



Cattlemans

THE MIDWEST

October 3, 2024 Volume 30 No. 9 GRASSLAND FARMING TODAY



Angus
Page 22



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CATTLEMAN THE MIDWEST

October 3, 2024 Volume 30 No. 9 GRASSLAND FARMING TODAY

CATTLE ON FEED, CARCASS WEIGHTS, CATTLE SLAUGHTER AND BEEF PRODUCTION

By Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension

As of Sept. 15, USDA reported that six percent of Oklahoma winter wheat was planted, compared to ten percent in the five-year average. Dry conditions have continued to delay wheat planting. However, large swaths of the western two-thirds of Oklahoma received some rain in the past few days, supporting more wheat planting. Wheat pasture prospects are delayed, but still possible if planting is completed relatively soon.

The September USDA Cattle on Feed report showed that August placements were 98.6 percent of last year and marketings were 96.4 per-



cent of one year ago. There was one less business day this August, so daily average marketings were actually up fractionally from last year. The September 1 on-feed total was 11.2 million head, 100.6 percent of one year ago. The report was well anticipated and should not cause a

continued on page 10

U.S. CATTLE ON FEED UP SLIGHTLY THROUGH JULY 2024

By Maggie Malson

Cattle and calves on feed for the slaughter market in the U.S. for feedlots with capacity of 1,000 or more head totaled 11.1 million head on Aug. 1, 2024. The inventory was slightly above Aug. 1, 2023.

Placements in feedlots during July totaled 1.70 million head, 6 percent above



2023. Net placements were 1.65 million head.

continued on page 10

ARE WE NEARING EXPANSION? A LOOK AT COW SLAUGHTER AND THE INVENTORY CYCLE

By Rob Ziegler, Extension Specialist - University of Wyoming

The U.S. beef cow herd inventory has received significant attention recently, due to historically low levels driven by market prices and drought conditions that have incentivized producers to sell. Droughts impacted much of the U.S. in 2011-2014 and again in 2021-2023, coinciding with the contraction phase of the cow cycle. A closer look at cow slaughter during these contraction phases and drought periods could shed light on producers' current intentions to rebuild and the potential trajectory of market prices.

Beef cow slaughter peaked in 2011 at 3.9 million head, roughly midway through the last contraction phase, which ended in 2014 when expansion began. Slaughter bottomed out in 2015 at 2.2

million head and started increasing again in 2016. Another peak in cow slaughter was observed in 2022 at nearly 4 million head. In 2023, cow slaughter declined by 12% compared to 2022. From January through August 2023, 2.2 million head of beef cows were slaughtered, compared to 1.9 million head during the same period in 2024. It appears that total cow slaughter in 2024 will be lower than that of 2023. Historically 35% of cow slaughter occurs between September and December, which could bring total slaughter for 2024 to around 2.9 million head. While the final figure for 2024 is yet to be determined, if the decline continues, 2024 could mark the second consecutive year

continued on page 10

PORT STRIKES WILL HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON MEAT EXPORTS

By Jennifer Shike



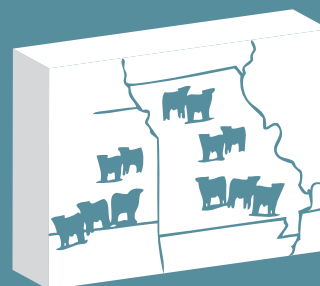
Contract negotiations between the International Longshoremen's Association and U.S. Maritime Alliance on a new labor agreement for port workers along the East and Gulf Coasts have stalled, increasing the potential for an Oct. 1 strike. Even though the majority of U.S. red meat exports flow out of the West Coast ports, U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) President and CEO Dan Halstrom says a strike in the east and south would still have a significant impact on the industry.

Halstrom notes 45% of waterborne U.S. pork exports were shipped through the East and Gulf Coast ports through July, while the share of waterborne beef exports was 30%, based on USMEF's calculations from PIERS data.

"A high percentage of chilled beef goes out from the East Coast, in particular for destinations like Europe and Middle East. So we can't overstate the importance of the East Coast and Gulf Coast ports, even though the West Coast is larger," Halstrom says. "A very significant quantity is exported through the East and Gulf Coasts."

