



COUNTRYSIDE KEYNOTES

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THERE'S A NEW RESOLUTION IN TOWN THIS YEAR

6 NEW YEARS RESOLUTION IDEAS FOR FARMERS

By Michelle Miller, Iowa-based farmer, public speaker and writer.

Step aside diet and exercise. The treadmill can wait when there's a NEW resolution in town.

As the popular old farmer saying goes, "There's always next year." We in agriculture tend to start out the new year with a fresh start and clean slate. Now that harvest is complete, what can we focus on for 2022? Here are a few ideas to get your gears turning (pun intended) on some popular farm related new year's resolutions.

1. Put yourself — and your mental health — first. Mental health is a popular topic these days and the past couple years have been very difficult on our farmers. Just know that it's OK. Problems with tariffs, Mother Nature, abandoned harvests, low commodity prices ... they all play a role but it doesn't make you a bad farmer. Call your health insurance company and ask them for the best mental health resources. Talk to someone you love and trust and try not to spread yourself too thin to the point where you burn out. It's OK to take a break and ask for help.

2. Plan a dang succession plan already! It's something that can be SO easy to put off, but do you know how you're going to **pass the farm off to the next generation**? The average American farmer is 58 years old and time goes by so quickly. Think about how you're going to do it as unemotionally as possible.

3. Be better organized with equipment, tools, etc. "Where the heck is that 3/8 wrench?" It can be frustrating to lose an important part or tool. Equipment needs to be cared for to prevent breakdowns, rust, and other things, and implementing new organizational drawers and systems can save you a lot of time. Time is money and every little bit helps.

4. Keep livestock pens just a little cleaner. We get it, life on the farm can get pretty crazy and hectic. Sometimes you might not have a place to store the manure, or maybe conditions aren't right for hauling. Take better advantage of the days that are good for it and reap the benefits. When cattle pens are cleaner, there's fewer instances of illness and disease. Less medication and vet bills equals more money in your pocket, and healthy, clean animals are a key component to that. Take the time to ensure they're raised in the best conditions possible — improved rate of gain and the farm process will overall go much smoother.

5. Keep better track of the books. Breakdowns and repairs, input costs like seed, fertilizer, chemical, and feed can add up quickly. Do you really know your ROI? By having better spreadsheets and record keeping, you can do better cost comparison among vendors and can do a better job of shopping around. Try an experimental seed plot with a different company. The cost savings can quickly add up!

6. Become more involved. With the average person being multiple generations removed from the farm, how can we better connect with the public? Social media gives us great opportunities to connect while volunteer opportunities are plentiful. You could volunteer at schools to talk about a day in the life of a farmer, inspire others to get excited about agriculture, start a YouTube channel, whatever! The possibilities are endless, and people are becoming so much more interested than ever to learn where their food comes from.

THE ROLE OF BODY CONDITION SCORE IN GETTING A COW REBRED

By Christina Hayes, Ph.D. Purina Product Manager, Beef Technical Solutions

When newborn calves arrive, cows put their reproductive cycles on hold. Cows are recovering from pregnancy and building up energy reserves in preparation for their next breeding cycle. On top of that, once a cow calves her energy requirements increase by 20-30 percent due to lactation. The challenge then becomes, how do you get a cow rebred?

Body condition score plays a big role.

Body condition score at calving matters

Too often, we don't pay attention to body condition score until it's too late. Calving and rebreeding is no exception. Rather than trying to recover body condition score post-calving, focus your resources on optimizing cow body condition score at calving. Research shows that for cows that calved with a body condition score of 6:

- 98 percent showed estrus by day 40 of the breeding window
- 90 percent were confirmed pregnant by day 40

The same research shows a drop in body condition score to 5 resulted in just 80 percent of cows in estrus and 65 percent confirmed pregnant by day 40.

Be proactive with body condition score

Once cows get behind, it's hard to catch up. Cows at a body condition score 3 at calving need to gain upwards of three pounds per head per day to be at a body condition score 5 before breeding, which is difficult to do in most real-world conditions. To help cows breed back quickly and support calf health, target mature cows to calve at body condition score 6. A quality, year-round supplementation program, including mineral and protein supplements, ensures cows have the nutrition they need to thrive and gives them a nutritional foundation to achieve ideal body condition score.

Body condition scoring your cows at key times allows you to evaluate whether your cows are on track or need nutritional adjustments for successful calving, weaning and rebreeding – during this season and future seasons.

The 90-day period after weaning is the best time to pay close attention to body condition score. By about 45 days after weaning, cows will pick up condition if feed management, including the quality and quantity of feed resources, matches cows' needs. Forage supplementation might be needed to help cows recover.

If you have any body condition questions, don't hesitate to reach out to one of our knowledgeable nutrition professionals. You can find their contact information below.

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