

Get more mileage from feedstuffs



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When we fill our vehicles with gas, my husband compares the price of unleaded to premium unleaded. If the difference in price is less than a certain amount, he fills with premium; if it is greater, he fills with regular unleaded.

He bases his choice on fuel mileage, reasoning it is more cost-effective to use the higher-priced premium gas to go the same distance because the fuel mileage is better — until you reach a point. After that point it's cheaper per mile to use the lower-priced gasoline.

When we consider how to improve the winter feeding efficiency of our cow herd, there are a lot of factors that weigh into the equation. Some of those factors you could say reduce the price at the pump, some add mileage, some include finding a more efficient car and some include adding hauling capacity.

With this issue, we try to explore several options for improving winter feed efficiency — from looking at cow efficiency to utilizing more efficient feeding methods to getting a higher price for the product produced.

What will be most useful to you will depend on your circumstance. While most cattlemen may benefit from a cow that can eat less to produce the same amount of product, producers in a plush feed environment may find the greatest efficiency in a big cow that produces a calf that will put more pounds on the scale at sale time. Someone with a more sparse environment would find the greatest efficiency in a smaller cow that can conceive and calve every year on a restricted diet.

Even selecting the best feeding method will depend on your location, terrain, feedstuff, labor availability and precipitation. Is it efficient to store hay in stacks open to the elements? A cattleman in western Kansas would answer a lot differently than would a cattleman in central Illinois.

Cost efficiency depends on what that dollar expended is going to return in revenue, and that may depend on your marketing efforts. Enrolling in programs like AngusSource® and Angus LinkSM can help describe to potential buyers the value you put into the calves — whether that be genetics, a health program or a management technique — so you can be compensated.

It's not about having the highest feeder-calf scores in the auction. It's about describing those cattle so the feeder buying them can plan the most efficient feeding program to earn a profit in the next phase of the business. How you approach a pen of cattle that can have a high percentage achieve premium Choice or higher is a lot different than how you approach a pen of growthy cattle that can pack on pounds, but aren't likely to marble.

Enjoy the issue, and safe travels. |



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