CC144 Adjusting to Drought...Why Cull Your Herd Now?

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Why Cull Your Herd Now?

- Livestock numbers must balance available feed.
- Feed is becoming scarce and high in price.
- Pastures may not carry a normal load next spring.

Extension Service - University of Nebraska
College of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperating

W. V. Lambert, Director
Factors to consider when you cull:

**Health**

The unhealthy animal is not only a source of danger to other animals, but is seldom a profitable animal.

Animals in poor health make slow, costly gains, and milk production may not be up to standard. During drought periods they use valuable feed.
- Keeping slow or shy breeders increases the cost of production.
- Loss of offspring from disease is expensive. Eliminate the brucellosis reactor.
- Unhealthy udders may reduce milk production 25 per cent.

**Production**

The production of any animal should at least pay for its maintenance to justify remaining in the herd.

Production records furnish the best basis for selecting and culling. Consider culling beef cows that do not produce steer calves that weigh 400 pounds at six months or heifer calves that weigh 375 pounds; dairy cows that do not produce at least 7,000 pounds of milk or 280 pounds of butterfat annually; sows whose litters do not weigh 320 pounds at 56 days; and ewes that do not produce single lambs that weigh 85 pounds and twins that weigh 75 pounds each at four months.

**Disposition**

One nervous, unruly animal will make the whole herd harder to handle and is a constant source of danger.

Animals that are easily disturbed require added effort in management and usually shrink heavily in handling.
Any animal that requires extra labor and time cuts profits. Cull animals that may transmit defects to their young.

Animals that are crippled—either through inheritance or injury—should be evaluated carefully. Animals with offspring showing deformities should be considered for culling.

The slow or hard milker not only uses more than her share of the milker’s time but also may interfere with proper milking of other cows.

All animals reach the age of reduced productivity. Keep older animals only as long as they remain sound and maintain profitable production.

In cases where extreme culling is called for, it may be wise to raise only replacements which show an above-average potential for production.

When the market is favorable or when feed is short it may be advisable to cull the heifer calves from beef herds.

In times of feed shortage, gilts require less feed and therefore are preferable to sows for commercial pig production.

Keep young thrifty ewes that have sound mouths and healthy udders.

Beauty still commands a premium where animals are bought and sold for breeding purposes.

In culling animals, place emphasis on health, production, disposition, unsoundness, and age. Then apply the test of type.

For the strictly commercial operation, animals with extreme type faults that approach unsoundness should be considered for culling.

Breeders of purebreds must recognize breed requirements of color markings, sex and breed character.
# Daily Feed Requirements

## A Rough Guide to Help You Estimate Feed Needs for Culling Purposes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of Livestock</th>
<th>Approximate Daily Feed Needs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grain or grain mixture (pounds)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dairy cows &amp; bulls</td>
<td>15-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dairy heifers</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy calves</td>
<td>2-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beef cows &amp; bulls</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yearlings</td>
<td>Feed same protein or legume hay and approximately ¾ the non-legume silage or other roughage as for cows and bulls.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calves</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewes &amp; rams</td>
<td>1-1¼</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-1½</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gilts</td>
<td>Breeding to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sows</td>
<td>farrowing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growing &amp; finishing pigs</td>
<td>Weaning to 75 lbs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>75 lbs. to 200 lbs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Base grain ration on milk production. Feed about 1 lb. grain to 3 lbs. milk. Suggested grain mixture—5 parts corn; 3 parts oats; 1 part bran; 1 part oil meal; plus salt and steamed bone meal.  
** Protein supplement for swine should include protein from both plant and animal sources.  
† For beef cattle may include corn stalks, corn cobs, straw or grass hay.

This circular is a publication of the Drought Committee of the Nebraska College of Agriculture. It was prepared by K. C. Fouts, Philip Cole, Paul Guyer, C. W. Nibler and P. A. Henderson.