South Florida Beef Forage Program - Winter Supplementation

August 28th, 2025 – Labelle, FL

Economics of Implementing a Supplementation Program

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Improve Pregnancy & Calving Rates

Maintain/Improve BCS

SUPPLEMENTING

Increase Weaning Weights

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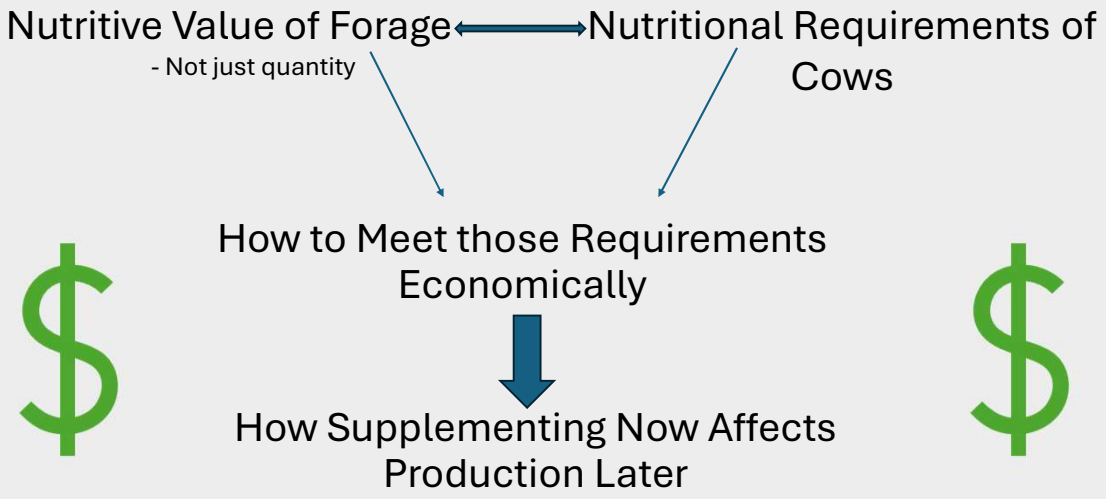
What to Consider



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What to Consider

- Sometimes, the underlying cost of "convenience" is more expensive than the upfront cost of "inconvenience."
- It is important to understand the cost of protein, not just the total cost of feed. Is one option actually cheaper than the other?
- It is VERY important to know what you are feeding, how much you are feeding, and why you are feeding it. What do your cows need?

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Meeting those Requirements Economically

Protein Source	Total Cost of Feed	Pounds of Protein in the Feed	$/lb of Protein
41% cottonseed meal	$350/ton*	820 lbs	$0.43
32% liquid feed	$325/ton*	640 lbs	$0.50
20% cubes	$18 per 50 lb bag	10 lbs	$1.80

ONE IS NOT SUPERIOR OVER THE OTHER; THIS IS JUST SHOWING HOW TO THINK ABOUT THE COST OF PROTEIN IN TERMS OF THE TOTAL COST

: DOES NOT INCLUDE** COST OF DELIVERY OR **PURCHASE OF LICK TANK/BUNKS

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Infrastructure Costs of Supplementation

- Supplementing itself is expensive…but just getting set up to supplement is also expensive.
- Lick Tank: $250-$650 *(depends on size, wheels sold separately)*
- 8 ft. Concrete Bunks: $185 - $350 *(consider delivery/custom fees)*
- 10 ft. Poly/Steel Bunk Feeder: $150-$550 *(depends on size/type)*
- Feed Bin w/ Auger: $2,500 - $10,000 *(depends on tons & auger size)*
- Feed Wagon: $8,000 - >$50,000 *(how fancy do you need it to be?)*

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Supplementation Infrastructure Costs

❖**525 lb Weaned Calf = ~$2,000**

- 1, 4-wheel Lick Tank = 33% of a calf
  - ~100 head, ~25 head per wheel
- 25, 8 ft. Concrete Bunks= 4.33 calves
  - ~100 head, 2 ft. per head
- 20, 10 ft. Poly/Steel Bunk Feeders = 5.5 calves
  - ~100 head, 2 ft. per head
- Feed Bin w/ Auger= 5 calves
- $20,000 Feed Wagon = 10 calves

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Why do this now?

