ISSUE
05
Spring
2025

# Cattle Tips

AgriUnity, LLC Cattle Division

## This issue



## Things to consider:

Maintaining body condition is important for your cows whether they are nursing Fall calves or pregnant with Spring calves. Research shows that lack of proper nutrition in pregnant cows at any stage causes fewer muscle cells in calves that they can never get back.

See how to body condition score at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfW97OH02E0

## Things to consider:

Calves that are vaccinated, dewormed, eating (grain) and drinking from troughs have added value and bring higher prices, no matter where you sell your cattle. Having good looking cattle also gives us a sense of pride in our farm, and bragging rights.

## April – July 2025

**Selection using genetic testing**.

In livestock, genetic technologies such as genomic (DNA) testing are improving the decision-making process for both commercial cow-calf operations as well as registered herds. These advancements help enhance herd performance and clarify any possible parentage questions.

Genomic testing analyzes an animal's DNA (so can be done as early as at birth). For unregistered cattle, the testing results are reported as genetic predictions, scores, or index rankings for various traits to make informed management and selection decisions. The rankings help producers make replacement heifer selections, sort feeder cattle in performance groups, and determine which cows are passing which traits (for culling or keeping). Testing can also identify carriers for genetic disorders or diseases.

For registered cattle, the results are used for improving Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs), which are calculated predictions of how their offspring will perform for economically important traits such as growth rates, fertility, calving ease, feed efficiency, carcass quality, and maternal ability. EPDs use pedigree, animal records, and offspring (calf) records, so genomic testing added to that information can improve the accuracy of EPDs, especially for younger animals without calves yet.

DNA parentage testing is useful for picking bulls to keep out of multiple sire groups based on the performance of their offspring, or to pick which offspring are sired by an artificial insemination (AI) sire or the clean-up bull.

Taking a sample for DNA is as easy as putting in an ear tag (with tissue sampling units), pulling some tail hair out by the root, or getting some blood drops on a DNA card. For more information about DNA testing and sampling, see the websites of testing sites such as Neogen, Zoetis, UC Davis, and Texas A&M (also American Angus Association and Select Sires using Neogen or Zoetis), or contact Dr. Niki Whitley at Fort Valley State University.

Article written by Lauren Wartley, AgriUnity, LLC, Fort Valley State University (FVSU) graduate student and edited by Dr. Niki Whitley, FVSU Extension Specialist.

AgriUnity
Agriunity.org

## AgriUnity Marketing Cohorts

AgriUnity, LLC Cattle Division, Fort Valley State University (Dr. Niki Whitley), and Dr. Ralph Noble, Dean, South Carolina State University are working together with funding from the Cargill Black Farmers Initiative (through April 30, 2025) and Fort Valley State University Cooperative Extension.

Cohort producers work within recommendations and with assistance for bull genetics and selection for similar calves. They will breed cows at the same time in a controlled breeding season to be able to wean and background at the same time. Vaccination and deworming protocols are coordinated for what buyers want. Calves are weaned and backgrounded (fed some grain, learn to eat/drink from troughs) for 45-60 days prior to marketing. Contact Handy Kennedy, Jr. or Dr. Niki Whitley (FVSU) for more information (whitleyn@fvsu.edu).

# Recommendations for Spring and Fall calving herds.

For more information about cattle production, video webinars are available at: www.youtube.com/@nikiwhitley981/videos

**Genetics/Breeding**

- Consider DNA testing your heifers at weaning for additional information to help you make keep or sell decisions.
- Consider weighing your cows when you weigh/wean your calves to calculate how much of her BW she is weaning in calf as a measure of efficiency and profitability of that cow.

**Nutrition Management**

- Considering getting hay or a higher fiber supplement for feeding during drought conditions to help your cows maintain body condition (keep cow body condition scores to no less than 4 on a 1-9 scale; 1=emaciated).
- Provide a good loose cattle mineral (comes in a bag) for all animals even when pasture is good. Loose mineral is better than blocks, but a red “salt” trace mineral block is better than nothing!

**Record Keeping**

- Record weaning weights and consider taking post-weaning weights to monitor performance
- Using your previous records, sell cows at weaning with bad udders, poor mothering, calving issues etc.
- At weaning, consider taking docility scores (how calm they are) for selection. Calm animals perform better and are not as hard on our equipment or ourselves.

**Herd Management**

- Watch for flies and plan fly control methods (tags, spray, fly control minerals?). Remember to switch between chemical classes to avoid flies getting immune to a specific type of fly control.
- Remove bulls after a 60-to-90-day breeding period (or 120 days if you are still switching to a controlled season).
- Pregnancy check (picture above) cows and heifers 30 to 60 days after removing the bull and cull (sell) those that are not pregnant. When prices are high, it is a good time to sell, not to buy.
- Precondition fall calves at weaning
- Prep for weaning and pre-conditioning Spring calves

**Soil Health/Fertility**

- Fertilize as per soil samples

**Forage Management**

- Control weeds (clip pastures, chemical control)-contact your local cooperative extension office for assistance.
- Consider how you will be storing hay for the winter and prepare site/s or barns/shelters.
- Check hay equipment if you are making your own or contact your suppliers if not. Plan for 1.5 tons of hay per cow for the winter.

Content provided by Dr. Niki Whitley, Fort Valley State University and reviewed or edited by Dr. Ralph Noble, Dean, South Carolina State University

AgriUnity
Agriunity.org

Reference: UGA Extension Beef Management Calendar, Bulletin 1161, reviewed May 2015