



High Quality Hay after Calving

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For beef herds planning to calve in March and April cows are now entering the 3rd trimester. This is an important period from a nutritional stand point because cows channel 30% of their energy to support fetal growth and development during the third trimester. The calf needs more nutrients from the cow than the previous two trimesters to fuel the final development of its organs, skeleton, lungs and immune system. Between the cold winter weather and the rapidly increasing requirements of the growing calf, the whole nutritional picture must be taken into account to ensure a healthy cow and calf.

Although this period is very important, the next period following calving is also extremely important to getting the cow rebred. The old saying, *When you're up to your butt in alligators it's hard to remember that your objective was to drain the swamp*, could apply when feeding cows. With feed supplies short and good quality feed even shorter, having enough feed available to meet the nutritional demands of your cows can be an issue.

After calving, the cow is producing milk for her calf as well as preparing her reproductive system to rebreed. As a result, her energy requirements increase about 30 percent and protein needs nearly double after calving. Underfeeding reduces the amount of milk a cow provides her calf, and it can delay or even prevent rebreeding. If it gets cold or wet during this period, nutrient demands can sky-rocket.

Your cow needs 10 to 12 percent crude protein and 60 to 65 percent TDN in her total diet after calving. If her winter diet has consisted of poor quality feeds or straw, your other forages and supplements must make up any deficiencies. Overfeed is wasteful and expensive so be sure to get your feed tested.

Good feed may seem expensive or difficult to obtain but light or dead calves and open cows don't make money. Planning ahead and getting some nutritional advice from your Mb Agriculture Livestock specialist or feed nutritionist may help get you thru till your pastures green up.

Additional Resources:

[Beef Cow Rations and Winter Feeding Guidelines](#)

Crude Protein: 7 – 9 – 11 rule, where cows mid pregnancy require 7%, late pregnancy require 9%, and post calving require 11%

Energy: 55 – 60 – 65 rule for a mature beef cow to maintain her BCS, where TDN energy must be 55% mid pregnancy, 60% late pregnancy, and 65% post calving.