A lot more revenue to give up in years when profits won't be as favorable

- Because calf prices will come back down eventually…
- While profits are higher, now is the time to explore investing in these changes with long-term outcomes.

❖**525 lb Weaned Calf in a "bad market year" = ~$900**

- 1, 4-wheel Lick Tanks = 75% of a calf
  - ~100 head, ~25 head per wheel
- 25, 8 ft. Concrete Bunks= 9.75 calves
  - ~100 head, 2 ft. per head
- 20, 10 ft. Poly/Steel Bunk Feeders = 12 calves
  - ~100 head, 2 ft. per head
- Feed Bin w/ Auger= 11 calves
- $20,000 Feed Wagon = 22 calves

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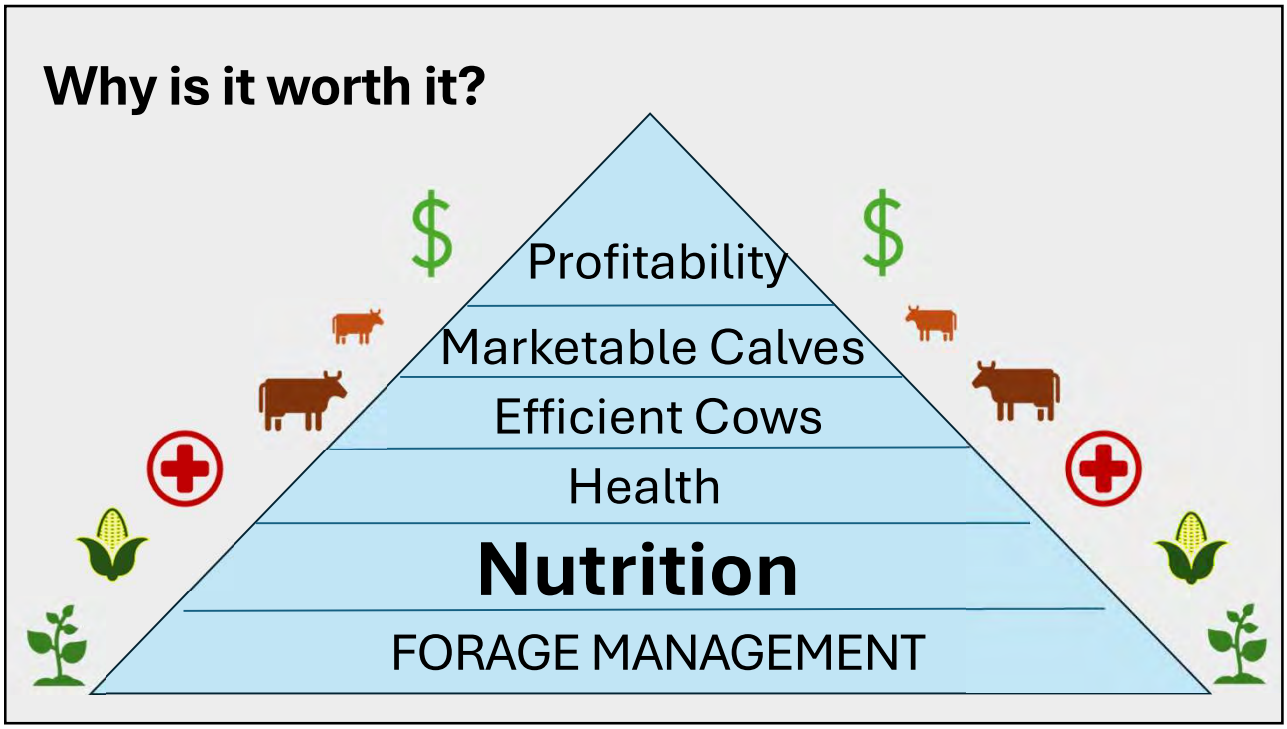
Why is it worth it?
Profitability
Marketable Calves
Efficient Cows
Health
Nutrition
FORAGE MANAGEMENT

