

SISKIYOU STOCKMAN

What's New in the "Top of the State". A report for Siskiyou Livestock Producers put out by the Farm Advisors Office, Cooperative Extension of the University of California, located at 1655 South Main Street, Yreka, California 96097

October 2009

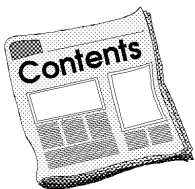
Cow body condition critical for reproductive performance

Drought and reduced water for irrigation may have resulted in cows coming into the fall and winter months in lower than normal body condition. Cows in low body condition at calving will have more difficulties getting re-bred after calving. Reproductive performance is the most important factor affecting production efficiency. To have a calf every year a cow must be rebred within 80 to 85 days of calving. This means she must start cycling by 60 days after calving. Body condition at calving is probably the most practical method to assess condition and allow for management adjustments. Research suggests a body condition score of 5 at the time of calving to maintain annual calving (Table 1). Cows with a post calving interval to cycling of more than 60 days will have difficulties getting re-bred in a timely manner.

Table 1. Effect of body condition score at time of calving on days from calving to cycling. From Houghton et al, 1990.

Body Condition Score	Interval from calving to cycling, days
3	88.5
4	69.7
5	59.4
6	51.7
7	30.6

Replacement heifers that are calving at 2 years of age should be at a condition score of 6 at calving.



- Cow body condition critical for reproductive performance
- The cost of keeping it simple
- Upcoming meetings

Calendar

Nov 7	Siskiyou County Cattlemen's and CattleWomen's Fall Dinner, Yreka, CA
Nov 11-13	California Cattlemen's Association Annual Convention, Reno, NV http://www.calcattlemen.org/
Dec 5-9	California Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting, Anaheim, CA: http://www.cfbf.com/am2009/
Dec 2-4	Western Alfalfa and Forage Symposium, Reno, NV: http://alfalfa.ucdavis.edu/

These same workers found that thin cows but gaining condition and fleshy cows (BCS greater than 5) losing some condition did about as well as those cows maintaining moderate (BCS of 5) condition. The cows not getting pregnant were those already fleshy and getting fatter, and the thin ones losing more condition.

Table 2. Effect of condition score change after calving on pregnancy rate. From Houghton et al, 1990.

Condition Status	Pregnancy Rate, %
Moderate (4.5 to 5.5) and maintaining	100
Thin (less than 5) and increasing condition	100
Thin (less than 5) and decreasing condition	69
Fleshy (more than 5) and decreasing condition	94
Fleshy (more than 5) and increasing condition	75

What does a BCS 5 cow look like?

Cows of body condition score 5 (below) are in moderate condition. The 12th and 13th ribs (the last two ribs) are not visible unless the animal has been shrunk but they can be felt easily. No brisket fat. Hindquarter individual muscles are not apparent. Areas on either side of the tailhead are fairly well filled but not mounded and fat cover is palpable.



By comparison a **BCS 4** (below) cow is thin. Individual ribs are not visually obvious except for the last two. Backbone can be identified by feeling with slight pressure. Spinal bones are rounded rather than sharp. Individual muscles in the hindquarter are apparent but quarter is straight.



A BCS cow of 6 (below) shows good smooth appearance throughout. Individual ribs are not visible and are fully covered. There is some fat deposition in brisket. Spongy fat about 3/8 (1 cm) thick is noticeable on ribs and pin bones, and each side of tailhead has a high degree of fat. Firm pressure is needed to feel bones of the backbone.



How do I improve cow condition?

Additional nutrients are needed to improve a cow's condition. To change from a condition score of 4 to 5 requires an additional 200 pounds of TDN (Total digestible nutrients) or nearly 400 pounds of good quality hay. It is often difficult to get a cow to consume that much more feed. When condition score is taken close to calving, there is often insufficient time to improve nutrition and therefore condition by calving and breeding. If space is available, sorting so thinner cows are together and fed better is economical. Under dire conditions early weaning may even be a better alternative than an open cow. Early weaning will greatly reduce nutritional demands allowing cows to cycle and get re-bred. Cows calving early in the calving season will have more time to cycle before the start of the breeding season. Sorting late calving cows may be another alternative to address those needing more attention. Cows that calve in the last part of the calving season, and are extremely thin, would be potential candidates for culling rather than waiting to see if they end up open after pouring the feed into them.

