

navigation

Links

- [News Home](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Archives](#)

RSS Feeds

- All News [RSS](#)
- BeefTalk [RSS](#)
- Crops [RSS](#)
- Geospatial [RSS](#)
- Hortiscope [RSS](#)
- Livestock [RSS](#)
- Prairie Fare [RSS](#)

## BeefTalk: Feed the Cows and Feed Them Right



**If more time was spent discussing the nutrient requirements of beef instead of the merits of different management systems, all the cows would be better off.**

By Kris Ringwall, Beef Specialist

NDSU Extension Service

Winter continues to pummel us with extreme cold, wind and snow. A normal winter, if there is such a thing, occasionally gives us a breather, but not this year.

Winters like this year create discussion about what type of cattle operation is best. Despite the discussion, the fact remains that the cows need to be fed.

Calving-time discussions are relevant, as are discussions on high versus low input and big versus small cows. The bottom line is that producers must select a cattle management system they are comfortable with. What is even more important is that, in every system, producers still must feed the cows.

If more time was spent discussing the nutrient requirements of beef instead of the merits of different systems, all the cows would be better off.

The discussion with a nutritionist involves four basic needs. How much do the cows weigh and milk? How is the environment affecting the feeding requirements of the cattle? What stage of production are the cattle in? Lastly, what type of feed do you have available?

The answers to these four questions have nothing to do with the management system the producer has developed. The important part is that the producer can answer the questions

Images

Cow Weight	Estimated Dry Matter Intake (Pounds per Day)
1000	26.5
1100	28.2
1200	29.9
1300	31.5
1400	33.1
1500	34.7
1600	36.2
1700	37.8
1800	39.3
1900	40.7
2000	42.2

Source and Assumptions - Dr. Greg Lally, North Dakota State University Beef Cattle Specialist and Nutritionist. Based on the 1996 NRC Beef Cattle Nutrient Requirements Table Converter. Dry Matter feed required at 6 degree temps, no mud. 17.6 lbs DM intake during lactation, but 2/3rds of pregnancy and 55% TDN intake.

Beef Cattle  
Nutrient  
Requirements

columns

**Dairy Focus: Dairy Focus: Economic Conditions Could Get Ugly** (2009-02-05)

The economy likely will get worse before it gets better for dairy producers. [FULL STORY](#)

**Biofuel Economics: New Energy Economics: Japanese Consumers: What is Carbon Footprint of N.D. Grains?** (2009-02-12)

The grain industry is getting more questions from Japanese consumers who want to know what the carbon footprint is of the foods they are consuming. [FULL STORY](#)

**BeefTalk: BeefTalk: Feed the Cows and Feed Them Right** (2009-02-12)

If more time was spent discussing the nutrient requirements of beef instead of the merits of different management systems, all the cows would be better off. [FULL STORY](#)

**Hortiscope: Hortiscope** (2009-02-12)

Ron Smith answers questions about plants, trees and gardens. [FULL STORY](#)

**Livestock Market Advisor: Market Advisor: U.S. Sheep and Lamb Inventories Decline** (2009-02-12)

Current prices are being impacted by the economic meltdown and less demand for all meat, including lamb. [FULL STORY](#)

**Prairie Fare: Prairie Fare: Bake Bread, Make Friends** (2009-02-12)

Try your hand at baking some bread, and you will be surrounded by happy people waiting for samples. [FULL STORY](#)

use of releases

The news media and others may use these news releases in their entirety. If the articles are edited, the sources and NDSU must be given credit.

factually so the nutritionist can correctly calculate a feeding plan.

The nutritionist will take into consideration the cows, environment, stage of production, feeds available and the nutritional analysis of those feeds when the ration is formulated. Getting the correct answers are critical.

Let's take the very first question about how big the cows are. Greg Lardy, North Dakota State University beef cattle specialist and nutritionist, shared some calculations that help show the amount of feed that a cow would need in a given environment (5 degree temperature and no mud), a given milk production (17.6 pounds peak milk production during lactation) a given stage of production (a cow in the last two-thirds of pregnancy) and a given feed resource (55 percent total digestible nutrient forage).

Lardy calculated the dry matter intake for every 100 pounds of cows weighing from 1,000 to 2,000 pounds. The 1,000-pound cow requires 26.5 pounds of dry matter per day, while the 2,000-pound cow requires 42.2 pounds of dry matter per day.

The larger cow needs a lot more than a fork or two more of hay. It actually needs 15.7 pounds more of dry matter. It's simply a biological need, which is not good or bad.

Likewise, the smaller cow will waste feed that is provided over what she actually needs, so know your cows and how much they need to eat.

If we accept Lardy's assumptions, the 1,000-pound cow needs 26.5 pounds of dry matter forage. Here are the daily dry matter needs for different weight cows:

- 1,100-pound cow needs 28.2 pounds of dry matter
- 1,200-pound cow needs 29.9 pounds of dry matter
- 1,300-pound cow needs 31.5 pounds of dry matter
- 1,400-pound cow needs 33.1 pounds of dry matter
- 1,500-pound cow needs 34.7 pounds of dry matter
- 1,600-pound cow needs 36.2 pounds of dry matter
- 1,700-pound cow needs 37.8 pounds of dry matter

matter

- 1,800-pound cow needs 39.3 pounds of dry matter
- 1,900-pound cow needs 40.7 pounds of dry matter
- 2,000-pound cow needs 42.2 pounds of dry matter

This illustrates how the amount of feed a cow needs varies considerably by body weight. Other factors also influence the amount of dry matter forage a cow needs to consume.

Now is not the time to misjudge cow nutrition. When you get to visit with the nutritionist, make sure you adjust the cow feeding for your environment, cow size, expected milk production and cows at calving time.

Have a good feed analysis in hand and be able to describe your feeding system so appropriate feed wastage also can be factored in. Now is not the time to debate cattle management systems. Instead, feed your cows enough and feed them right.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>.

For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601, or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

---

#### NDSU Agriculture Communication

source:	Kris Ringwall, (701) 483-2348, ext. 103, <a href="mailto:kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu">kris.ringwall@ndsu.edu</a>
editor:	Rich Mattern, (701) 231-6136, <a href="mailto:richard.mattern@ndsu.edu">richard.mattern@ndsu.edu</a>

#### Attachments



[PDF - Beef Cattle Nutrient Requirements](#)

(bt021209.PDF - 50.81 Kb)



[EPS - Beef Cattle Nutrient Requirements](#)

(bt021209.EPS - 127.56 Kb)

