Abstract

Maximising Reproduction under Extensive Grazing Conditions, Regardless of Rainfall †

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Abstract: Maximising reproduction in beef cows under normal grazing conditions takes planning, discipline and a firm belief in science. The things that hinder producers in this arena are the extreme variations in weather conditions, subjective beliefs, tradition and paradigms. What producers need to use to maximise Kg produced per hectare year in year out is objective measurement, benchmarking and solid adherence to science. The confounding factors that make this difficult are the vast array of variables which impact on cattle production. At Rocky Springs we endeavor to simplify these variables into a few objective measures, clearly defined trigger points and a very solid year around calendar of main events on farm. This translates into ground cover assessments at key seasonal points, condition score assessments of cows during lactation, pregnancy testing with foetal aging, weight recording and condition assessments at weaning. Nutritional manipulation where needed. We always protect the feed base first, then breeder cow condition with a specific target of a condition score of 3.5 at calving to ensure strong mothering behavior and good quality colostrum. This is done with manipulation of stocking rate, early reductions in stock numbers if rainfall is poor and strict adherence to management calendar, regardless of rainfall. We always have trigger dates and live by them, if things get tough, responding early is most important for the bottom line.

Keywords: beef reproduction; grazing; feotal aging; ground cover