

# Winter Feeding

## *Production objectives:*

The same overall production objectives of a year round program would apply for a winter feeding program: high pregnancy rates, narrow breeding/calving windows, and heavy weaning weights.

## *Goals:*

During winter, nutrition-related goals may differ depending on when you calve. Fall cows would need to maintain a positive plane of nutrition during calving, breeding, and lactation which occur over the winter months. Spring calving operations may want to enter calving season at a BCS 5 or higher. Other goals may be to manage weight loss and save on feed cost (or feed cost effectively).

A successful winter nutritional monitoring program starts by

- ◆ evaluating herd's BCS
- ◆ identifying what feed supplements are available
- ◆ evaluating pastures in terms of forage availability

Determine how much weight or body condition cows can afford to lose or need to gain in order to meet your overall production objectives. Example: Cows start the winter at BCS 7. Your desired BCS on March 1 is no less than 6. You can afford to lose about 80lbs over the winter.

**"I have saved my clients thousands of dollars by using this service."**

**Clifford Carter  
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## *Protocol:*

Monitor the herd through the winter by collecting a fecal sample each month and sending it to the lab for analysis. Run NUTBAL to produce a performance report. Start sampling 30 days before and after the winter season. For example, South Texas would sample from October to March.

With forage quality information and animal performance predictions, you can make management decisions regarding when to rotate the herd to new pasture, when you should start feeding, which feed is the most cost effective for you, and how much to feed...just to name a few.

## *Benefits:*

A winter monitoring program allows you to recognize when you do not need to feed and thus save money.

On the other hand, the system helps you realize when spring grasses are not as they should be. You may need to continue supplementing in order to meet your production objectives.