

ONA REPORTS

published in

THE FLORIDA CATTLEMAN AND LIVESTOCK JOURNAL

February-1995

Encouraging Cows to Rebreed After Wintering on Range

by Rob Kalmbacher and Findlay Pate
University of Florida, Range Cattle REC



For questions or comments regarding this publication contact [Findlay Pate](#)

Cows typically lose 10 to 12 percent of their body weight while grazing range during winter. Much of the range research at Ona has been aimed at minimizing these losses. Rotational burning, managing range for higher yielding and more palatable grasses like the bluestems, and feeding molasses-based supplements help reduce weight loss, but sometimes they are not enough. There are times, like this fall, when cows come off bahiagrass to start a winter on range at a disadvantage because they are in a poorer condition than we would like due to an exceptionally wet summer.

There is reason to believe that herd management during the spring breeding season can overcome rebreeding difficulties of mature cows that have experienced excessive weight loss on range in winter. In a three year study at Ona, cows were weighed and given a body condition score when they were rotated off range on March 1st and onto bahiagrass to begin a 90-day breeding season. Cows received five lb./head/ day of a molasses + cottonseed meal slurry during this time. Cows were pregnancy tested in September, and their calving date on range was recorded.

Our objective in the research was not to evaluate rebreeding in thin cows, but we did notice that cows in poor to fair body condition (score = 2, 3, and 4) at the start of the breeding season bred equally well and as soon after calving as cows in good condition (5+).

Of the 159 cows (total of column two), five percent were in condition score 2 and 25 percent had a score of 3. Together, these cows had an average pregnancy rate of 86 percent. Typically, cows in this condition have a very poor pregnancy rate. We are encouraged that thin, mature cows fed molasses-natural protein slurries while on bahiagrass pasture during the breeding season may rebreed better than expected. This will

be the focus of research at the Range Cattle Station in the future.

Body Condition score'	No. cows(2)	Pregnancy rate (%)	Calving date(3)
2	8	87.5	16
3	40	85.0	11
4	66	80.3	10
5+	45	84.4	19
Body condition score of 1 to 9 based on degree of fatness with 1 being an extremely thin cow and 9 an extremely fat cow. Total cows during the 3-yr. trial was 168 (9 were replaced). 3 January date.			