Some of that traffic is already being re-routed through the West Coast

continued on page 12



Coming Sales-38

Market Report-8

Agribusiness Directory-36



Grandma Nell

I call her Mom, but her grands and great-grands call her **Grandma Nell**. When it comes to her amazing life; She has quite a story to tell.

Find a spot to sit down. Listen – as it begins you can hear the **wind blow**. The New Mexico wind never stopped; So... on to **Montana** we all go. I was her oldest, at seventeen she had me; then came another and then another; yes... there was **three**.

All boys... that is. Dad made four; Five mouths to feed – every night – every morn. **We never missed a meal**.

We had ham, and venison, and then ham and cheese; then ham again; and again... **don't pass the ham please**.

Baby calves, baby lambs, baby colts; We had them all – sometimes in the tub; She would cradle one, feed one, then feed us and give us a bath... **same tub**.

Our home was in 'The Breaks' – there was barely a road. We loved our dear neighbors; they helped carry our load... **many times**.

By the numbers I think it's safe to say; I enjoyed every single day. Six feet of snow, sixty miles to pray; Nine months of winter, ten years to stay... **----- Twenty degrees below**.

Ask, "What would the title be if it were a song?"; **We all left 'ALIVE'**, Mom's **goal** all along. The Ozarks, before '73; just part of the country with lots of hills... **lots of trees**.

It's true - we were used to a much bigger space; but we all made a home on the **'Anderson place'**... In Oregon County Missouri.

"It seems like only yesterday," she will say with a smile; "My boys are all grown up... The Lord has been with us... **the whole while**."

Today, Mom has a new life, a new partner and friend; Living proof that God's blessings... **never... never... end**.

My Mom has always been a blessing... to everyone! **Not even one would disagree**; And she's known quite a few; Last Spring she turned eighty-three.

Love you... Mom!

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By Paul Beck, Oklahoma State University

When selling calves shrink is a concern because it is a reduction in the sales weight, but abnormal levels of shrink is often used as a health indicator for cattle arriving in receiving facilities at stocker operations, grow yards, and feedlots. Adjustments in price are common to compensate for varying shrinkage and gut fill.

Shrink is often characterized in two categories; fill shrink and tissue shrink. Fill shrink is the loss of excreta from the digestive system. This type of shrink is common in marketing and can be recovered quickly in a few days once cattle are back on feed and water. Tissue shrink is more severe, with shrinkage levels greater than 6%, associated with long periods without feed and water along with other stressors, such as long-distance transport, weaning, rough handling, or heat stress. Tissue shrink

may take up to 30 days to recover.

Selling calves directly after weaning leads to some of the highest levels of shrink. Weaning is stressful and calves are often unfamiliar with water and feed locations, so may refuse to eat or drink even when feed and water are offered. Precondi-

continued on page 14



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The Evolution of U.S.-Mexican Cattle and Beef Trade

By Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

The U.S. and Mexican cattle industries have a long and somewhat colorful trade history that continues to evolve today. Cattle frequently served as the currency of trade between Mexico and the U.S. from the U.S. Civil War through the Mexican Revolution and World War I. U.S. imports of Mexican cattle were important all through the 20th century and continues today (Figure 1). In the last 25 years, an

average of 1.15 million head of cattle have been imported from Mexico each year. These imports represent an average of 3.3 percent of the U.S. calf crop. Mexico has a comparative advantage in the production and export of feeder cattle with vast regions of forage production in arid and semi-arid regions as well as in the non-arable regions of dry and wet tropics in which cattle production is the main economic activity.

The next phase of beef industry trade between the U.S. and Mexico was the growth of beef exports to Mexico which began in the 1990s and accelerated sharply in the late part of the decade. By the late 1980s, Mexico was the third largest beef export market because there simply weren't many export markets (Japan accounted for 70 percent of total exports.) Mexico was roughly six percent of total U.S. beef exports at that time. Growing rapidly after 1996, Mexico rose quickly to become the number two export destination and accounted for an average of 23.3 percent of exports from 2000-2003 (Figure 2).



aged 59.4 percent of exports from 2004-2007. Mexico was the number one beef export market from 2004-2010 before other markets recovered. Mexico was the number two or three export market each year from 2011-2020 and averaged 15.0 percent of beef exports over the period. Recently Mexico dropped to the number 4 market with an average share of 9.2 percent of total exports from 2021-2023.

