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Winter Feeding Cull Cows Is Worth Effort

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In September 1988 the price for utility grade cull cows was \$46/cwt, while in February 1989 the price was \$52/cwt. Lower cull cow prices in the fall followed by higher prices in the spring is a typical pattern in most years. If livestock producers had an economical winter feeding program, profit could be made by holding cull cows at weaning, feeding them through the winter, and selling them in the spring.

During the fall and winter of 1988-89 cull cows (approximately 900 pounds) were fed three treatments: (1) ammoniated stargrass hay: alone, (2) ammoniated hay plus 10 pounds per head per day standard molasses, or (3) ammoniated hay plus 10 pounds per head per day standard molasses plus 1.25 pounds per head per day cottonseed meal. Cows were placed on bahiagrass pasture and fed as much ammoniated hay as they would eat. Molasses, either alone, or with cottonseed meal was fed on Monday and Thursday. Cottonseed meal was mixed with the molasses to form a slurry. The amount of molasses fed was limited, and cows would have consumed more if it had been offered. .

Cows on all treatments ate large amounts of ammoniated hay (see table). Cows fed ammoniated hay alone gained .85 pounds per day. Supplementation with molasses increased daily gain to 1.51 pounds per head per day. Addition of cottonseed meal increased daily gain to almost 2.0) pounds per day. Cost of gain was best for cows fed ammoniated hay plus molasses plus cottonseed meal. All cost of gain values were somewhat high due to the large amounts of hay eaten. Cost of gain values could be reduced if old, weathered hay that has little dollar value is used. Therefore, economic evaluations are not intended to be absolute, nor is it intended that these be the only diets considered for winter feeding of cull cows. Profit projections in the table indicate that approximately \$34 to \$38 per head could have been made under these conditions. The differential between fall (September \$46/cwt) and spring (February \$52/ cwt) prices for cull cows in 1988-89 were not as great as that observed between fall and spring cull cow

prices. Costs and profit values given above can be adjusted for different situations, but winter feeding of cull cows can be profitable in many years.

Item	Ammoniated hay	Ammoniated hay + molasses	Ammoniated hay + molasses + CSM
Feed	intake, lbs. as is		
Hay	29.3	27.7	26.6
Standard molasses	0	10.0	10.0
Cottonseed meal	0	0	0
Daily gain, lbs.	.85	1.51	1.87
Cost, \$			
Hay	.44	.42	.40
Molasses	.00	.38	.38
Cottonseed meal	.00	.00	.18
Yardage	.12	.12	.12
Total	.56	.92	1.08
Cost of gain, \$ per lb.	.66	.61	.58
Cow cost, Sept. 900 lbs.	\$414.00	\$414.00	\$414.00
Feed + Yardage, 150 days	\$ 84.00	\$138.00	\$162.00
Cow weight, Feb., lbs.	1028	1127	1180
Cow price, Feb.	\$534.56	\$586.04	\$613.86

Profit, \$ per head	\$ 36.56	\$ 34.04	\$ 37.86
hay: \$30 per ton, molasses: \$75 per ton, CSM \$300 per ton.			