

Tips for peak finishing of grass-fed beef

Rod Ofte,
Willow Creek Ranch
Norse Group Consulting Inc.



Achieving peak grass-fed finishing performance.

Successful Grass-fed Beef Production System

Feed Quality

Genetics

Time

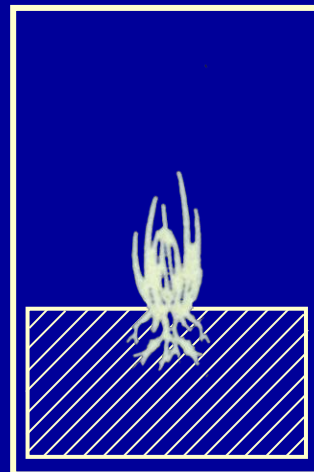
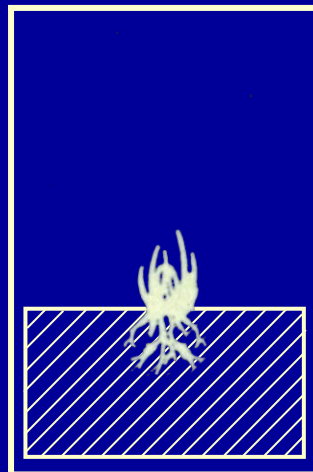
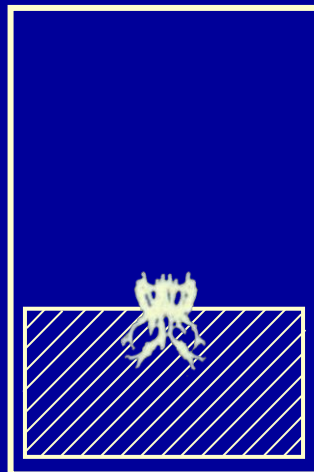
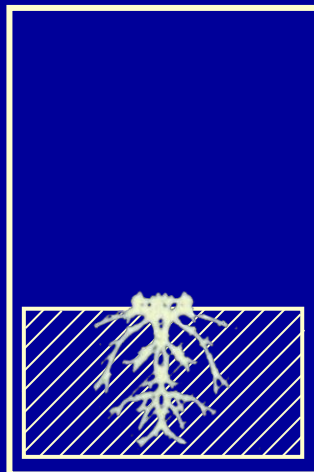
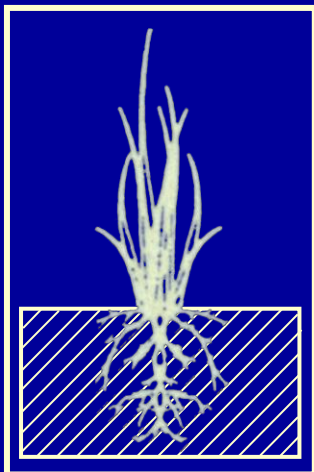
Winter Management

Feed Quality/Quantity

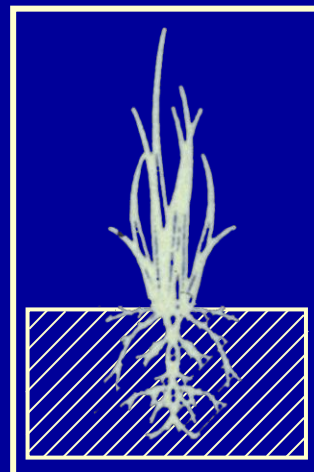
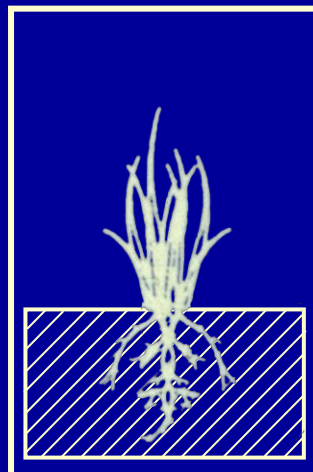
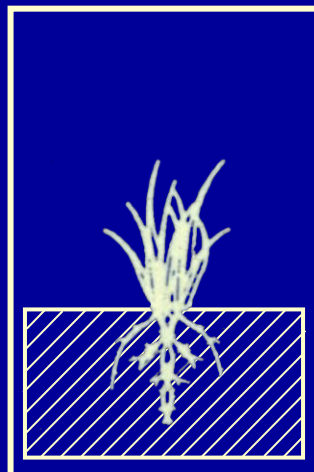
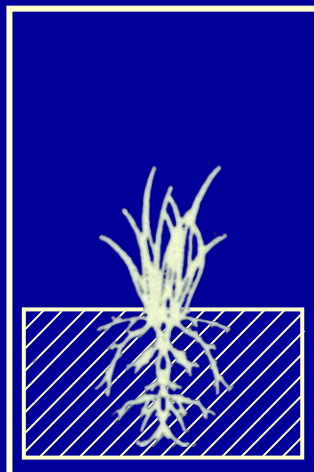
Rotational Grazing 101

