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Swath Grazing – a Way of Managing Winter Feeding Costs

Winter pastures is one of the ongoing challenges of a year-round grazing program. Records indicate that winter feeding costs are livestock producers' single largest production expense. Barry Yaremccio, beef and forage specialist with Alberta Agriculture says, “over the past five to ten years farmers and ranchers are trying to find ways to reduce those costs.” He says “One of the biggest costs is starting the tractor and running the equipment, if producers can eliminate those costs it will reduce their expenses by as much as forty to fifty cents per head per day.”

Yaremccio suggests swath grazing, as an efficient management practice of controlling the high costs of winter-feeding. “If you can keep some hay in front of these cows from the time they are caving to the time they are out on grass it’s going to make your job much easier to keep these cows in condition. For every pound of hay that you do not have in the ration you need to add one pound of grain.”

In addition to a good winter-feeding program, weather conditions need to be constantly monitored. Snow, cold and winds are all factors that create stress on farm animals during the winter months. Yaremccio says that, “livestock on the range under minus twenty or colder conditions are continually under cold stress.” In order to offset that, cows try to increase feed intake in an effort to meet their energy requirements. Good livestock management practices through winter weather while keeping feeding costs low are an essential part of maintaining a profitable operation and assuring your herd stays in good physical condition.

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Clip No. 1:

Yaremccio encourages producers to be on the lookout for tell tale signs of cold stress in your livestock:
(14... “...faster.”)

Clip No. 2:

Protection from the winter elements is critical in keeping the herd healthy:
(15... “keep warm.”)

Clip No. 3:

If a cow looses weight due to cold stress Yaremccio says feed costs increase:
(12... “the winter.”)

For further information contact:

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