Clearly spring calving cows assessed for body condition in the fall offer more alternatives to get them into adequate condition before calving.

With drought conditions widespread it is likely many cows may not have the condition they normally do. Thin cows need to gain condition before or shortly after calving if they are expected to become pregnant and especially if they are to get pregnant early in the breeding season. It isn't always possible to maintain cows in ideal condition year-round. Before winter weather makes it even more difficult for cattle to gain some weight, make the management effort to get cows into moderate condition. You will be glad you did when the breeding season starts.

The cost of keeping it simple

Sometimes we all need reminders. It has been so easy to get all our cattle black. Nothing wrong with that, there are some great black cattle. But there is a cost. Recently a local cattleman and I weighed some cattle and compared the almost straightbred high quality Angus calves to half Angus calves (crossed with a maternal breed of moderate size). The calves were all run in the same local conditions. We adjusted their birth dates so the calves were the same age. The crossbred steers weighed 90 pounds more than their herdmates, while the crossbred heifers were 76 pounds more than their herdmates. There were a total of 37 crossbred calves and 161 "straight" Angus calves, and the overall average was 81 pounds more for the crossbred calves. Not everyone may get the same response but this was the advantage in this example. And, these were black calves that got the same price per pound as their nearly straightbred Angus herdmates. Of course the crossbred replacements should be more fertile and have greater longevity due to heterosis. Their calves will still be nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ Angus when bred to a purebred Angus sire.

A sound rotational crossbreeding system only requires a permanent recording of the females' sire breed. Females with a sire of breed A are bred to breed B, and vice versa. Usually it is impossible to reliably tell the difference visually so some type of recording or identification system is needed. That's when it isn't so simple, but it's not that difficult.

Upcoming Meetings

Opportunities to meet with fellow livestock producers and agriculturalists are upcoming. Several events are occurring over the next 60 days before the Holidays.

Locally, the Siskiyou County Cattlemen's and CattleWomen have their fall dinner at the Community Center in Yreka. Social hour starts at 5:30 with dinner at 6:30 p.m. There will be live entertainment and a silent auction. For further information contact Joe Sammis, President, 530/397-2476.

Reno, NV is the place, November 11-13, for the annual meeting of the California Cattlemen's Association (<http://www.calcattlemen.org/>).

Hay and grass growers will be interested in the Western Alfalfa and Forage meeting in Reno, NV December 2-4 (<http://alfalfa.ucdavis.edu/>).

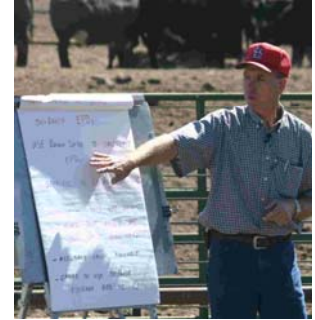
More southernly, the California Farm Bureau Federation is meeting in Anaheim on December 5-9 (<http://www.cfbf.com/am2009/>).

This is your copy of the Siskiyou Stockman, which you requested, or which we thought would be of interest to you.

Sincerely,



Daniel J. Drake, Ph.D., PAS
Farm Advisor - Livestock & Range
CE Associate, Animal Science Dept., UC Davis
530/842-2711



Commercial companies are mentioned in this publication solely for the purpose of providing specific information. Mention of a company does not constitute a guarantee or warranty of its products or an endorsement over products of other companies not mentioned.

What's New in the "Top of the State."

*A report for Siskiyou Livestock Producers put out by the Farm Advisors Office,
Cooperative Extension of the University of California
Yreka, CA*



The University of California, in compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, natural origin, sex or mental or physical handicap in any of its programs or activities, or with respect to any of its employment policies, practices or procedures. The University of California does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship, medical condition (as defined in section 12926 of the California Government Code), nor because individuals are disabled or Vietnam era veterans. Inquiries regarding this policy may be directed to the Director, Office of Affirmative Action, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 300 Lakeside Drive, Oakland, California 94612-3550, (510)987-0097.

Cooperative Extension
University of California
1655 So. Main Street
Yreka, CA 96097

Non-Profit
Standard Mail
Permit #3
Yreka, CA 96097