**Pasture recovery is
Critical!**

A



B



**PLANTS
AT START**

**EXTENT OF
GRAZING**

**5 DAYS
RECOVERY**

**10 DAYS
RECOVERY**

**15 DAYS
RECOVERY**

Flex – Pasture and seeding annuals



Flex – Pasture and seeding annuals



Grazing Stockpiled Annuals – Oct 30 '20



Harvested Forage

- Not all hay is created equal
- Feed quality (RFQ) is important
- Palatability is important

Wrapped vs dry forage debate



Maximize Forage Effectiveness

- Ensure pastures get at least 30 days of rest
- Finishing animals need an AYCE buffet
- Higher palatability equals higher consumption
- Offer supplements especially in low temps
- High quality forage pays good dividends
- Separate finishing cattle from the cow herd
- Investigate flex-pasture set up systems
- Investigate inter-seeding of annuals
- **Extend the grazing season as long as possible**

WATER

Water Management

- Don't let water be the limiting factor in your beef program.
- Gains will be limited if cattle have to walk too far or if water source is poor.
- Water quality is directly related to feed intake
- For optimum finishing – make fresh water available in each paddock.
- Different for cows.

Achieving peak grass-fed finishing performance in the upper midwest.

Successful Grass-fed Beef Production System

Feed Quality

Genetics

Time

Winter Management

Selecting Genetics for Forage Based Production Programs



Cow Herd Attributes

- Must have great **longevity**
- High **fertility**.
- **Sound** feet & legs, eyes, udder & teats, teeth.
- **Low to moderate milk**
- **Highly adapted** to their environment
- **Moderate frame** (BIF Frame Score 3.0-5.0)
 - Bulls = 52 – 56 inches
 - Cows = 48 – 52 inches
- Adequate **depth, thickness, and gut capacity**.
- Can **survive and thrive** without all the “props”.

