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Feeding Cull Cows For Extra Winter Profits

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Many Florida cattle producers cull and sell cows in the fall. Many of these cows can produce efficient growth if given adequate nutrition. Cull cow prices usually follow a pattern of being low in the fall and higher the following spring. A price advantage also exists if quality grade of the cow can be improved.

From November 1987 until March 1988 (114 days), a group of crossbred cows (initial weight 900 pounds) were fed diets designed to utilize feedstuffs present on most ranches, or could be purchased and fed with minimum labor requirements. Diets tested included ammoniated stargrass hay plus the following supplements: 1) control--no supplement, 2) standard molasses, and 3) citrus pulp. (The percent crude protein in ammoniated hay is 12.3, and 4.1 percent in non-treated hay. Ammoniated hay is 55.4 percent TDN, while non-treaded hay is 47.6 percent.) Cows were fed on bahiagrass pasture (7 head/ acre), and ammoniated hay was fed free choice in round bale feeders. Molasses and citrus pulp were fed in controlled quantities to provide equal amounts of supplemental energy. A group of cows was slaughtered at the beginning to determine carcass quality and yield. At the end of the trial, all cows were slaughtered and carcass quality and yield was measured.

The stargrass hay used was mature, low quality fall regrowth. Protein and total digestible nutrients (TDN) of the stargrass hay were increased by ammoniation. Increased crude protein content of ammoniated hay is from anhydrous ammonia which is similar to crude protein from urea. Therefore, a major advantage of increased protein in ammoniated hay is that standard molasses can be fed rather than a urea fortified molasses, resulting in $30 to $40 per ton savings from molasses.

Cows on all diets ate large quantities of ammoniated hay. Ammoniated hay provides a base upon which supplementation programs can be developed. Cows fed ammoniated hay only gained 1.0 pounds per day. Molasses or citrus pulp supplementation greatly improved daily gain. The amount of supplement offered was controlled, and cows would have consumed more of either supplement. Therefore, performance of these cows and 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. Daily costs of feeding and yardage were high primarily as a result of large intakes of ammoniated hay. Hay costs may be lower in some cases, particularly if a producer ammoniates hay that is weathered or several years old that without ammoniation has little value. These diets improved quality grade of the cows, resulting in a price differential of $10.10 per hundredweight between November and March. 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	**Hay Only**	**Hay + Molasses**	**Hay + Citrus Pulp**
	intake, lbs. as is		
Hay	34.7	31.4	29.4
Supplement	0	6.4	5.0
Daily gain,lbs.	1.0	1.6	1.5
Price, $ per day			
Hay	.87	.79	.74
Supplement	.00	.26	.28
Yardage	.12	.12	.12
Total	.99	1.17	1.14
Cow Price (Nov),$	354.96	354.96	354.96
Feed + Yardage, $	112.86	133.38	129.96

Cow price, (Mar),$	503.35	537.30	531.64
Profit, $/cow	35.53	48.96	46.72

Costs: Non-treated hay--$35/ton. Ammoniation costs--$15/ton. Ammoniated hay--$50/ton. Standard molasses--$80/ton. Citrus pulped 110/ton. Cutter cows (Nov.)--$39.44/cwt. Utility cows (March)--$49.64/cwt.