

## Rebreeding Considerations for Cows

Feeding the cows and heifers through gestation is often done with the lower quality ingredients to keep cost low. But nutrient density is important to keep the animals on an increasing plane of nutrition. Even on low quality forages the ration is designed to allow for a small gain in live weight. This is done so that heifers can keep growing and cows can put on some body condition to make sure calving and lactation begins well.

By now much of the calving is completed and those animals that had a difficult time calving should be the focus of additional energy intake to help rebuild their body and the extra energy will help prepare the reproductive tract for estrous. Difficult calving may be an indication that the energy status of the animal was not high enough during gestation. We expect intake to increase during lactation and in order to address the great demand milk production places on the animal we can increase the energy density by including alfalfa hay/silage, increasing the grain component of the diet or doing a bit of both. For those animals that had difficulty they can be separated out and fed a different diet that is slightly higher in protein and energy. It will cost more to do this but generally will result in more animals bred on first service. An estrous synchronization program could also be considered for this group. This approach helps deal with animals whose estrous expression may be reduced due to calving stress or high production of milk.

Next to look at is the mineral program and specifically the micro minerals. Copper and zinc are very important for everyday health and expression of estrous. Intake can vary considerably so take steps to ensure lots of opportunity for cows to get their share daily. Chelated minerals are expensive and difficult to justify in gestation, based on cost, but for those cows that under consumed or are weaker from calving, here is an application.

Next year's calf crop is about to be started and extra nutritional attention to those animals that are behind in body condition score or have had a struggle in calving, will keep the pregnancy rate high.

**CORPORATE RUMINANT NUTRITIONIST**

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