Undesirable Phenotypes

Frame 8 Bull



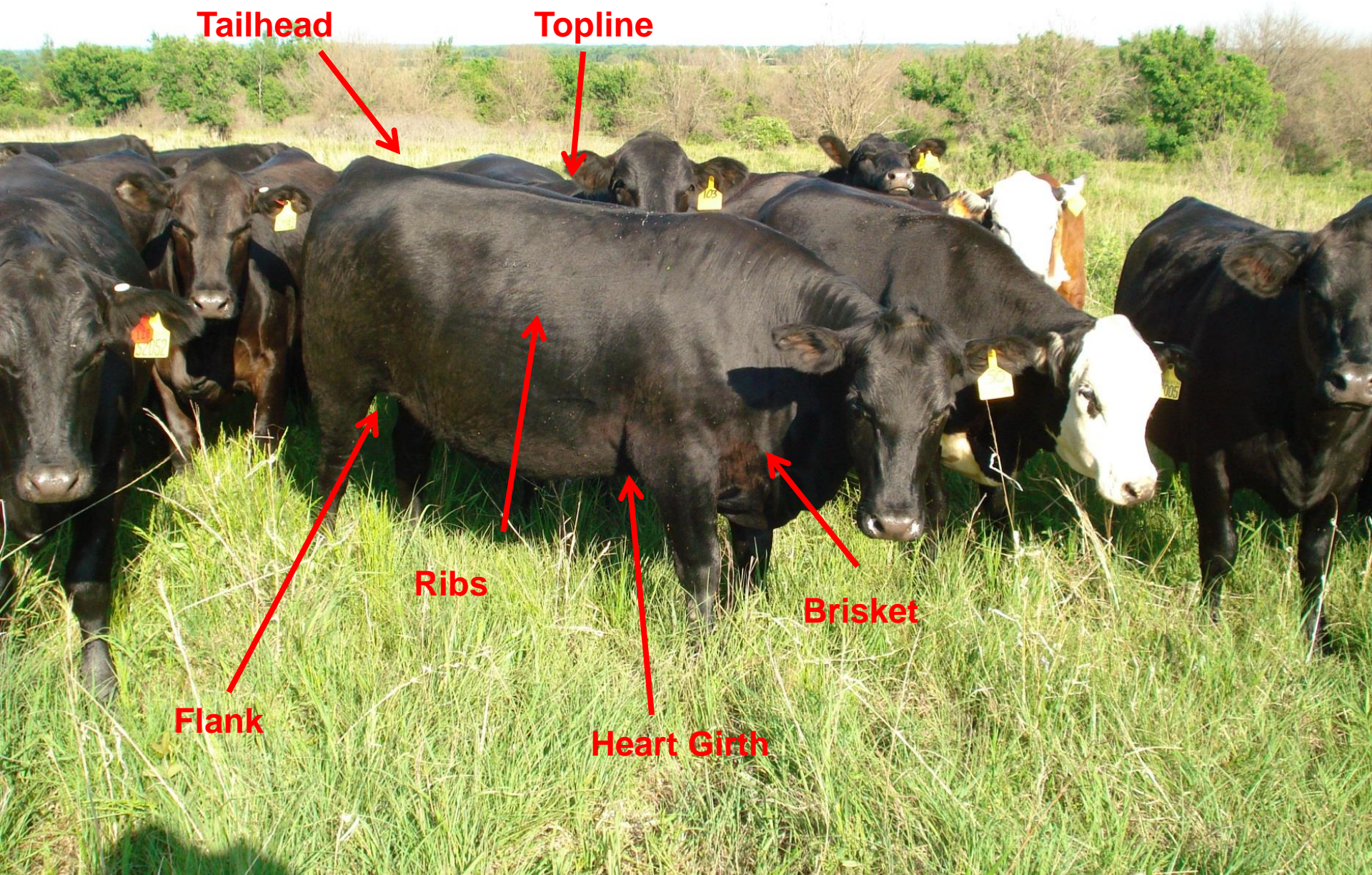


Time

- Finishing cattle on grass will require more time than conventional methods that use growth hormones or high energy feeds.
- Plan a calving/feeder system that supports your goals.
- Be patient... It may take 24+ months to properly finish an animal on grass

How do I know if an animal is properly “Finished”?

Where to Look for Proper Degree of Finish



**Why is proper carcass
finish important??**

Finish variants

	24 Mon Animal B	27 Mon Animal B	Assumptions @ 2.5lb/day gain
Live Weight	975	1200	
HCW	585	720	60% yield
Finish	40 Select	10 Choice	USDA Grade
Pay Price	\$2.15	\$2.35	WGBC HCW Pay Tiers
Gross Rev	\$1,257.75	\$1,692.00	\$434.25 Delta
Addn't Feed	0	\$237	Intake x 90 days x \$150/tn
Net Return	\$1,257.75	\$1,455.00	\$197.25 Addntl Return

High Quality Product Equals...



.....A High Quality Eating Experience



And consumers are ready to pay for it!

Winter Forage Management



Winter Forage Management

- Cold climate “Grazing” programs require managing harvested forage.
- Think through your goals and resources and complete a winter forage plan.
- Winter gains and health maintenance are critical for a successful beef program.
- A variety of feeding systems can be used to suit your needs and budget.

Winter Forage Management





Winter Forage Management



Winter Forage Management



Winter Forage Management



Winter Forage Management



Winter Stockpile Grazing



Winter Energy Supplements

- Continue offering free choice salt and mineral throughout the winter
- Grass based energy boosters are available (QLF)
- Kelp is an excellent immune system booster

