



Ohio County Farm & Home News

**Cooperative
Extension Service**

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GOOD FORAGE PAYS DURING LAST TRIMESTER OF SPRING CALVING COWS

The health and body condition of cows during late pregnancy is critical to their overall health and that of their calves. The body condition of a cow during its last trimester also affects subsequent reproductive performance.

Weather conditions and poor feed quality may lead to less than desirable body condition scores (BCS) during winter. Cows going into their last trimester in good condition will hold a healthy weight better than those with a BCS of 4 or lower. Once in late pregnancy or after calving, it becomes more difficult to improve body condition score.

An important issue to consider is the energy demand of winter cold stress. This is especially true for cows that are already thin.

After assessing the BCS of the cattle, consider your forage inventory and quality. A cow late in gestation requires an adequate supply of a 50% to 56% total digestible nutrient (TDN) diet. If adequate grass or hay are unavailable, a variety of by-product feeds can make up the difference.

Supplement protein when needed. Cows in late gestation need a diet containing 7% to 9% protein. Low-quality forages provide only 4% to 5% protein and will require supplementation, whereas high-quality hay generally has an adequate protein content.

A mature cow on winter range during her last trimester without proper energy and protein will lose one body condition point in about 40 to 50 days. High-fiber energy sources provide best options when energy supplementation is needed. These include products such as soy hulls and corn gluten feed. If protein is needed, by-product feeds such as distillers grains. Be sure to consider palatability when feeding by-products.

It is best to start managing your cows' BCS in the fall because this is the easiest and cheapest time to increase body condition. Strive to have your cows at a BCS of 5 or better in late pregnancy. However, if weather or other conditions cause BCS to be less than desired as they enter the last trimester of pregnancy, feed management to obtain a BCS of 5 or slightly better by the time they calve will be critical to calf health and cow fertility during the following breeding season.

ALFALFA & STORED FORAGE CONFERENCE – FEB. 8TH

The Alfalfa and Stored Forage Conference will be held Thursday, Feb. 8 at Warren County Extension office in Bowling Green. They have an excellent lineup of speakers, with the theme of the conference "Getting Into the Hay Business." You will hear how top producers in KY and OH got started in the hay business and other speakers

will overview the basics of hay production, marketing, and how hay fits into rations for horses and cattle.

A highlight of the conference will be Dr. Garry Lacefield, who started the conference 43 years ago. Garry will give his personal reflections on alfalfa production in KY over the last 50 years. For details and registration go to the Events tab on the Forage Website.



Topics and speaker include:

- Operating a Major Hay and Straw Farm in Ohio – John Russell
- Teaching Hay Buyers What Their Horses Really Need – Dr. Laurie Lawrence
- How to Find and Evaluate Used Equipment – Dennis Wright
- Establishing Markets for Your Hay and Straw— Ellis Deweese and Jeff Stephens
- 50 Years of Alfalfa Production in Kentucky: Observations, Reflections and Opportunities – Dr. Garry Lacefield
- Basics of Fertilizing for Successful Hay Production – Dr. Edwin Ritchey
- How I Got Started in the Hay Business: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly – Producer Panel.

UPCOMING Events

- Jan. 17 – Intensive Soybean Management Workshop; Sloan Convention Center, Bowling Green
- Jan. 18 – Commodity Conference Meeting; Sloan Convention Center; Bowling Green
- Feb. 1 – U.K. Wheat Meeting; James E. Bruce Convention Center; Hopkinsville
- Feb. 8 – Ky Crop Health Conference; National Corvette Museum; Bowling Green
- Feb. 8 – Ky Alfalfa & Stored Forage Conference; Warren Co. Extension Office; Bowling Green
- Feb. 19-20 – Heart of America Grazing Conference; Greenacres Art Center, Cincinnati, OH
- Feb. 20-22 – Ky Turf & Landscape Management Short Course; Hardin Co. Extension Center
- Feb. 27 – Master Logger TV Webinar; Ohio Co. Extension Center 8:00 a.m. till 3:00 p.m.

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