

Drought Strategies on Pasture

This fact sheet deals with creep feeding, the sell culls now option, early weaning and supplemental hay, silage and other feeds.

Creep Feeding

Creep feeding is an economic decision. Creep feed when pasture is gone (or before) and when feed is cheap and calf prices are high. These conditions exist now in Nova Scotia.

General Methods:

- Traditional grain in creep feeders
- Pasture creep – calves graze new pasture or other feed exclusive of the cows but have access to the cows

Creep Feeding Rules of Thumb:

1. Each pound (kg) of creep feed will replace .5 – 1.0 lb (kg) of forage dry matter
2. Average feed conversions with creep feed are 5:1 to 8:1 lbs of creep consumed per pound of calf gain
3. Use caution with barley and corn – irregular intakes can lead to digestive problems.
4. Sample ration:

15 per cent C.P.

Oats	47
Barley	46
SBM	5
Limestone	1.3
Trace Min. Salt	0.4
ADE	0.1
TOTAL	100

Note: if you use a commercial protein source, use a non-urea source.

5. Facilities considerations – the entrance should be 16-20” wide; height should be 30-42” high; you will need 12” feeder space for two or three calves; feeders should be placed close to where cattle loaf now (near shade, water, mineral feeder, etc.)

6. Cost – grain prices FOB Truro, August 8, 2001 Smith Brokerage Limited

Old Crop Oats	\$142
Old Crop Barley	\$165
New Crop Barley	\$148
Old Crop Corn	\$171
SBM	\$371

Cost of ration = \$161.37 + \$25 for mixing = \$186.37/tonne OR \$.094 per LB feed DM
Drought Strategies on Pastures – August 2001

\$.094 at 8:1 feed conversion = \$.7530/LB
Gain + \$.10 equipment and labor = \$.8533/LB

Sell Now Option

Producers can decrease stocking rate by selling culls now that would normally be sold this fall. Hub Packers FOB Moncton this week is \$1.35 for cows 400 lbs and up. This price will decrease by 10-15 per cent by October or November. On a 550 lb carcass cow that's a difference of \$80 per cow. Hub's phone number is 1-506-853-0620 for more information.

Get preg cows checked now. Vets can accurately detect pregnancy 40 to 60 days post breeding

Feb 1 calving Breeding April 25 End of Breeding June 28 + 40 days = August 7

Consider:

Cow Weight	Now: 1200	Fall: 1175
Cow Price	Now: .67	Fall: .58
Return	Now: 804	Fall: 682
Preg Check	Now: -5	Fall: -5
*Supplemental feed cost	Now: 0	Fall: - \$20.50
NET	Now: \$799.00	Fall: \$656.50
DIFF	NOW: +142.50	

* Feed cost = 30 days x 20lbs @ \$75/T

Points to Consider:

1. Cows will eat feed and lose weight between now and October
2. Cull bottom 15 per cent if necessary and all open cows
3. Sell now not later

Early Weaning

Early weaning accomplishes two things:

1. Decreases pressure on pasture
2. Maintains cow condition for fall/winter

Calves born April 1, or earlier, can be weaned now. Wean onto grass if possible. Try and wean 60 day before anticipated sale date and maximize benefit of gain. An alternative is to sell the calves directly off the cows now.

Supplemental Feeding

Supplement feeding the entire cow herd on pasture decreases grazing pressures. Supplemental feed can be hay, straw, grain or other opportunity feeds.

Take a feed inventory. If you have more forage than you need for this winter, feed it now. A cow needs 5,500 lbs as fed hay for the winter – 12 4x4 bales or 7 5x4 bales. Consider vegetable waste if you have access to it. Straw can be used but cows will lose condition. Consider straw plus grain. Grain can also be fed; limit intake by adding salt or feed amounts.

For more information, please contact:
Sean Firth, Livestock Specialist
(902) 678-7722

AgraPoint's Ag Info Centre
1-866-606-4636

© AgraPoint International Inc.

