

# Old Cattle Feeding Habits Are Hard To Break

SPRINGFIELD, MO.

**P**roducers have a habit of feeding protein supplements to their cattle after frost and freezing weather hits in the fall-early winter period.

But according to Eldon Cole, a University of Missouri Extension livestock specialist, it might be a needed practice under some specific situations but for others it could be an expensive habit.

"As temperatures cool in the fall, many forages decline in protein and palatability which makes protein supplementation worthwhile. With good grazing management practices and stockpiling of fescue, much of the pasture could be in the 10 to 15 percent range in crude protein into January," said Cole.

Even Bermuda grass could run around 10 percent until the first of the year. Most of the warm season grasses will dip into the single digit range by this time.

Forage testing lets a producer know for sure the quality of the grass being fed.

The other variable in answering the supplementation question is what class of cattle will be grazing the pasture?

"Dry beef cows in the last one-third of gesta-

tion only have a crude protein requirement of 8 percent on a dry matter basis. If they are late spring calvers, they only require about a 7 percent protein diet," said Cole.

Higher levels of protein are required for fall-calving adult cows, but Cole says that unless they are heavy milkers, over 25 pounds per day, their protein needs are no greater than 10 percent.

Cattle that require in excess of 10 percent protein of their daily dry matter intake are: heavy-milking adult cows in the first 90 days of lactation, first-calf heifers in first 90 days of lactation, and almost all classes of growing steer and heifer calves and yearlings.

In this "growing" category some lightweight calves with daily expected gains above 2 pounds, require 16 percent and even more protein in their daily diet.

"With this wide variance in protein requirements it's easy to see why grouping cattle of like needs helps save protein dollars. Testing the forage, both pasture and any hay that might be fed, and sorting cattle according to their requirements will help use your money more wisely and break the protein buying habit," said Cole. △



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