CULL POORER PRODUCING COWS
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Many producers are currently being faced with limited forage availability due to drought and/or fire. One of the first management tools that should be evaluated for cow/calf producers is to cull poorer producing cows. This option can capture their value at a time in the cattle cycle when the prices for cows and culled replacement heifers are fair, while allowing for some capital investment to be used when cattle prices are considerably lower and forage supplies are more plentiful.

Below is a suggested order of culling when facing diminishing forage supplies:

1. Open (non-pregnant) old cows
2. Open replacement heifers
3. Old cows with unsound mouth, eyes, feet, legs and udder
4. Open cows of any age
5. Thin cows over 7 years of age (BCS < 4)
6. Very late bred 2 year olds

The first two items on the list are automatic culls in any forage year. Old open cows are not worth keeping through a low-forage, expensive feeding period. Replacement heifers that were properly developed and mated to a fertile bull or in a well organized AI program should be pregnant. If they are not bred, there is a likelihood that they are reproductively unsound and should be removed from the herd while still young enough to go to the feedlot and grade choice with an A maturity carcass. The more difficult decisions arise when the producer is low in forage and feed supplies and he/she feels the need to cull cows that have been palpated and found pregnant. That order of culling starts with line 5 on our culling order. This is necessary only when grass and feed supplies are very short. The thin older cows are going to require additional feed resources to have a high probability of being productive the following year and the late bred 2 year-olds are least likely to have long-term productivity in your herd.

Source: Glenn Selk, OSU Department of Animal Science Website (www.ansi.okstate.edu) Cows and drought.