable ranchers that calve in March, and profitable ranchers that calve in June. The merits of calving later are that the heaviest requirements for your cows are met with the best nutritional months. Therefore you save on feeding. You calve with the antelope, with nature, on green grass. You may not have to feed all year (that is *if* you have green in May or June). The downside is, "what do I do with a 350-400 pound calf in October/November? Yes, they *use* to bring more per pound, but never "dollared" up better to heavier calves. Now, they don't even bring more per pound. What do you do when an 800 lb steer is worth 110\$/cwt and the 4-weights are worth 115\$/cwt? It is also harder for a buyer to "break them even" when they have to go past the April futures board, because the April board is always 5-8 dollars/cwt higher than the June/August boards. A six-weight calf will come out in April/May. You almost have to hold these calves over and do something different with them. The marketing becomes an issue. So, it's a trade. I think you have to find balance. Spend less, make more, but not extremes on either side. That is up for you to determine.

4. Select replacements carefully.

Have you ever seen those easy fleshing, big barreled, deep ribbed cows that seem to stay fat year round no matter the circumstances? Keep their daughters. We here a lot of talk about low maintenance cows today and efficiency. We don't have an EPD yet for efficiency or fleshing ability, but the DNA work is getting there. Ease of flesh and do-ability is heritable. I am not advocating dwarfism or cattle that don't fit the industry.

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However, there are cows out there that wean 50% of their weight, weigh 1150-1200 lbs and are built right and need very little feed.

5. Take extra care of the “young-ens”.

Young stock are too much of an investment not to take care of them. Put them where the better grass is and let them express their potential. Separate them from mature stock, if possible. If grown out right, they will require less feed when they mature. Older cattle (solid mouth) are able to stay in better shape with less. Young cattle that are “stunted” never grow out, or perform right.

5. Price feed on a cost per lb of crude protein basis.

High protein feeds generally cost more, but you get more bang for your buck. They work really well if you have grass. For example: A 20% cube at 300\$/ton (bulk with freight) costs .75\$/lb CP. A 38% cube at 380\$/ton (bulk with freight) costs .50\$/lb CP. Feeding 3lbs per day of the 20% will cost you .45\$/day and feeding 1.5lbs per day of the 38% will cost you .28\$/day and you will deliver the same amount of protein. Research shows that you can deliver up to a week’s requirement in one feeding of the higher protein supplement. That is, you could put out 10.5 lbs/cow (38%) and up to 14lbs per cow at one feeding per week with no detrimental affect on grazing, digestion and performance. Doing this with a 20% would cause grazing inhibition and a substitution effect. The following is a table composed of various feedstuffs that I have had calls about with area prices and their associated cost on a ton basis and on a crude protein basis.



	Cost/ton (Freight included)	Protein Percentage	Cost per pound of Crude Protein
20% Cube	300\$	20%	.75\$
38% Cube	380\$	38%	.50\$
Alfalfa (green)	200\$	18%	.55\$
Tubs (High moisture, cooked)	850\$	35-40%	1.21\$

Good quality alfalfa is high as the dairy demand is great. However, relative to other feed options, for the first time, alfalfa could be competitive as a supplement source as well. Hay has always been fed to *replace* grass when covered with a foot of snow. However, relative to other grain price increases, you could feed hay as cheaply as a

cube in supplement to grass. You not only get the protein, but you get the savings in forage not consumed. Cooked tubs have gained a lot of momentum the past few years due to the “convenience” aspect and the fuel savings during these high dollar fuel times. They definitely have a place, but be careful with the extra processing costs associated with them. At consumption levels of 1.5- 2.5 lbs per day, you are talking about .85\$/day in feed costs. That is 48\$ per cow over a 120 day feeding period that you would have to save in gas and delivery expense to break even over feeding a 20% cube.

In closing, nobody, including this agent, has all the answers to eliminating or reducing the feed costs to run a cow. There are many factors that play into why an operation does certain things including climate, topography, environment, resources, etc. You have to do what makes you money. However, these are just ideas to think about when trying to cut your feed costs. As the saying goes, “what goes up must come down”. This is true when it comes to cattle prices/income, but inversely, on the expense side in an agricultural setting, “what goes up, stays up”.

Bunkhouse Christmas

By S.Omar Barker

Twas Christmas Eve out on the ranch, and all the winter crew
Was settin' 'round the bunkhouse fire with nothin' else to do
But let their fancies wander on the thoughts of Christmas chuck,
And what they'd like the best to eat if just they had the luck
To set down to a table where the feast was laid so thick
That all they'd have to do was reach and take their choice and pick.

Young Sleepy Kid, the wrangler, claims he'd love a stummick-ache
From stuffin' steady half a day on choclit-frosted cake.
"A slab of turkey breast, " smacks Pete, "and good ol' punkin' pie!"
"I'd reach for oyster dressin'!" Lobo Luther heaves a sigh.
"It ain't no Christmas feed for me," says little Charlie Moss,
"Without brown turkey gravy and some red cranberry sauce!"
"Mince pie!" avers ol' Swaller-Fork. "The kind my ma could make.
It beats your punkin' forty ways—and also choclit cake!"

So each they named their fancy, till their chops begun to drip,
Then ol' Pop Williams gives a snort and rubs his crippled hip.
He hitches to the window, sorter sizin' up the night.
"Well, boys," he says, "it's Christmas Eve, and if I figger right,
That snow's too deep for travel, so before I hit the hay,
Upon the subject now in hand I'll have my little say.
It ain't what's in your stummick that's the most important part.
It's the feelin's of your gizzard, or in other words, your heart.
A-doin' others kindness is the road to Christmas cheer,
But that, of course, ain't possible, the way we're snowbound here.

It looks like all that we can do for our good Christmas deed
Is hustle all the livestock in and give 'em extry feed.
To hungry cows an extry fork of hay will seem as nice
As when a hungry cowboy finds a raisin in his rice.
And as for favorite Christmas chuck, I'll name mine now, to wit:
It's beef and beans and biskits—'cause I know that's what we'll git!"



From our bunkhouse to yours, the extension office wishes you an awesome Christmas season and I hope 2009 treats you well. Enjoy your biskits.

If you have any questions or need any more information, please fee free to call the office at 505-673-2341 or cell at 643-7517.

Best Regards,
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County Extension Agent