

Post Rock Extension District Column

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Beef herd management tips for July!

Summer hot temperatures are definitely here and just in time for county fair season!!! Be sure and check out our Post Rock Extension District website at www.postrock.ksu.edu for all the fair activities around our district in Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne and Smith counties.

With the hot temperatures, it is critical for livestock owners to follow certain guidelines to insure the animals are safe. The cow-calf enterprise is the most prominent component of the livestock sector in this area, so producers are continually faced with management decisions every day.

Here are a few beef herd management guidelines to follow during the month of July.

With hot temperatures, it is important to provide **plenty of clean, fresh water**. On average, a 1,300-pound cow (not with calf/nursing) takes about 14 gallons of water per day at about 90 degrees F. So cows in milk or still nursing a calf would take even more at about 17-20 gallons/day. So adequate water is critical with our weather conditions!

Provide **free-choice mineral** to correct any mineral deficiencies or imbalances. Be sure and monitor the intake of your herd to insure that levels are consistent with the label specifications. Having a feed analysis of your forage will help you “fine-tune” your mineral supplementation.

Pasture management is a critical component of a beef herd and it is important to monitor the grazing conditions and rotate pastures if possible. The Post Rock Extension District conducts a Leasing Arrangements Survey every year which includes the pasture component with part of the survey data that includes the average stocking rate. If you are interested in the survey data for each of the counties, the lease survey reports are posted at our website at <https://www.postrock.k-state.edu/crops/lease-surveys/>.

A great feed resource following wheat harvest is the **residue or straw**. Ammoniating wheat straw can make it almost as digestible and as readily eaten as average prairie hay, but you need to follow the proper guidelines. The best time for utilizing the ammoniating process of the wheat straw is immediately after harvest, prior to the deterioration by the weather. The ammoniating process is temperature sensitive and is fastest during hot days. Apply 3% Anhydrous Ammonia or about 60 pounds/ton of straw. Do NOT ammoniate wheat hay or any other intermediate or high-quality forage as the production of imidazole can cause cattle hyperactivity and death. If the ammoniating is done properly, it can double the crude protein content of the forage along with enhancing intake and can be very cost effective.

For detailed instructions on ammoniating wheat straw, K-State Research and Extension has a publication “Ammoniating Low Quality Forages” at <https://www.asi.k-state.edu/doc/forage/fora12.pdf> or in any of our Post Rock District Offices or on our website under the “Livestock” tab on the left and then under “Hot Topics”.

You might consider early weaning if drought conditions develop or get worse and also consider creep feeding only if it may be cost effective.

On the herd health side, be sure and **monitor pink eye** and treat if necessary. **Fly control** is also very important as it can cause problems, so consider all the options for control including price and efficiency that would dictate the best options to use.

Monitoring and keeping an eye on the **hooves of your cattle**, especially foot rot, is so important for maintaining structural soundness. Promptly treat any foot rot cases immediately.

With high temperatures along with humidity, avoid handling and transporting cattle during the hottest part of the day, if possible, to try to reduce heat stress.

Vaccinate replacement heifers for Brucellosis if within the proper age range of 4-10 months and continue your anaplasmosis control program by contacting your local veterinarian for specific updates and guidelines.

Let’s move to forage and pasture management. Check and maintain **summer water supplies** and place mineral feeders strategically to enhance the grazing distribution. Be sure to harvest hay in a timely manner to focus on quality and not just quantity. Generally, the preferred timely cutting of sudan or sudan hybrids for hay are in the boot stage, normally three to four feet in height. It is also a good idea to check for nitrates in the field BEFORE harvesting it for hay. Plan hay storage placement wisely as this will help maintain the quality of the hay. Putting hay conveniently near feeding sites reduces labor, time demands and equipment repair cost.

Lastly, maintaining strong **dependable fences** are a must! Good fences and good brands make good neighbors! Check equipment (sprayers, dust bags, oilers or haying equipment) and repair or replace as needed. Be sure and have parts on hand so as to minimize down time that can make a significant difference in hay quality.

If you have additional questions on livestock, give us a call or stop by any of our Post Rock District Offices in Beloit, Lincoln, Mankato, Osborne or Smith Center.

Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith counties. Sandra may be contacted at swick@ksu.edu or by calling Smith Center, 282-6823, Beloit 738-3597, Lincoln 524-4432, Mankato 378-3174, or Osborne 346-2521. Join us on Facebook at “Post Rock Extension” along with our blog site at postrockextension.blogspot.com. Also remember our website is www.postrock.ksu.edu and my twitter account is @PRDcrops.