



Feed Scoop

303 W. First St., La Junta, CO ♦ 719-384-4463 ♦ www.wwfeed.com ♦ Fall 2011 beef issue

In drought, wean calves early!

Have you considered the benefits of early-weaning calves? Many believe we're in a 30-year drought cycle and 2002 was just a dry-run, with 2011 and coming years to continue with below average precipitation.

Consider the benefits of early-weaning:

■ **Improved cow condition.** Getting those big nursing calves off the cows before the quality of grass drops off too much in the fall is one of the easiest ways to keep your cows in good shape. Drying up a lactating cow reduces her protein requirements by about 20% and her energy requirements by 30%. That means she will eat less grass while putting on more pounds before winter hits. That translates into benefit #2.

■ **Reduced winter feed costs.** Cows in good condition going into winter will need less supplementation during the winter. That's because a smooth, healthy cow is better insulated, requiring less feed energy to stay warm, plus you aren't playing catch-up on your thinner cows, trying to get them fed up before calving season. And, if we are hit with another winter like 2007, cows in good shape going *continued* ►



Giant rubber tire tanks in stock

If you've driven by WW Feed & Supply lately, you probably know that we are now a dealer for Giant Rubber Water Tanks. Tanks are available in a variety of sizes, but we currently have 7, 8, 9, 10 & 12 ½ -foot sizes in stock. We can get truckloads of any available size delivered direct to your ranch if you have a big project in mind.

For permanent installations of stock tanks, there is simply nothing better than these tanks, made by recycling giant tires from heavy construction and mining equipment. The tanks never rust, can't be dented or bent and are even bullet resistant. In addition, the black color helps keep water warmer in the winter, reducing the amount of ice you have to cut. And if you do have to chop ice, you don't have to worry about an errant swing of the axe damaging your tank.

Call or stop by for more information on this great way to save time, money and headaches when installing or replacing permanent stock water tanks.

Beef mineral sale in September



WW Feed & Supply's beef mineral will aid your cowherd, while our special sale will make it easier on your wallet. Feeding a balanced, complete mineral package is essential to a healthy calf crop. So, for September 2011, we're offering a LONG-TON promotion on beef mineral. For every 10 bags of mineral you purchase, we'll give you an 11th bag FREE. As a further bonus, for each full ton you purchase and pick up at one time, you'll receive an extra bag for a total of 5 free bags. For this special we have a variety of minerals on hand, including our popular 12:9 high copper, no selenium mineral that is balanced &

customized for this area. With this special you'll save about \$3-4 per bag compared to the normal price. Sale runs through Sept. 30th, 2011.

Early weaning continued ►

into storms like that will come out in better shape as well.

■ **Early breed back.** If cows are in better shape at the start of winter, they will likely be in better condition at calving time as well. And cows in better shape at calving are more likely to breed back in a timely manner. That means a shorter calving season, with older, bigger calves in a more uniform group. That means more money in your pocket.

■ **Increase pasture carrying capacity.** By pulling calves off the cow a month or two early, as well as reducing the cows' requirement for grass during that time period, you may be able to increase the size of your cowherd without increasing your land requirement. More cows on the same number of acres equals more PROFIT.

■ **Rest your pastures.** Instead of increasing the number of cows you run, you might want to use the reduced amount of grass required for your herd to give your pastures a rest.

■ **Calf performance.** This works a couple of different ways. By getting your cows bred back early, the average size of your calves will increase at any given time during the growing season. Let me give you a personal example. We summer our cows on Timberlake Grazing Association between Cheraw and La Junta. We traditionally weaned 550 pound calves about the first of November. In 1997 we had a dry summer and the cows were starting to lose condition, so we pulled the calves off the last week of August weighing 475 pounds. You may remember the storm that hit in late October that year. Those dry cows came through that storm in great shape, so we have consistently weaned around Sept. 1 ever since. Within three years, our weaning weights had increased from 475 pounds to 525. We were within 25 pounds of our traditional weaning weight, but doing it 60 days earlier! All because our cows were breeding up and calving earlier in the season.

Secondly, you might have noticed from our original weaning weights of 475 versus 550 pounds that our calves were not exactly pouring on the pounds during the last 60 days they were nursing the cow. By putting the calves on feed in early September we were able to increase their gain during September and October and sell more pounds at year-end.



■ **Calf health.** Believe it or not, there are fewer health problems when weaning in early September than in late-October or November. This was a concern for us when we started weaning early. Lots of folks told us that the hot temperatures of September would mean more pneumonia, more death loss and more medicine cost. Wrong. I won't pretend to know exactly why, but we have had far less health problems with weaned calves since we started early-weaning. It might be the warm days/cold nights of October and November, or perhaps the calves have retained

more of their maternal antibodies when weaned early, or something else entirely. I just know that we spend less on antibiotics.

■ **Increased marketing options.** By having your calves weaned early you have more chances to sell at an opportune time. If wheat pasture is good, you have weaned calves ready to sell at exactly the right time to turn out on wheat. If feeder weight cattle are selling well, your calves will weigh more at an earlier date, letting you hit that strong market for yearling weight cattle. And if you decide to own your cattle all the way to slaughter, then by weaning early you are more likely to hit the strong spring market rather than the seasonally weak summer fed cattle market.

■ **Improved quality grade.** Particularly if you retain ownership to slaughter, this can be quite important. Research has consistently shown that the earlier calves are put on a grain-based diet, the more likely they are to grade Choice. And quality has become the buzzword for feedlot cattle in recent years.

