

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM26 – Managing calving to coincide with forage availability



Enhancement Description

This enhancement uses a controlled breeding season to match livestock nutrient requirements to available pasture forage and reduce supplemental feeding. This enhancement is applicable to all grazing livestock.

Land Use Applicability

Pastureland and rangeland

Benefits

Managing calving to coincide with the production of palatable, high quality pasture matches forage availability to the peak nutrient needs of beef cows and allows nursing calves to use pasture for much of their growth. The result is improved animal health for lactation and reproduction, lower calf death losses and more efficient use of labor and resources. Matching livestock feed requirements to when forage is most abundant and of the highest quality reduces dependency on supplemental feed, and it saves energy associated with hay production and harvest.

Criteria

Based on forage type and season of growth, use Land Grant University and/or state developed recommendations for controlled breeding and calving seasons (single and/or split) to plan the start and end dates for calving that will match the operation’s herd requirements with forage availability. This enhancement recognizes that time is needed to adjust the controlled breeding and calving season for the operation. The desired start and end dates for calving are based on:

1. Calving (within a herd) taking place within a 90-day or less time period
2. Calving occurring four to six weeks prior to initial availability of good quality pasture

Additionally,

3. Cow – calf pairs are on or are moved to pasture as soon as possible after birth, e.g., they are not left in dry lots or small calving pastures for extended time periods
4. 50% of breeding females are transitioned by the third year of the contract
5. 75% of breeding females are transitioned by the end of the contract period

Documentation Requirements

Document annually by herd the:

1. Percentage of breeding females with a projected calving date that falls within the established calving period
2. Number of calf births occurring between the desired start and end dates
3. Dominant forage type grazed
4. Acres of available pasture



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

IDAHO ADDENDUM 2011

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM26 – Managing Calving [or Lambing] to coincide with forage availability

Additional guidance for managing calving/lambing:

A controlled breeding program will be developed to match the operation's herd requirements with forage availability. Calving and lambing start date should be planned no earlier than April.

For additional information, refer to the following documents:

Adams, DC, RT Clark, TJ Klopfenstein, and JD Volesky. 1996. Matching the cow with the forage resources. *Rangelands* 18(2): 57-62.
[http://www.cnr.uidaho.edu/range456/readings/Adams_et_al_Matching_the_Cow_with_Forage_Resources\(Rangelands1996\).pdf](http://www.cnr.uidaho.edu/range456/readings/Adams_et_al_Matching_the_Cow_with_Forage_Resources(Rangelands1996).pdf)

Idaho NRCS Plant Materials Technical Note 11, *Pasture – Species Selections and Grazing Management Guidelines*. ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/ID/programs/technotes/tn11_pasture.pdf

Kruse, RE, MW Tess, EE Grings, RE Short, RK Heitschmidt, WA Phillips, and HS Mayeux. 2008. *Evaluation of beef cattle operations utilizing different seasons of calving, weaning strategies, postweaning management, and retained ownership*. *Professional Animal Scientist* 24: 319-327.
http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/publications/publications.htm?seq_no_115=167581

May, GJ, LW Van Tassell, MA Smith, and JW Waggoner. 1999. *Delayed calving in Wyoming*. *Rangelands* 21(3): 8-12.

May, GJ, LW Van Tassell, MA Smith, and JW Waggoner. 1998. *Optimal feeding cost strategies associated with early and late calving seasons*. American Agricultural Economics Association annual meeting, Salt Lake City.
<http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/20878/1/spmayg01.pdf>

University of Idaho Bulletin 547, *Idaho Forage Handbook*.
<http://info.ag.uidaho.edu/forage/index.html>

Whittier, JC, RC Torell, B Bruce, D Chamberlin, J Carr, and B Zollinger. Time of weaning and cow condition. University of Nevada, Cattle Producer's Library CL 747.
<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/files/ag/other/cl747.pdf>

**This activity may NOT be used with the following enhancements:
ANM23, PLT01, SQE02**

**Potential duplicate practices:
528 – Prescribed grazing**