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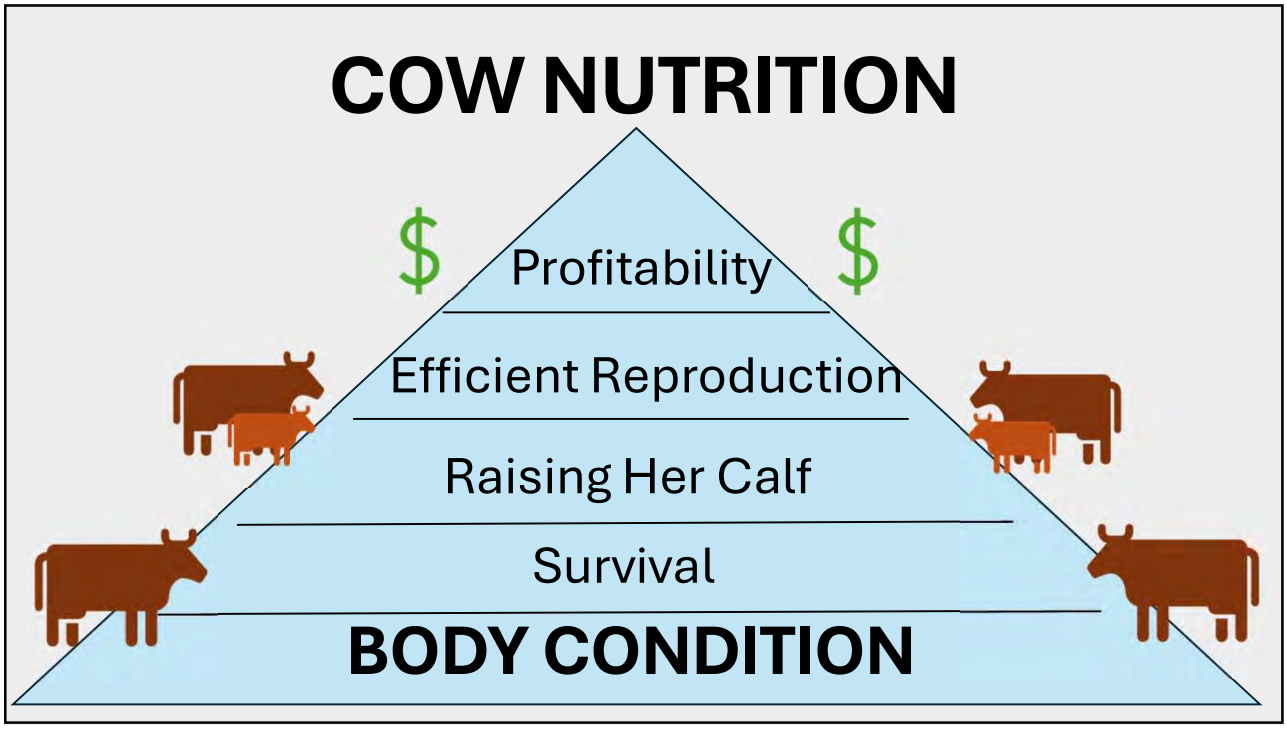
COW NUTRITION
Profitability
Efficient Reproduction
Raising Her Calf
Survival
BODY CONDITION

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Cow Nutrition

If cows are not getting what they need, she can't give you what you need:

a healthy, heavy, & marketable calf every year.

REPRO

365-Day Calving Interval

RAISING HER CALF

Calving Ease & Milk Production

SURVIVAL

Nutritional Requirements (BCS), Mineral

Health (vaccines, meds, dewormer, etc.)

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SUPPLEMENTING

Maintain/Improve BCS

Improve Pregnancy & Calving Rates

REPRODUCTION

Increase Weaning Weights

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Supplementation 🤝 Repro

"In terms of offspring preweaning growth, these studies observed that ***pre-calving supplementation*** of protein and energy **increased calf body weight at weaning by, on average, 25 lb…**" *(Moriel & Vendramini, 2023)*

"…a **reduction in cow BCS *from calving until the start of breeding season*** further **reduced pregnancy percentage, calving percentage, and calving distribution during the first 30 days** of calving in cows calving with when cow BCS < 5;…" *(Moriel, 2024)*

Proper nutrition, **before, during, and after calving** is important for your cows to be able to **focus on growing a calf and getting bred**, not trying to meet their nutritional requirements.

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How the Now Affects the Later: Calf Value

BCS & Pre-calving Nutrition Affect ***VALUE of Calves***

	BCS ≥ 5 at calving	BCS < 5 at calving	$/Head Difference
Calf Weight at Weaning	525 lbs	500 lbs	25 lbs
Calf Sale Price	**$2,016**	**$1,920**	**$96**

CALF PRICE: $3.84 FOR 500-525 LB STEER CALVES

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How the Now Affects the Later: Pregnancy & Calving Rates

Maintaining a BCS of 5 or greater before calving helps avoid having to play "catch up" after calving.

