

Wintertime Beef Cow Nutrition

Cattle producers wintering beef cows on warm season grasses (such as Bermuda or native) will find the first limiting factor in their cows diet will be protein. Warm season grasses have a protein content of about 4% by mid winter. If cows have adequate intake the native or Bermuda grass will meet their energy needs, but will need to be supplemented with protein. Adequate protein in the diet also increases forage intake and digestion.

If you have adequate forage resources for your cows, then protein is the key nutrient you'll need to supplement your cow herd. To find the most cost effective protein sources, price protein on a cost/pound of protein basis. To accomplish this, take the supplemental feed's price on a hundred weight basis and divide it by the percent of protein in the feed. Below are 3 examples.

20% cube, cost \$275/ton, making the hundred weight price \$13.75. Divide the hundred weight price by 20% (20 pounds of protein in 100 pounds of feed) = 68.75 cents per pound is the cost of crude protein.

18% corn gluten feed pellet, cost \$220/ton, or a per hundred weight price of \$11. Divide the hundred weight price by 18% = 61.11 cents per pound is the cost of crude protein.

38% cube, cost \$370 per ton, or a per hundred weight price of 18.5% = 48.7 per pound is the cost of crude protein.

From this math work we find the most cost effective protein source is the 38% cube, compared to the 20% cube and the 18% corn gluten feed pellet.

How much of a savings? If we have 1200 cows in the last 1/3 of gestation grazing native range in January, they will require about 1 pound of crude protein per day to meet their protein need. This can be achieved by feeding 5 pounds of 20% cube, 5.3 pounds of the 18% pellet, or 2.6 pounds of the 38% cube. The cost per cow per day for the 20% cube is .69 per day, the 18% corn gluten feed cost is .58 per day and the cost of the 38% cube is .48 per day.

If you have questions on beef cow winter feeding, contact the Tulsa County Extension Center for assistance (918) 746-3725.