After the BSE case in late 2003, Mexico was the only beef export market that did not close or greatly reduce. Mexico accounted for 72.4 percent of total beef exports in 2004 and aver-

The economics that drove the increase in beef exports to Mexico in the 1990s and 2000s was largely a matter of supplementing deficit beef supplies in the country as consumption outpaced do-

continued on page 14

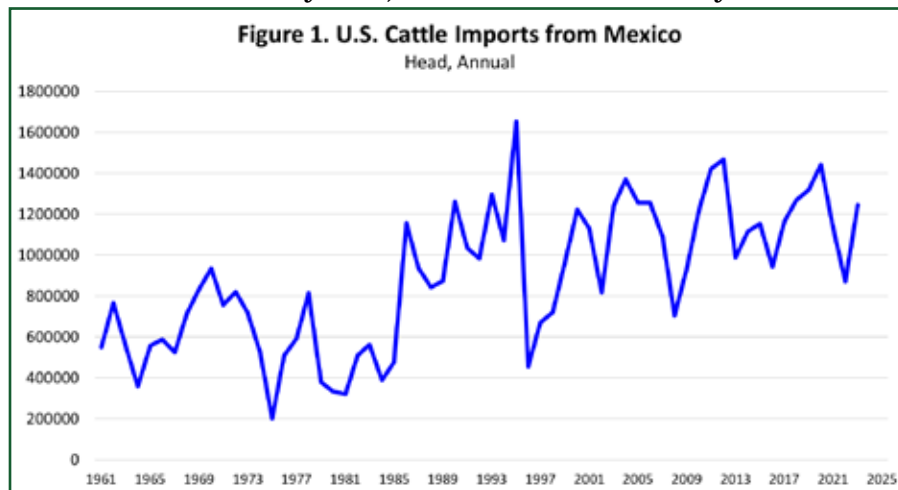


Figure 1. U.S. Cattle Imports from Mexico (Peel)



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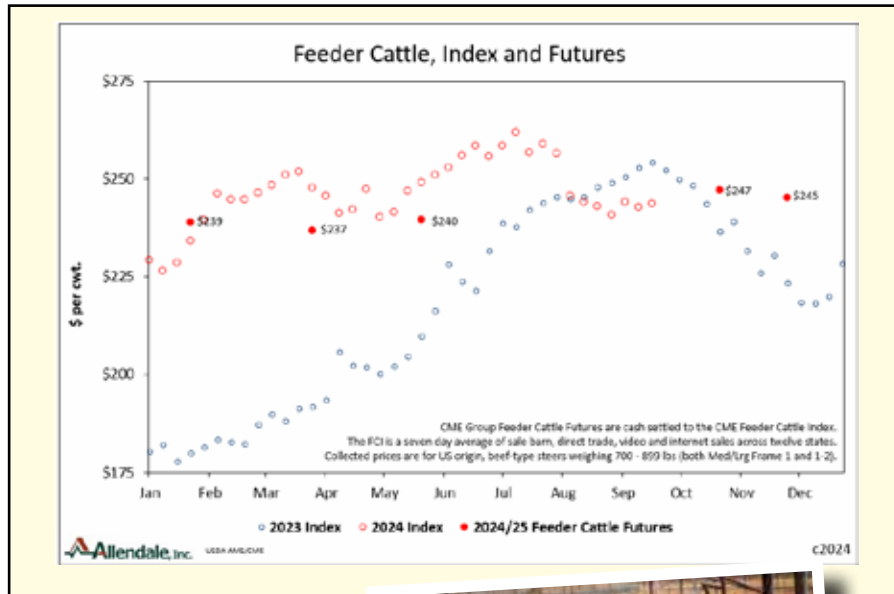
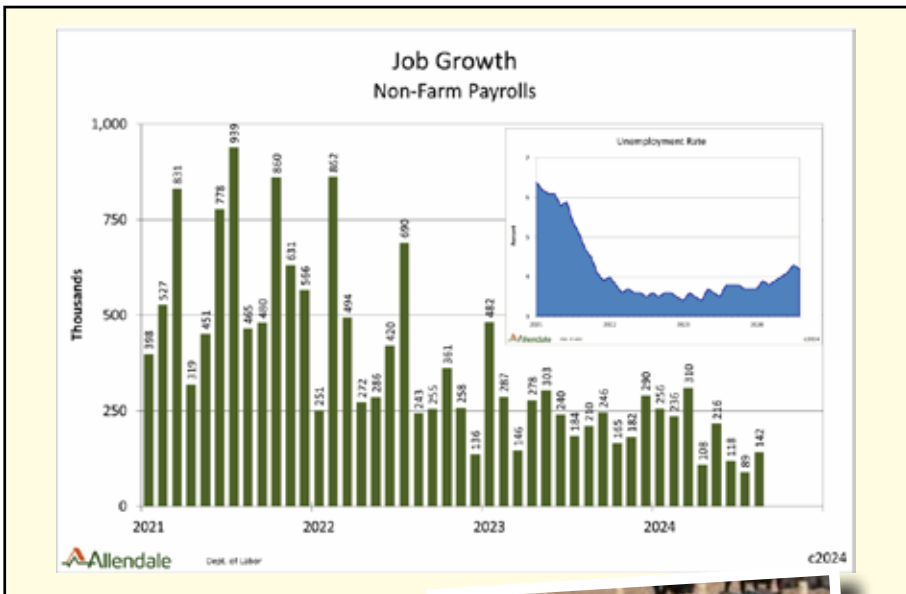
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Live Cattle:

The general 2023 – 2026 US beef supply decline story is in a temporary lull. Cow culling has stepped back from last year but there is no heifer retention story. 2024 beef production will be about -5% from the start of the story, 2022. We estimate 2025 supplies will push that to -9% from 2022. The tightest supplies will still lie ahead for one more year if expansion starts. In the near term, feedlot placements January – August have run -1.9% from last year. This feeds lightly lower supplies into part of Q2.

But the question in the near term is not about supply, but demand. Job growth is slowing, full-time/part-time rates are slipping and consumer debt delinquencies are rising. However, beef end users are not backing away. Though wholesale beef prices have declined from summer highs, like last year, end users are more active with long term procurement at these lower prices. Futures were once implying cash cattle in the South would drop to \$177 by December, +3% year/year. They are now saying stable, \$183.

Feeder Cattle:

Demand concerns have also played out in calf and feeder pricing. Recent sale barn pricing is about -4% from last year. That's fine for a light psychological risk but it is no clear breakdown in demand. Retail beef prices in August were a new record for any prior August, +4% from last year's prior record August. Putting it into perspective, prices are now +42% from five years ago. At worst, we have only mixed demand signs, no clear pushback. We have learned to respect the US consumer's love affair with beef. In addition, we'll have a lightly lowered supply offering next year.

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What Does this Report Mean to Me?

Q: What is the update to the feedlot plan?

A: Questions over the US 2024 corn harvest are wrapping up. We have the largest US stocks/use in five years but there are limits to a bear story. US yields are +1% vs. starting trend, not +3% to +5%. Without any new news we suggest \$4.40 futures is still the direction with an ending stock close to 2.0 billion. Feed buyers should have all needs through December locked up. That was made in Sep/Aug using basis and call options. In heavy supply years there is still a 15 cent basis increase into February from here. As with prior suggestions, feeder procurement through March should be locked in via purchased futures.

Q: This is the peak marketing season for freshly weaned calves. Would you overwinter any?

A: This is a lightly discounted market. Prices are -4% year/year at the same time as we are offering lower supplies. It could become heavily discounted. Maybe, like last year, it won't be a lasting issue at all. If you have feed on hand right now, I would take the risk on half.

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market reaction.

Feedlots have maintained inventories slightly higher in the first nine months of 2024, up an average of 0.6 percent compared to one year ago. However, total feedlot placements in the January – August period were down 1.9 percent year over year. The feedlot industry continues to find ways to hold inventory levels despite an ever-smaller feeder cattle supply. Continued heifer feeding is one key to that but increased days on feed is most important this year. The most recent monthly data from the Kan-

sas Focus on Feedlots summary shows average days on feed for steers at 204 days and the current 12 month moving average continues to inch higher at 194 days. Increased days on feed means a slower feedlot turnover rate and helps feedlot maintain the inventory level despite a reduce throughput – feedlot marketings are down 1.0 percent year over year thus far in 2024.