Winter Energy Supplements



Winter Energy Supplements



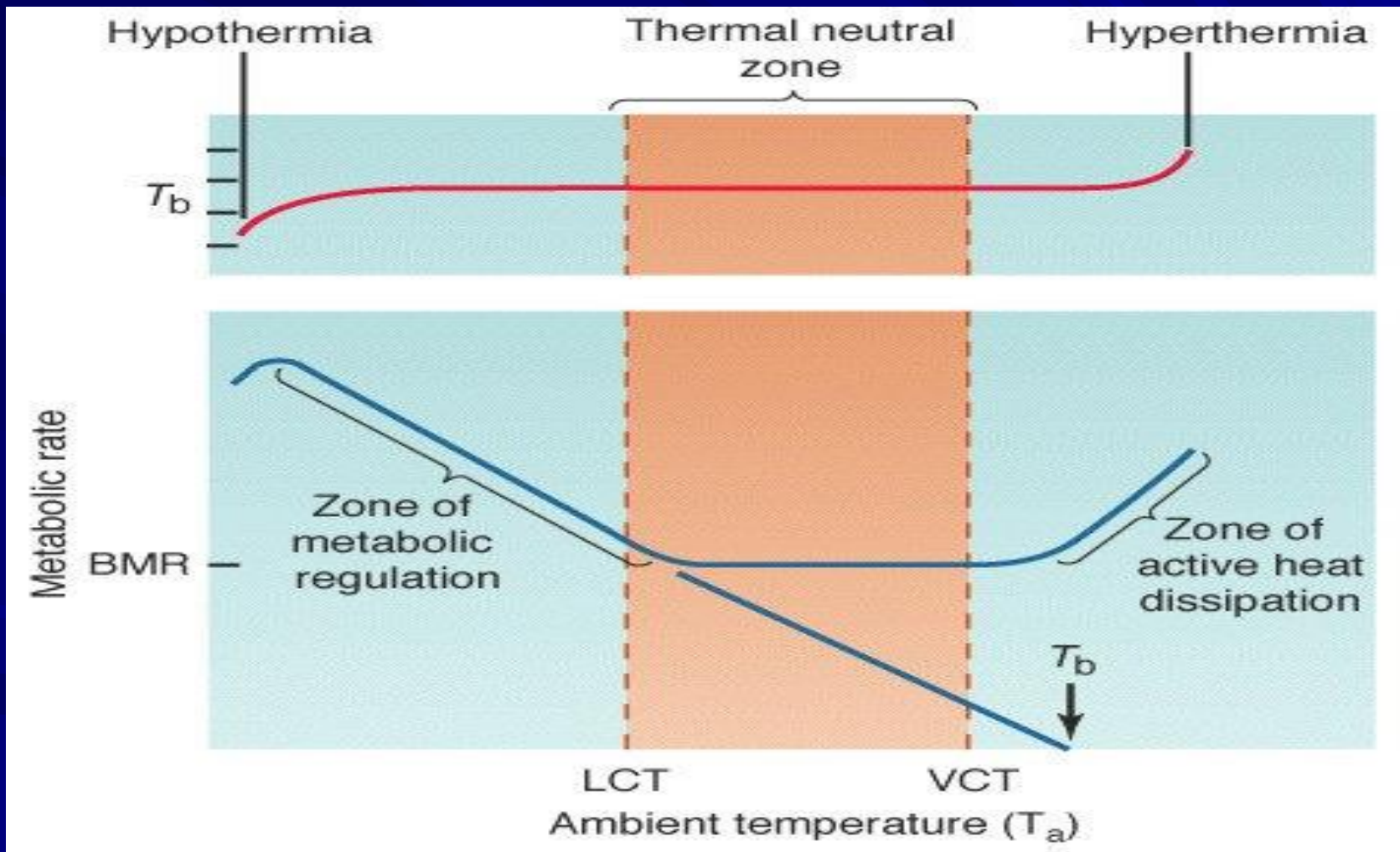
Winter Energy Supplements



The Importance of Temperature Management

- Be aware of “Critical Temperature” = 20 F
- Wind and moisture significantly affect “real feel” temperature
- Managing temperature is critical to winter weight gain and body condition
 - If the temperature drops to zero (or equivalent of zero, with wind chill) energy requirement of an animal increases between 20 - 30 percent or about one percent for each degree of coldness below its critical temperature.

Thermo – Neutral Zone



Temperature Management Tips

- Provide shelter and/or wind breaks for your finishing cattle.
- Harness the sun where possible.
- Dry bedding pays big dividends
- Proper bedding and wind breaks can result in a 20%+ improvement in feed efficiency.

*ISU Study – AV Dec 2018

Temperature Management

What is the value of a 20% efficiency gain?

# Feeders	Weight	Monthly Feed Intake	
50	900	40500	
40500	8100	\$648/Mo	

Winter Forage Management



Willow Creek Ranch



Willow Creek Ranch Finished Cattle Results

- Average Age to finish: 26 months
- Grade Results:
 - 2020: 82% Achieved Choice Grade

“Good things take time, it
pays not to rush it”

Financial Calculators for Grass-fed Production Systems

- Cow Calf Operation
- Stockers Back-grounding
- Finishing Operation
- Direct Marketing
- Farm to Fork
- Branded Programs



<http://www.wallacecenter.org/resourcelibrary/-grassfed-beef-financial-calculators>

Free On Line Resources

- www.farmbiztrainer.com
- <https://hayandforage.com>
- <http://www.iowabeefcenter.org/calculators.html>
- <http://www.wallacecenter.org/resourcelibrary/-grassfed-beef-financial-calculators>



Thank you!

Supporting Slides

- Questions ???