

Nutrition

Setting up a Plan

Setting up a successful nutritional plan for Angus cattle is easier said than done. Producers have several details to consider for cattle to express their full genetic ability. Issues include: climate and environment, budget, resources, reproductive cycle and age.

While weighing your options, keep in mind that it is better to pay a little more for nutrient-rich, high-quality feed than pay less for lower-quality feed. A county extension agent, livestock specialist or feed salesman can help design a well-balanced, economical feed program.

CREEP-FEEDING

Angus cows are excellent mothers and provide plenty of nutrient-rich milk to raise healthy calves. Some producers use other tools to help boost the growth of their calves.

One method, creep-feeding, can help when nutrition for cows becomes limited due to heavy stocking rates or dry weather.

Although creep-feeding may increase weaning weights and reduce stress at weaning, there are some disadvantages. First, creep-feeding could make it more difficult to identify cows with inferior milking abilities since calves will continue to be healthy and grow due to the creep feed. Second, creep-feeding can make calves too fat, which can result in decreased production.

Use coarsely cracked grains such as corn, oats, barley or grain sorghum for best results. Intake should not exceed 1 percent of the animal's body weight and contain approximately 14 percent protein content.

POSTWEANING

A beef cow's milk nutritional value peaks two to three months after the calf is born, and the calf needs to be weaned 150-220 days of age.

Weaning is a stressful process on both the dam and

calf, and proper care and management is essential. If done properly the calf will continue to grow in order to reach its maximum yearling weight and frame, without becoming over conditioned.

If the calf weighs between 500 and 600 pounds at weaning and has the genetic ability to weigh 800 pounds at a year of age, they must gain about 200-300 pounds between weaning and yearling. This means the ideal target for the calf is an average daily gain (ADG) of 2 pounds per day. To reach this goal, feed approximately 1.5 percent of the calf's body weight per day with a quality grain ration.

The most commonly fed grains include, but are not limited to, corn and oats. Feed your calf corn that is whole kernel or very coarsely milled. Oats and barley can be fed whole or rolled, and they work well in rations.

Grain sorghum, coarsely milled, has lower energy content than corn; expect slightly lower gains over corn.

Wheat is sometimes used, but not at more than one-third of the ration; ruminants do not respond well to a high-wheat ration.

Always start feed gradually, and wait around 30 days for them to eat their maximum amount of feed.

OTHER IMPORTANT FEED ADDITIVES

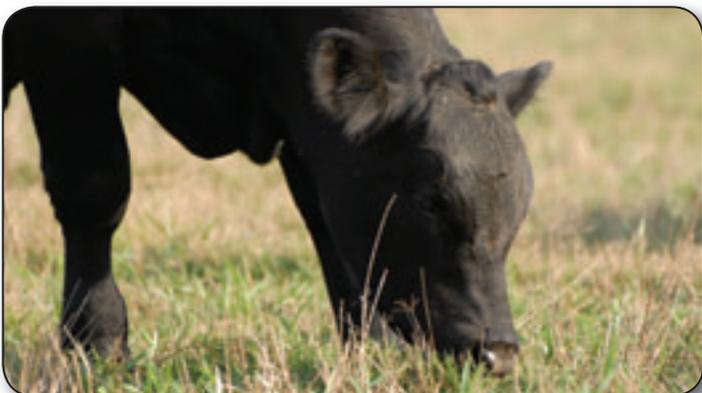
It is crucial to feed cattle more than grain. Other items in a proper feed ration include: protein, minerals, vitamins and good-quality forages.

The quality of the forage will effect your cattle's performance, appearance and herd health. It will also determine the additional nutritional needs. Add a vitamin A supplement if leafy and bright green legume hay; dehydrated alfalfa meal; sun-bleached or rain-bleached legumes; grass hay; silage; soybean meal; or cottonseed meal are used.

Consider the following guidelines:

Feed	Supplement
Grass hay or pasture	½ pound protein supplement
Leafy legume hay, alfalfa	None needed
Corn- or sorghum silage	¾ pound of protein supplement

Most commercial (brand name) supplements are 30-40 percent protein. Soybean meal and cottonseed meal are slightly more than 40 percent.



Provide iodized salt, in block or granular form, in a separate feeder protected from the weather.

Feed grains are good sources of phosphorus; and legume pastures and hay are excellent sources of calcium. Producers may provide additional sources through forage or grain rations.

A list of guidelines follows:

Scenario	Solution
Receive forage and little grain.	Mix: ½ trace mineral salt, ½ dicalcium phosphate and ½ monosodium phosphate.
Receive 1.5 percent body weight daily of feed grain and roughage source of grass, hay or corn silage.	Mix: ½ trace mineral salt, ½ dicalcium phosphate and ½ ground limestone.
Receive more that 1.5 percent body weight daily of feed grain and roughage source is legume.	Mix: ½ trace mineral salt and ½ dicalcium phosphate.

CARING FOR THE EXPECTING MOTHER

When a heifer reaches 600 pounds, she will most likely reach puberty and come into heat shortly after. A common method for first-time breeding is to breed at 12 to 15 months of age — 75 percent of mature-cow weight — and calve at 24 months of age.

Efficient nutrition practices are important before breeding to increase the chance of reproductive soundness and an early breeding-season pregnancy. A proper feeding practice means less calving problems, stronger calves at birth, and a quicker return to estrus.

Before breeding, check your heifers body condition score (BCS), as it greatly affects reproductive performance, and adjust feed accordingly. The ideal BCS is 5; the heifer is neither fat nor thin.

After your heifer is bred, gradually wean her onto an all-forage diet, with little or no grain, to promote skeletal growth throughout her pregnancy.

The last 90 days of pregnancy, the gestation period, is a crucial point for a successful birth. While calving she will lose more than 100 pounds; to make up for this loss ahead of time, manage nutritional needs, an ADG of 1 pound per day.

MAINTAINING A LACTATING COW

After parturition, a cow has three main jobs: provide milk, maintain her body for the next breeding cycle, and continue to grow.

Lactation is a stage in a cow's life requiring the most nutritional needs. If not fed properly, the cow's future reproductive performance will be affected. To ensure proper health, feed the highest quality forage available. This will

provide energy and protein. A producer may also feed grain if forage is not available. Upon re-breeding, manage her as a mature cow.

FEEDING ANGUS COWS

A producer's yearly goal is to keep calving on schedule and to raise healthy, valuable calves.

After a cow weans her calf — and 90 days before she calves again — crop residues, such as corn and grain sorghum stalks, are sufficient for her needs and add grain in cold weather. If managed properly, she may lose weight during this period and still give birth to a healthy calf.

FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO AVOID SETBACKS:

1. Consult a veterinarian for advice on disease prevention and explain plans, if any, to exhibit your cattle.
2. Always ask about health records and the general herd health program before buying.
3. Study the most common diseases in the area and learn the best prevention and treatment methods.
4. Construct a year-round schedule of when to vaccinate. A comprehensive vaccination program is recommended.
5. Obtain health certificates from a veterinarian well in advance of show dates.
6. Observe cattle year-round, especially during transportation and climate change.

