

AGRI-FACTS

Practical Information for Alberta's Agriculture Industry

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Ration Options for Beef Cows

Producers are always encouraged to have their beef cow feed programs set well in advance of the winter. This is even more important when planning through a challenging time, one that may require extra feed for extra animals due to volatile or weak markets. In times of high feed prices, planning can also help producers manage and potentially reduce overall winter feed costs.

Ration options

This factsheet looks at five generic rations for a beef cow. These sample rations may help producers establish their feed needs and budgets early, so they can react to a drought or anticipated higher feed costs with a management plan.

All five rations were formulated using CowBytes software. This ration program, designed by Alberta Agriculture and Food, is available for \$200. It can be ordered through Alberta Agriculture's website, Ropin' the Web (www.agric.gov.ab.ca).

The following assumptions were used in the ration calculations:

- Beef cow: 1,300 lbs and 7 months pregnant
- Weather: -10° Celsius at noon with no wind
- Feed prices
 - alfalfa/grass hay \$70/ton
 - straw \$35/ton
 - barley silage \$35/ton
 - barley grain \$4.00/bus
 - 32% beef supp \$299/tonne
 - 18% pellet \$220/tonne
 - limestone \$180/tonne
 - 1:1 mineral \$27/bag

Note: All feed prices on this list are for example purposes only. They are not to be used to establish or indicate market value of the feed.

Producers should consult with their nutritionist for further details. These rations are examples, and recommendations vary with management

systems, cow type and feeds available. Test all feeds and balance your rations.

See the sample rations below.

Sample rations			
Ration 1			
35 lbs	Alfalfa/grass hay	Cost/Cow	\$1.18/day
0.15 lbs	1:1 Mineral		\$236.00/200 days
Ration 2			
20 lbs	Alfalfa/grass hay	Cost/Cow	\$0.95/day
15 lbs	Straw		\$190.00/200 days
0.15 lbs	1:1 Mineral		
Ration 3			
65 lbs	Barley silage	Cost/Cow	\$1.22/day
7 lbs	Straw		\$244.00/200 days
0.15 lbs	1:1 Mineral		
Ration 4			
20 lbs	Barley silage	Cost/Cow	\$1.14/day
17 lbs	Straw		\$228.00/200 days
5 lbs	Barley grain		
1 lb	32% Beef supp.		
Ration 5			
18 lbs	Straw	Cost/Cow	\$1.34/day
10 lbs	Barley grain		\$268.00/200 days
1.5 lbs	32% Beef supp.		
0.1 lbs	Limestone		

Feed waste

Research has shown that feed waste can have a major effect on feed inventory requirements and the associated costs with feeding cows over the winter.

Many different feeder designs are available to reduce the amount of waste. Ring feeders or bunk feeders are effective when feeding either round bales or processing feed with a bale shredder.

Cattle can waste 12 to 15 per cent of the forage when a ring feeder is used. When processing hay or forage onto the snow or feeding silage on the snow, waste can be 25 per cent or higher. This factor can increase winter feed costs dramatically.

For more information, contact

Alberta Agriculture and Food
Alberta Ag-Info Centre at 310-farm (3276)

Revised by

Barry Yaremicio – Beef/Forage Specialist