

NEWS LINE

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Producers warned not to cut corners when winter swath grazing

Year-round swath grazing has become a popular management practice. Many producers have found it's a good way to save time and money. Reynold Bergen, animal health and welfare manager with Alberta Beef Producers, agrees swath grazing can very successful if it's done right.

He makes a number of points: cattle on pasture need shelter from the wind. "Mature cows that are in good condition and have good feed can stand minus 25 without much problem but if there's a 35 km per hour wind and it feels like minus 40, the animal starts to need extra energy - water is a very essential nutrient and it's not a big deal if there's clean, loose snow - producers should make sure their cattle are segregated according to their nutritional needs - it's important to control grazing so the feed cattle can access is always of constant quality. Otherwise cattle turned onto a quarter section of swath grazing will mow through the best feed and leave the tougher, more fibrous part until late in the winter, and that's a time when they need the most energy."

Current conditions are good across the province, says Bergen. "There has not been a lot of snow in the south so feed is always available. In the north there's a bit more snow but under these conditions, swath grazing has been quite successful. In the event of problems producers need a Plan B, however, making sure there's feed on hand and a plan to get the feed to the cattle."

Bergen warns that if producers cut too many corners they might get away with it this year if the winter is easy, but at some point in time, they won't get away with it and it will cost them. He suggests that anyone working off the farm and unable to check their animals in daylight should make sure somebody in the family, a friend or neighbour is responsible. He urges anyone having problems, or believes a neighbour is having difficulties, should call the confidential Alberta Farm Animal Care Alert Line 1-800-506-2273."

--PLEASE CALL 1-800-468-7021 TOLL-FREE FOR VOICE CLIPS --

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Clip No. 1:

Year-round swath grazing has become a popular management practice. Many producers have found it's a good way to save time and money. Reynold Bergen, animal health and welfare manager with Alberta Beef Producers, says current conditions across Alberta are good:

(24... "point.")

Water is a very essential nutrient. It's not a big deal if there's clean, loose snow, adds Bergen.

Clip No. 2:

When swath grazing, Bergen warns producers not to cut corners and this means checking the cattle regularly:

(23... "you.")

Bergen urges that anyone having problems or feels a neighbour is having difficulties to call the confidential Alberta Farm Animal Care Alert Line 1-800-506-2273.

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