Are there disadvantages to early-weaning? Probably a few, but you'll think of those on your own. Then compare those disadvantages and increased costs to the benefits, increased income and reduced expenses gained by early-weaning and see how you come out. If you want more information, or just want to visit about our experiences, stop by or give us a call at WW Feed & Supply.



Medicated top-dress products keep calves healthy

When the vaccination program just hasn't had time to work or when you unload a truckload of bawling calves from 1000 miles away, its time to get proactive in your approach to animal health. There are several medicated top-dress products to help keep calves healthy. We keep several on hand.



Got a pen full of coughing, snotty-nosed calves? Try an antibiotic utilizing CTC (chlortetracycline). We keep 10-gram pellets in stock, so you can mix it right in the ration to reduce the number of pulls and get that pen of calves gaining faster.

AS 700 crumbles (chlortetracycline & sulfamethazine) are a preventative top-dress to mix with your own ration until the calves are on feed and the vaccinations have had time to work.

Having unexplained sickness or seeing blood in calves' stools? Use either Amprolium or Deccox crumbles to treat and prevent coccidiosis.

Looking for a way to improve gain and efficiency in your calves, as well as keep coccidiosis under control? Use Rumensin crumbles to maximize the gain and health of your growing calves.

WW also has a number of calf starter feeds and protein supplement pellets with some of these additives already included to make your job easier. Stop in & let us help you choose the right program for your situation.

Watch timing on winter protein contract

While it's nearly 100° outside, it's hard to think ahead to winter. But fall is traditionally the best economic time to contract your herd's winter protein needs.

Anything that comes out of the ground has seen its price skyrocket in recent years. That includes everything from gold and oil to corn and hay. This year seems likely to test cattle producers feeding strategies even more than usual.

As most ranchers know, brood cows need protein supplementation during the winter months and this winter's needs will require good business planning.

Supplementation is important since typical protein levels of dry winter grama grass are 3 to 6%. Since even dry cows in mid-gestation need a minimum of 7% protein for efficient digestion of forage and to maintain themselves and their growing fetus, supplementation of some sort is necessary. As winter progresses and calving time approaches those needs rise to about 8%. After calving, as the cow starts milking, protein needs rise to 9 to 10% of the total diet. First-calf heifers, heavy-milking cows and cows in thin body condition may require more supplementation.

Thus, one of the main questions that cattlemen should be asking is how to provide that protein most economically and conveniently. We'd like to help you explore options:

- Liquid feed – Mix 30 is a high-energy alternative to the typical urea and molasses liquid feeds. Mix 30 is a natural, palatable, consistent and nutrient-rich blend of corn and soy ingredients. This liquid feed,

which supplies a combination of protein and energy, seems certain to be one of the most economical feeding options this winter for producers with adequate forage. We deliver by the semi load, you can check out one of our transport trailers or you can pick it up in your own container.

- Cubes – We will have 20% cubes available, as well as mid and high protein options, depending on your needs. Those cubes are manufactured by either Purina or ADM, so quality control of both ingredients and finished product is excellent, but the prices are quite competitive. We also handle the 26% high-fat sunflower cube from Colorado Mills, which has become one of our most popular winter feeds. We can deliver truckloads of cubes, bag or bulk, direct to your ranch or we keep bagged and bulk product in inventory at the feedstore. We even sell T&S Trip Hopper cube feeders to help you measure out the appropriate amount of daily feed.

- Tubs – The most convenient way to provide protein is with self-fed protein tubs, however tubs are usually the most expensive option. We carry fortified 30% protein and 20% protein cow tubs.

- Hay – Alfalfa is the polar opposite of tubs. Depending on price and quality, alfalfa may be a good way to stretch grass supplies. However, hay requires time, labor, and regular pasture trips with the hidden costs for high-priced fuel, oil & tires. And with the drought ravaged states of Texas and Oklahoma pulling hay out of Colorado as fast as they can load the trucks, alfalfa will likely be one of the most costly options this winter.

Retaining calves? Start 'em fast

Calf prices look like they will be good this fall and many ranchers will likely load their calves and “wean them on the truck” on the way to the sale barn. But depending on your forage situation you may be able to retain and feed your calves for one to three months and realize a bigger profit. Our preconditioning, receiving and weaning rations are complete "start 'em fast" programs to help you realize the maximum profit from your calf crop. Options include:

- Pre-Conditioning/ Receiving Chow is a highly-palatable weaning pellet by Purina Mills. It's a fortified, 12% protein pellet with chlortetracycline & sulfamethazine to aid in reducing stress. This product is the original, proven weaning feed from Purina that has been used by stockmen for years to get calves off to fast start.
- Pre-Con 5 is another product from Purina that was released just last year. It is designed to use at a 5 pound per day feeding rate. The protein is higher than in the original Pre-Conditioning Chow, and the vitamins and minerals are concentrated as well. If you have plenty of your own feedstuffs, particularly grass or hay, this product may be the ideal way to get your weaned calves off to a fast start and save some money in the process.
- Stress tubs from Purina are an excellent tool to get calves eating faster, while staying healthier and strengthening the immune system.
- Custom rations are available. We can custom design weaning and growing rations specifically for your operation, using available roughage and tailoring average daily gains to meet your goals.

Let us help you get your calves off to a healthy start so they can live up to their performance potential. Call or stop by and see Curt to review the options best for you.