

As many spring calves are getting weaned, we rightfully focus on calf health and wellness in preparation for the next step in the calves' life. Unfortunately, we also tend to forget about their mothers and preparing them for the next year. Right after weaning is a great time to look at the individual cows in your herd and evaluate their condition.

The most common way to evaluate the condition of individual animals is to rank them using a body condition score (BCS) using a scale from 1 to 7 with 1 being emaciated and 7 being obese. The ideal score for cows going into calving is a BCS 5 so they have the physical reserves to support lactation, recover from calving and prepare for rebreeding in the spring.

Another reason to evaluate your cows condition right now is that post weaning and mid-term pregnancy is best time to put condition back on these cows that might have been drug down by raising a calf in a dry year like we are having. If you try to regain this condition closer to calving season, the cow's maintenance energy requirements combined with that of the growing calf and the beginning of lactation make it extremely hard to provide enough high quality feed to make any significant gains in cow condition.

If you want to know more about body condition scoring or would like assistance developing a ration to improve the condition of your cow herd, please visit with me at the Rawlins County Extension Office. We also recently acquired a hay probe so that we can help collect samples so you can have the true quality of your hay tested and then make the most efficient use of that resource when determining rations.