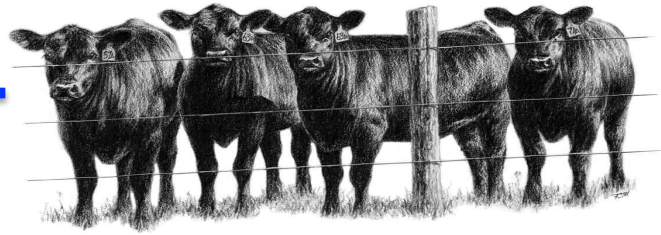


# Extension

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## Cattle Call



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### Preparing for Calving Season

*John Cothren, Livestock Agent, Wilkes County*

Calving time is when the rubber hits the road in the cow business. After all, without a live – and thrifty – calf, all the anticipated payoff of expenditures in genetics, cow health, facilities, feed, labor, etc., is just wasted dollars. As many producers start their fall calving season, there are several tips to be mindful of to ensure the next calf crop can safely be on the ground. For some, this time of the year is just "another day at the office," because they have taken the necessary steps to ensure as few problems as possible. For others, I hope this article will help reduce some of the problems they might incur. As we strive to improve the beef operation over time, it's never too early to be thinking about the next calving season.



**Make sure all females are in the correct body condition score (BCS).** This is an often misunderstood and overlooked part of the management operation. Cows should be in a BCS of 5.5 to 6.5 at calving. This BCS ensures two things: The cows will have enough energy for the laborious task of parturition, and they are in the proper BCS for rebreeding. A thin cow sometimes won't have enough energy and will just give up during labor. Additionally, cows below BCS 5 at rebreeding exhibit lower conception rates. Reports have shown as much as a 25 percent or more breeding rate reduction for thin cows.

**Be prepared - OB chains, calf jack, and fresh batteries in flashlights.** It may seem obvious to some, but checking to make sure the calving equipment is where it is supposed to be is time well spent. I know at my place, things have a tendency to get moved throughout the year! While you're at it, make sure your flashlights have fresh batteries and the spotlight in the truck is still in working condition.

**Have a working area that is clean, well lit and functional.** Make sure the head gate on the squeeze chute is adjusted to fit cows and not calves. Having adequate light when you have to pull a calf is beneficial. Have clean, fresh hay available in the calving pen.

**Feed in the evening to reduce nighttime calving.** Studies have shown a response to evening feeding and its effects on nighttime calving. In essence, feeding late in the day or early evening will reduce the amount of calves being born at night. This enables you to reduce overnight labor costs for your hired help and allows you to get some much-needed rest.

**Have nice, clean, dry pasture for calving.** If you cannot easily see or get to the cows in a pasture, the likelihood of running into trouble increases. Have the cows close to handling/working facilities in case you have to assist a cow. The pasture, hopefully, has not been grazed for a while and has plenty of forage available. The standing forage helps keep the cows clean (less mud) and increases the health of both the cow and calf.

**Know the signs.** It is important to know proper presentation of the calf. The soles of the hooves should be pointing down. If they are in any other position, trouble could be ahead. Know when to say when! If the cow is worn out and lacking energy, she may need help. Keep your veterinarian's phone number programmed into your cell phone.

**Move cows and calves to a different pasture after calving.** Moving the cows to a different pasture after calving simplifies the monitoring process since there are fewer cows to watch. This is a good time to pair the cows to the calves. Again, make sure to use a pasture that has plenty of standing forage available for the cows.

## What Will You Feed This Winter?

Allison Brown, Livestock Agent, Alexander County



My article was supposed to be about stockpiling fescue for winter grazing. However stockpiling will not be an option if we do not get adequate rainfall. So I thought a better topic might be “Plan Now for Winter Feeding”. If it does not start raining regularly soon, most of us will not get a second cutting of hay. Therefore plans need to be made now on how to get through winter on half our normal hay supply. Many corn producers have also experienced drought and a disappointing corn crop. Therefore many cornfields that are usually harvested for grain will now be chopped for silage. Contact these growers NOW and pre-purchase. Most producers will allow you to purchase now for later delivery (when you are ready for it), as most beef producers do not have silos or storage capabilities. Transferring silage from farm to farm may result in some loss due to spoilage. To reduce loss due to spoilage, specialist recommend transferring in cooler weather, re-pack silage to expel oxygen, and cover. Bagged silage is a great option that would eliminate spoilage from transfer and may be one to consider. Shelled corn may be another option for smaller producers to consider. Shelled corn offers easier storage and feeding options. It can be a great way to extend what hay you have in inventory. It is important to inventory your feed on hand and determine how much you will need to get through the winter months. Do not wait till you have a month’s supply of hay left to look for additional feedstuffs. They may not be available and if they are, you definitely won’t like the price!

Herd reduction is also an important option to consider. Market those open, older, or “small calf raising” cows now while they are still thriving and fleshy enough to bring a decent price on the market. Don’t let these poorer performing cows continue to slide by and take up bunk space needed by your higher performing brood cows. Plan to test your hay and silage so that you can make sure to meet your herd’s nutritional needs. Well-eared, good quality corn silage will have a crude protein content (CP) somewhere around 9%, with a total digestible nutrient (TDN) content of about 68%. Silage made from drought stressed corn does not have the same nutrient values. Energy content (TDN) will be lower. How much lower depends upon the amount of corn grain that developed. Fiber levels will also be higher since there are fewer corn ears. On the other hand, CP values may be one to two units higher. Corn silage in normal years will come close to meeting your cow’s energy requirements but will fall short on protein. Quality hay will meet and exceed the energy requirements and fill the gap on protein, but of course everyone’s version of quality is different. Contact your local Extension Agent for assistance with collecting samples and sending them to NCDA for analysis.

For many beef producers this fall and winter will be a challenging time to feed the beef herd. Feed options are available to beef producers, however much thought, investigation, and cost analysis should be done to determine which option is right for you. But don’t wait to figure it out. **Start NOW!**

### Nutritional Requirements

Cows nursing calves, average milking ability (10 lb milk/day), first 3-4 months postpartum

Body Weight lb	Avg. Daily Gain lb.	Dry Matter Intake lb.	Crude Protein %	Crude Protein lb.	TDN %	TDN lbs.	Ca %	P%
1200	0.0	23.0	9.3	2.1	56	12.8	.27	.22

### ++ Extension Cattle Call Giveaway ++

Congratulations to Connie Deal of Alexander County. He won ***5 bags of Southern States Beef Breeder Minerals*** donated by Southern States. Next month we will announce our next giveaway!

*Reference to brand names or commercial services is for educational information only and should not be construed as an endorsement of the product or services by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service or discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned.*

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