Body Condition of Cows ***At & After Calving*** Affects ***Pregnancy & Calving Rates***

	AFTER CALVING					
AT CALVING	**Lost BC**		**Maintained BC**		**Gained BC**	
BCS < 5	Pregnancy 75%	Calving 70%	Pregnancy 85%	Calving 81%	Pregnancy 84%	Calving 79%
BCS ≥ 5	Pregnancy 88%	Calving 85%	Pregnancy 90%	Calving 87%	Pregnancy 93%	Calving 87%

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How the Now Affects the Later: Revenue Per Cow

$198 difference per cow

Body Condition of Cows Affects ***Revenue***

Example: herd of 100 cows

Comparison: Maintain BCS ≥ 5 vs. Maintain BCS < 5

	PR%	CR%	CD% (1st 30 days*)	# of calves	WW (lbs)	Total Calf Revenue	Revenue Per Cow
BCS < 5	85%	81%	57%	81	500	$155,520	**$1,555**
BCS ≥ 5	90%	87%	68%	87	525	$175,392	**$1,753**

**affects average weaning weights because more calves are born earlier in the season*

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Put it all together…ways to look at "ROI" *(w/ high calf prices)*

1) Invest calf revenue to implement supplement plan -> gained calves as a result of the investment
- Lick tank ($650) + Supplement ($350/ton x 36 tons) = **$13,250 (revenue from 6.6 calves)**

  → 100 cows, 4 lbs per head per day, 180 days (Sept.-Feb.)
- Have **6 more calves** to market the next year that weigh 525 lbs each at $3.84/lb = **$12,096**
  - **Extra calves almost paid for the implementation *($1,154 short)***

2) Made almost **$20,000 more when supplementing** compared to not supplementing (**more calves=more money, regardless of mkt prices)**
- Spent $132.50/cow for supplement →Made $198/cow more when supplementing → **$65.50 return/cow more than not supplementing**

3**) Depreciate the lick tank *(best way)***
- $650 - $250 / 10 years = $40 depreciation cost per year
- $40 per year + $12,600 per year for supplement = **$12,640 total ($126.40 per cow) per year**
- Spent $126.40/cow for supplement →Made $198/cow more when supplementing → **$71.60 return/cow more than not supplementing**

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Annual Costs of Investment- Looking Long-term

- Examples of depreciating over 10 years with 100 hd herd
  - Purchase price – salvage value/years in production

Qty	Asset	Cost per Item	Salvage Value	Annual Cost	Cost per Cow
1	Lick Tank	$650	$250	$40	$0.40
25	8 ft. Concrete Bunk	$350 each	$150 each	$500	$5.00
20	Bunk Feeder	$550 each	$200 each	$700	$7.00
—	Feed Bin w/ Auger	$10,000	$3,500	$650	$6.50
—	Feed Wagon	$20,000	$8,000	$1,200	$12.00
TOTAL				**$3,090**	**$30.90**

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"What about the bad years?"

- I am not saying a supplementation program will make you profitable ***every year***....there are still going to be some bad years.
- **BUT...**I am saying that having an established program and the right infrastructure may help in mitigating some loss in the bad years.

- Example 1:

→you aren't able to provide liquid feed after calving in a bad market year

→you have to back down to just providing it before calving

→ you still have the link tank to be able to provide feed at all to try & increase weaning weights

- Example 2:

→you can't afford to feed every day, but it is still cheaper or the same price to buy in bulk rather than "spot buying" feed

→you still buy the same amount, but "stretch out" feeding period (feed 3 times a week instead of 5)

→ you still have the feed bin to store the same amount to supplement cow herd & maintain BCS

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Conclusion

❖Having a supplementation proper is vital for production. Supplementing is expensive...but so is not having calves to market.

❖Large expenses such as supplementation/infrastructure, can be looked at as investments rather than just a large expense.

❖Investing in these changes now can free you up to save money later in the bad years.

❖Giving our cows what they need when they need it, allows them to focus on raising a healthy calf rather than "survival".

❖**Help your cows, help you!!**

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QUESTIONS?

MAY GOD BLESS YOUR STEWARDSHIP!

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