THE WINTER FEEDING CHALLENGE
01/05/17

Bob-o is an East Tennessee farmer who never ceases to evaluate his livestock, mainly beef cows and calves along with crops of grass and a few acres of corn and soybeans. While visiting Bob-o a few weeks before Christmas, he was concerned that his winter feed ( hay ) supply may not be sufficient to feed his 75 cows, calves and bulls until sufficient grass growth was availble this spring.

The drought situation that occurred during the fall of 2016 presented a tough situation, to say the least. The fall was a drying time with no measurable rain from September thur November, also 76 days during the summer of 90+ F sure helped dry things out.

The first cutting/harvest of hay baled was very good, if not one of Bob-o best ever. The second harvest was rather meager, about 1/4 or ess when compared to the first harvest.

During the hay harvest season he had sampled ( forage tested ) each field and cutting to evaluate the nutritional values of each. Today just happened to be the time his herd veterinarian was also visiting to evaluate the condition of the cow herd and review the feeding program for the remaining winter. The cows receiving adequate nutrition will have an easier time at calving, a higher quality of colostrum and raise a stronger and healthier calf. This is the main reason he had sampled each field and cutting of grass hay for nutritional values.

Bob-o had recently sold 5 culled cows that averaged 1300 pounds, a bit more than he had originally estimated. He and the veterinarian had estimated the cow herd to be above average for milking ability. These are two important facts to consider when balancing or developing the feedin ration for his cows, bulls and yearling heifers. I failed to remember her name (the veterinarian) as he just called her "Doc," but she was very familiar with his situation and management of these cows, bulls and yearling heifers.

Generally, his cows live a life of leisure grazing pastures during the fall following weaning of their calves. But, this year has presented a new dilemma. The extreme dry weather resulted in a halt to pasture/grass growth requiring earlier than normal supplenental hay feeding, also a longer feeding period. Thus cutting into the winter feed supply.

Folowing their ration calculations it was determined he would need to supplement his hay ( 31 pounds/ cow/ day ) with 3 to 5 pounds of grain/ cow/ day. Three pounds before calving to as much as five pounds after calving. Both these amounts depends on the body condition of the cows and other livestock. Bob-o was following the Doc's advice and contacting several feed suppliers as to the cost and availability of corn, wheat mids, soybean hulls, whole cottonseed, distillers grains and soybean meal. These feeds will be evaluated as to cost per pound of protein and energy or which feed option will work best for his beef herd.

Bob-o has a scales that will be used to determine pounds of hay being fed and supplemental grains provided. With these adjustments to the feeding program he should have sufficient hay lasting until April 2017 when pasture grasses should be growing well enough to support the cows and their new calves.

Several generations of farmers have "weathered the storm before," as they are truly family farms. Today they are using new technologies to maximize pounds of beef raised because its good for the environment and natural resources.

Today, this is what I would call a good "Valid Client Patient Relationship" - Bob-o and the herd veterinarian and beef quality assurance in action. I enjoyed my visit with Bob-o and Doc.

We as farmers/ranchers take the responsibility of raising food for american families very seriously.

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2- [Farmers](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/farmers.docx)
3- [We Raised Beef Cattle](http://weebly-file/1/8/9/9/18991133/we_raised_beef_cattle.docx)
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