

Group Cattle for Winter Feeding

Clyde D. Lane Jr.
Professor and Extension Beef Cattle Specialist
Department of Animal Science, University of Tennessee

Grouping of cattle for winter feeding allows producers to more efficiently and economically use available feed supplies. Requirements differ for various classes of cattle. Grouping allows animals to be fed according to their needs, not over feeding nor under feeding.

A tentative grouping for the herd would be dry cows, cows with calves, young cows with calves, replacement heifers and stocker calves. The feed required by animals in each group will vary.

What happens if the animals are not grouped for feeding? In this situation, some animals will receive too much feed while other will not receive enough. An excellent example would be dry cows and cows with calves. Dry cows have a relatively low nutrient requirement while cows with calves have a higher requirement.

If animals cannot be placed in the above-mentioned groups, then some combining of groups may be necessary. Although combining of groups is not desired, it is still much better than no grouping at all. An example of combining groups would be to place the young cows and stockers together providing the stockers are not being fed to make very fast gains.

For additional information on winter feeding of beef cattle or other topics related to beef cattle production, contact your local University of Tennessee Extension agent.