LIMIT FEEDING AN ENERGY SUPPLEMENT TO EXTEND FORAGE

Kent C. Barnes

Grazing forages has always been and will continue to be the most economical and practical way to maintain beef cows. However, in drought situations limit feeding grain may be an economical alternative to purchasing expensive hay. When drought is accompanied by relative low non-forage feed prices, producers can evaluate the possibility of using concentrates to feed cows.

It is possible to reduce forage use by 70 to 80% by limit-feeding some grain to cows. Given the cost of purchasing and hauling hay, limit-feeding grain may reduce the cost of meeting nutritional needs by 20 to 40%. In most cases, a limit-feeding program for cows will require some changes in cow management, may increase labor for feeding, and may require additional feedbunks. These considerations will temper the feasibility of this alternative in some operations.

OSU fact sheet F-3028 explains limit feeding beef cows in detail and is intended to provide management tips to help producers evaluate the opportunity to utilize this technique. This fact sheet and other information to help cattlemen cope with drought are available from OSU County Extension offices.