

SIERRA STOCK REVIEW

Resources for Ranching in the Foothills

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➤➤➤ New Address in Placer County

The Placer County Agricultural Commission and UC Cooperative Extension have moved offices. You can now find us at 255 2nd Street, Auburn, CA 95603.

➤➤➤ Research Update: What's new in the field?

With increasing concern and regulation surrounding climate change, researchers has been trying to find ways to potentially decrease the amount of methane emitted from beef cattle production. One of the most promising methods of accomplishing this so far, as been through feed additives, such as red seaweed. In a feedlot setting, red seaweed has shown to reduce methane by up to 98%.

While this initially sounds like a promising solution, cow calf and stocker producers grazing on rangelands do not have the same opportunity as feedlots and dairies when it comes to feed delivery methods. It is important to find a practical delivery method for grazing cattle, as they produce about three times the amount of methane than those being fed a high grain diet.

Exciting news...a team of UC Cooperative Extension livestock advisors and specialists in the north state area have been awarded funding from CDFA for a three year project to find a practical way for cow-calf producers to deliver the red seaweed to grazing cattle. We are starting this project in the fall at the Sierra Foothill Research and Extension Center. This project will use high-tech feeders (see photo) to deliver seaweed that is mixed into the standard mineral of the cattle and to collect methane measurements in the field. We will be reporting on how palatable the mineral mix is, how much the cattle consume, differences in methane emissions, and monitoring cow performance and calf weaning weights. Stay tuned for updates and results!

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FALL CALVING: tools for the toolbox

While the first day of fall isn't technically for a few weeks, for me, it has always felt like summer wraps up once the county fair is over and cows start calving. While this can be one of the most exciting times of the year, there can also be a lot to manage! Not only are we concerned about potential birthing difficulties, predators, and managing calving checks, but also nutritional management of cows and heifers to breed back on time. Below are some basic refresher points to help you feel prepared:

1) The calving tool kit, what's inside? Start with a lightweight tool box that you can keep in your truck or strapped to the 4 wheeler for the next couple of months. This keeps your tools clean, organized, and saves time running back to the barn if a situation arises. Inside, start with basic supplies including lube, calving chains, OB gloves, dish soap or disinfectant, calf tube, colostrum replacer, iodine solution, syringes, needles, and medications that align with your herd health protocol as determined by your veterinarian. You can also include your ID tools such as tags, taggers, pens, and calving record book. Everyone's toolbox will look a little different, and it will likely change over time based on the needs of your ranch.

2) Nutritional considerations: A cow's greatest energy demand occurs about 60 days after calving, when milk production is at its peak. This is also typically when breeding season starts, and in order to cycle and increase chances of successful breeding, she needs to have adequate energy stores. There are a lot of demands on a cow at this time as they are still recovering from calving, lactating, and preparing for breeding all at once. It is important to assess your cows body condition score (a tool used to visually assess fat cover/energy reserves) as early as 90 days before calving and throughout the postpartum interval to adjust for any nutritional changes you may need to make to keep weight on the cows. It is suggested that mature cows are at a BCS of 5 at calving, and heifers are around a 6, as they are still growing themselves and will require more energy stores to recover from calving. If body condition scoring is a new tool to you, use the photos and descriptions ([sourced from Oklahoma State University Extension](#)) below as a guide:



BCS 1: Cow appears emaciated. This is rare and often associated with disease or parasites:



BCS 3: Thin with no fat on the ribs or brisket. Backbone is easily visible



BCS 5: Last 2 ribs can be seen and little fat is present in brisket, ribs, or tailhead. Spine is smooth and difficult to identify



BCS 7 (left): Very fleshy. Brisket is full, tail head has fat pockets and back is square due to fat cover. Ribs are not visible and smooth.

On the other hand...cows can in fact be TOO fleshy! Cows with a BCS of 8 or 9 can experience health and mobility issues, along with inconsistent cycling for breeding. Target a BCS of 5 - 6 at calving.