

# FEED FOR THOUGHT

News For Cattlemen From Suga-Lik® A Product Of U.S. Sugar Corp.

## Thoughts While Weaning and Shipping

*Pat Whidden, PAS & Chet Fields, PhD, PAS*

Weaning and shipping calves is the culmination of a year's preparation. What are your thoughts during these events? Are you considering the number of calves each cow is nurturing? The number is two: the one she is bringing to the pens and the one in her uterus. (Frankly, you would be rewarded if you were thinking "three"...the one that results from the next breeding.)

Number and weight of calves shipped are major influences of your success. Higher net profit results from achieving reasonable cost-of-production. What is a low-cost producer; is it the outfit with the lowest cost per cow? Not necessarily. It is the optimum cost per cow. What if the "base scenario" is \$325 annual cow cost with an 85% weaned calf crop sold, weighing 550 lb? The break even selling price of the calves is \$69.50 cwt. What if there's a higher cost, yet enticing, cow program (labor, fencing, feed, fuel, equipment, land, etc.) that raises the cow cost to \$350? The math shows that in order for it to be better than the current program, it must yield a 92% calf crop at current weaning weight or improve weaning weight to 592 lbs. at current calf crop. Conversely, if cow cost could be lowered to \$300, then for it to be better than the current program it would need to yield a calf crop of at least 78% at current weaning weight or produce at least a 507 lb. weaning weight at current calf crop.

### EXAMPLE A:

Average Cow Cost	% Calf Crop Sold	Average Weaning Wt.	Break-Even Price
\$325.	85	550 lbs.	\$69.50
\$350.	92	550 lbs.	\$69.50
\$350.	85	592 lbs.	\$69.50
\$300.	78	550 lbs.	\$69.50
\$300.	85	507 lbs.	\$69.50

This says that changes in production practices should be carefully evaluated for their potential impact on performance. Regarding the nutrition program, check the scientific data for evidence of how a nutrition program should perform. Here are some highlights of important data:



- **Body Condition Score** (which is mostly dependent on adequate total daily nutrient intake). Fluctuations of only one condition score can mean a difference of up to 30 percentage points of change in calf crop and 50 lbs. of calf weaning weight. In example A, if cow cost was dramatically reduced to \$250, yet BCS were eroded due to total daily nutrient intake, resulting in a calf crop of 65% and weaning weight of 500 lbs., the new break even selling price of the calves would be \$76.90...a tremendous loss of profit.

- **Dry matter intake and water consumption** (appetite) is a direct function of overall nutrient balance. In other words, virtually ANY nutrient deficiency can ultimately result in depressed feed intake and thus affect BCS, cow performance, calf crop and weaning weight. Be sure that all essential nutrients are accounted for in your program.

- **The value of Fully Fortified™ Suga-Lik®,** expressed simply as the savings of NOT having to provide free choice salt and mineral, is \$15-\$20 per cow. In example A, this would lower cow costs to \$307.50 without affecting productivity; thus the new break-even selling price of the calves is \$65.80...a tremendous gain in profit.

- **An important fact to understand** is that there is NO commodity feedstuff that you can feed which supplies all the essential, necessary nutrients to your cows or their

-continued-

calves (both the one on the ground and the one in the uterus). All of the following commonly fed commodity feedstuffs require additional supplementation: Grains, grain screenings, hominy, potato by-products, bakery by-products, citrus pulp, whole cottonseed, poultry litter, and (even) molasses.



with effective supplementation can avoid the risks associated with loss of body condition. Using Fully Fortified™ Suga-Lik® Supplements can further lower calf break-even selling price, as shown earlier in variations of example A. Our message to help you with your “thinking,” is to do what the scientific information shows is valid and useful.

• **The true meaning of Fully Fortified™** is that there is an optimum daily intake level of available nutrients to meet the animal’s stated nutrient requirements for various ages, stages and performance. For example, most commercial supplement products contain some token amount of vitamin E. However, Fully Fortified™ Suga-Lik® contains the appropriate amount. This can result in significantly higher weaning weights, reduced morbidity (sickness) and improved feed yard performance. Weaning weights, due to reduced mastitis incidence in the cowherd, can be 15 - 50 lbs. higher. If the cost of the vitamin E is, say, \$3 per cow and weaning weight is improved 30 lbs., then in example A break-even selling price of the calves becomes \$66.50 cwt....more significant profit.

• **Recent research demonstrated** that certain sugars (like those found in cane molasses) improve fiber digestibility compared to feeding starches (found in grain and grain by-products). Suga-Lik® products are all made starting with U.S. Sugar’s pure cane molasses.

Now, what about the importance of this with regard to this time of year? Our forage data base, which contains over 600 actual assays of Florida bahia grass, clearly shows that as summer grinds on into August and September, forage quality declines and requires supplementation in order to meet cows’ nutrient requirements (see the chart at right). Starting earlier than is traditional

### Bahia Grass Nutrient Deficiency - August through September

	DRY COW (18 lbs. DM INTAKE)	10 lbs. MILK (20.5 lbs. DM INTAKE)	15 lbs. MILK (21.8 lbs. DM INTAKE)	20 lbs. MILK (23 lbs. DM INTAKE)
Protein	X	X	X	X
TDN	X	X	X	X
Calcium				
Phosphorus		X	X	X
Potassium				
Sodium	X	X	X	X
Chloride				
Sulfur				
Magnesium				
Manganese				
Copper	X	X	X	X
Iron				
Zinc	X	X	X	X
Selenium	X	X	X	X
Cobalt	X	X	X	X
Iodine	X	X	X	X
Vitamin A	X	X	X	X
Vitamin D	X	X	X	X
Vitamin E	X	X	X	X

ADEQUATE

DEFICIENT X

*Based upon National Research Council (NRC) recommendations for 1000 lb. cows and assays of 144 Bahia samples taken and assayed in August and September.*

## DEALERS

**Arcadia**  
Walpole Feed & Supply  
863-763-6905

**Branford**  
Mayo Fertilizer & Farm Supply  
904-294-2024

**Bronson**  
Owens Liquid Feed  
352-486-2442

**DeFuniak Springs**  
West FL Farmers Co-op  
850-892-5522

**Lake Butler**  
Lake Butler Farm Center  
904-496-3921

**Lake Helen**  
Phil McClure's Feeds  
904-734-0095

**Lakeland**  
Kathleen Cash Feed  
863-858-3123

**Mayo**  
Mayo Fertilizer & Farm Supply  
904-294-2024

**Myakka City**  
Myakka Farm Supply  
941-322-1783

**Okahumpka**  
Lasher Milling Co.  
352-787-4821

**Okeechobee**  
Walpole Feed & Supply  
863-763-6905



# Suga-Lik®

A product of U.S. Sugar Corporation

U.S. Sugar Corporation • An Employee-Owned Corporation

www.suga-lik.com • 800-940-7253

