

River View Veterinary Service Newsletter

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News and Upcoming Events:

- Be watching for our upcoming Calving School in January!
- Need a VFD? Give us a call if your VFD is expiring soon!

*Welcome to the River View Veterinary Service Newsletter!
This newsletter is designed to provide cattle producers with timely information and education on a variety of topics. Got a topic? Let us know!
Sarah Foust, DVM and Terry Foust, DVM*

Cold Stress and Cattle

Winter is just around the corner, again! The cold temps and freezing rain, ice, winds, and snow can negatively impact cattle health and performance.

During cold weather conditions, cattle require more energy to maintain production and body condition. Cattle must maintain basal metabolic function and core body temperature to survive. The lower limit of the thermoneutral zone is called the Lower Critical Temperature or LCT. At temps below the LCT, animals must burn energy to produce heat to maintain their core body temp. Therefore, cattle must intake higher energy levels or burn stored body fat. Just how much will they need? For every 1 degree below the LCT, cattle will require approximately 0.7% to 2% more energy for maintenance of body condition. The LCT varies with hide and coat thickness, wind speed, moisture, and a variety of other factors. Newborn calves with very little body condition and thin hair coats may have an LCT of 50-60 degrees F, while a feedlot animal with a heavy, dry winter coat could have an LCT as low as 20 degrees F.

Dry matter intake increases during cold stress to help offset the loss of body fat. Increase the quality of feeds fed, as well as the amount offered. Now is a great time to have feeds analyzed for quality and ration balancing. Forage testing is relatively simple and inexpensive. Decrease competition by splitting groups or increasing bunk space. Water intake also increases during cold stress and must be kept accessible and not frozen. Offer windbreaks and thick, dry bedding. Offer shelter from precipitation to keep hair coats dry.

Most importantly, don't be afraid to ask for help! Ask your nutritionist, extension specialist, or veterinarian for help interpreting forage testing results, rations analysis or ration formulation. Start thinking and planning now to be best prepared for the upcoming winter!