

APPLICATION OF SYSTEM CONCEPTS IN COW-CALF MANAGEMENT

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On Baldwin Angus Ranch, we use Coastal bermudagrass for our pastures, hay and most of our silage. We use about 400 lbs of N per acre as well as 300 lbs of 0-10-30. About every third or fourth year, when it is needed, we will use minor elements as well as sulphur. We also put a ton of dolomite per acre about every fifth year. This gives us plenty of grazing, on the average, from March through November. Generally the springtime is so dry that we continue to feed our bermudagrass silage on up through May or June, depending on how short the grass is or how bad the drought is. We do not creep feed our calves at all. It is strictly bermudagrass, salt and mineral for the cows and calves.

Our Winter program consists of oats or wheat. We start breeding about the sixth to tenth of February. We like to start grazing our wheat or oats 30 days before we start breeding. We control graze. We run the cattle about 3 hours per day, then they have free choice bermudagrass silage (that has been ammoniated) the rest of the day. We like to start grazing our clover as early as the weather will allow us to. Generally, we start about the first of February. We will then graze our oats three hours and our clover one hour and continue to feed our silage free choice through the Winter months. Usually we start feeding the silage at first frost or even before, if it has been so dry there is no grass left. It is very good silage and we will have a lot of cattle cycling before we ever start grazing the oats. Last year we had a very good year. We used artificial insemination the first 35 to 40 days depending on how well it looks like we have settled the

cows on the first cycle. Last year we had 146 head that had babies 30 days or older when we started breeding on February 6th. The first cycle (22 days) we had 141 of those cattle come in heat, and we had an amazing conception rate of 63%. This is probably as good as we have ever done. We really believe in synchronizing our cows, but we find it works a lot better for us if we synchronize them with oats, wheat or clover or combination of the three. We continue to graze these oats and clover as long as we are getting enough moisture that the crop can stay ahead of the cattle. Generally, sometime at the end of March or first of April is when this program will play out. We just feel there is no other way we can calve our cows and rebreed them in such a short period of time as we can with our controlled oat grazing, clover and feeding silage free choice. Generally, we will have enough moisture that we do not have to use our entire 160 acres of small grain and we will let a field grow, head out, then chop and bag it (with ammonia at the bagging). This gives a little bit higher energy feed than our Coastal bermudagrass does and when we wean our calves, we put them on this ammoniated oat silage. The way that we try to grow all of the feed that we feed on our place, we feel like this is a management practice that can make a ranch operation successful even in bad times. In fact we have got a little program that we feel is the basis for all successful operations. You have first got to have a good genetic pool; you have got to have good nutrition; you have got to have production and performance records; and good management. A lot of things can be

thrown into these four categories, but without these four categories, we don't feel like our operation would be successful by any means.

In warm weather when we have enough moisture, we have a big surplus of grass. We can do one of two things when the grass gets ahead of the cattle. We rotate them to shorter, more lush grass. We give the grass a couple of more weeks, then we cut it. We cut our entire bermudagrass planting three to six times a year depending on the number of cattle we are running on it, and how much moisture we get. If the weather is good for making hay, we put up pretty high quality hay with a lot of color.

We are able to sell all of this to the horse farms. If hay gets rained on, we windrow it, put our pick-up reel on the chopper and chop and bag it. If it looks too bad to even attempt making hay, we will either direct chop it or cut with our haybine and try to wilt it down an hour or two before we rake and chop it. We try to keep a four to five week cut on all of our bermudagrass the entire growing season.

If you have any questions or would like any further details, I would be happy to talk with you later.