

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

CULLING FOR THE FUTURE OF YOUR HERD

STRATEGY GUIDE

When - Ideal time to remove unproductive females:

The most economical time to make any culling decisions is within the first two weeks post-weaning. At this point, the cow has entered her maintenance nutrition period without the calf at her side. Culling prior to weaning will result in additional labor on your part to take care of the nutritional needs of the early weaned calf or finding a sale venue.

Why - "Was she able to do her job and raise a good calf?"

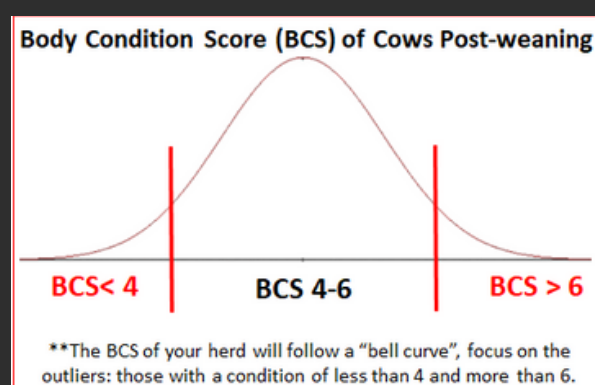
- **Age**
 - Older cows are more injury prone, have a harder time maintaining body condition, and are more likely to have issues with their udder.
- **Injury or Illness**
 - Injuries and/or illness happen at every farm and unfortunately they can't always be fixed. For her sake, its often best to part ways.
- **Disposition**
 - If you find yourself having to know where a problem cow is at all times when you're out on the pasture, it doesn't matter how good of a calf she raises: a bad disposition is a safety hazard.
- **Maternal Ability**
 - How does her calf compare to herd mates peers? Did she have difficulties during calving which have led to issues with producing future calves?



What to look for:

Looking at the Cow:

- **Body Condition: Are they heavy or thin?**
 - **Heavy: WHY?** They put weight on their back and not as milk for their calf. They shouldn't be over a BSC of 6 at weaning
 - **Thin: WHY?** They put everything into milk production for their calf. Age - first calf heifers and older cows tend to pull off a lot of weight. Additional causes: injury or illness.
- **Udder**
 - How does her udder look? Ligaments - hanging low. Teat length and size - don't want too long or too large.
- **Feet and Legs**
 - How are her feet and legs holding up? Mobility issues will affect feed intake



Looking at the Calf:

- **Size and Weight**
 - How does the calf compare in size and weight of the peers in it's age group? Keep in mind age of the dam as well as gender of the calf.
- **Structure**
 - Is the calf structurally correct? Does it stand solid of all four legs? Straight through the spine?

The Udder

Having good udders on your cows are essential to running a productive cattle operation. One of the best times to evaluate her udder is the first day or two post-weaning:

- **All 4 quarters should be full**
 - Are any quarters dry?
 - Has she already dried herself off prior to weaning? Generally indicates she was a poor producer
- **Teat length**
 - Short is better than long
- **Teat Shape**
 - Enlarged or blown-up teats are hard for calves to drink from, may indicate a previous mastitis infection and potential teat damage.

Ultimately the culling choices you make (or don't make) will help determine the future success of your cattle business.

Questions?

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