Steer and heifer carcass weights continue to advance sharply this year. Current weekly steer carcass weights are 941 pounds, up 24 pounds

year over year. Steer carcass weight shave averaged 23 pounds heavier for the year to date. Heifer carcasses are currently 846 pounds, up 21 pounds from one year ago, with a year-to-date average 19 pounds above last year. Simultaneously, steer slaughter is down a scant 0.3 percent year over year, while heifer slaughter is down 2.3 percent for the year to date. Total fed slaughter is down 1.1 percent in the first 36 weeks of the year, a smaller decrease than previously expected. Higher than expected fed slaughter and sharply

higher fed carcass weights put total fed beef production higher by 1.4 percent year over year. This is offset by a 12.9 percent year over year decrease in nonfed beef production resulting in a 1.1 percent year to date decrease in total beef production. Unexpectedly large fed beef production has changed expectations for annual beef production from earlier forecasts of a 4-5 percent year over year decrease to current estimates of a one percent decrease in total beef production.



U.S. CATTLE

continued from page 3

During July, placements of cattle and calves were as follows:

- Less than 600 pounds = 390,000 head
- 600-699 pounds = 265,000 head
- 700-799 pounds = 385,000 head
- 800-899 pounds = 387,000 head

- 900-999 pounds = 200,000 head
- 1,000 pounds and greater = 75,000 head

Fed cattle marketed during July totaled 1.86 million head, 8 percent above 2023.

Other disappearance totaled 56,000 head during July, 14 percent below 2023.

Drovers



ARE WE NEARING

continued from page 3

of lower beef cow slaughter volumes.

Examining the CME Feeder Cattle Index over this period provides insight into the price impacts resulting from supply and demand dynamics. The index peaked in 2014 and 2015 at just over \$200/cwt, when cow herd inventory and slaughter volumes reached their lowest points at the end of the contraction. From 2016 to 2020, the index trended mostly sideways, with a slight downward drift around the \$150/cwt mark, as cow herd numbers increased and peaked in 2019. When feeder cattle supplies peaked in 2020, prices hit their low, but in 2021, the Feeder Cattle Index rose again as cow numbers declined and slaughter volumes increased. Currently, the index hovers around \$242/cwt. Given the projected increase in slaughter volumes for 2024, it appears the cow

herd is contracting at a faster pace. If this trend continues, feeder supplies will likely tighten during this contraction period, supporting prices.

If history repeats itself, as it did in 2011, we may have another 1-2 years of contraction before moving into the expansion phase. However, despite strong feeder prices, elevated interest rates and higher input costs in recent years have negatively impacted income per cow. The question remains whether these margins will be sufficient to encourage expansion within that timeframe. While the drought in 2024 has been more regional, some heifer retention may be correlated with these areas. That said, heifers retained this year will not contribute to the feeder cattle supply for approximately two more years. These factors suggest that the expansion phase may unfold more slowly than it did in 2014.

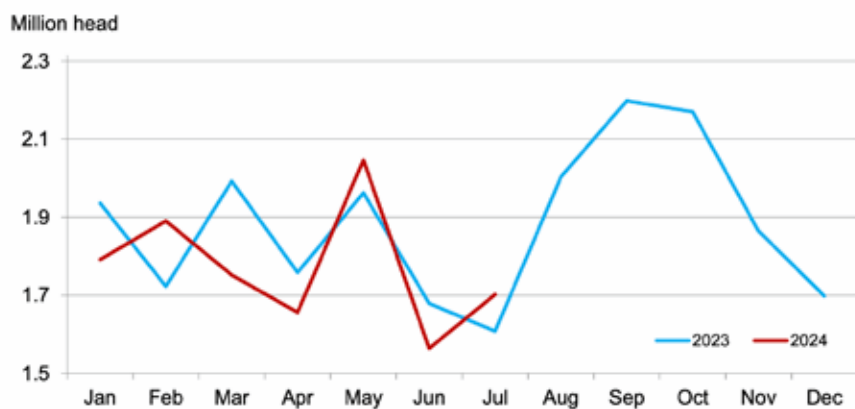


Cattle on Feed Inventory on 1,000+ Capacity Feedlots by Month – States and United States: 2023 and 2024

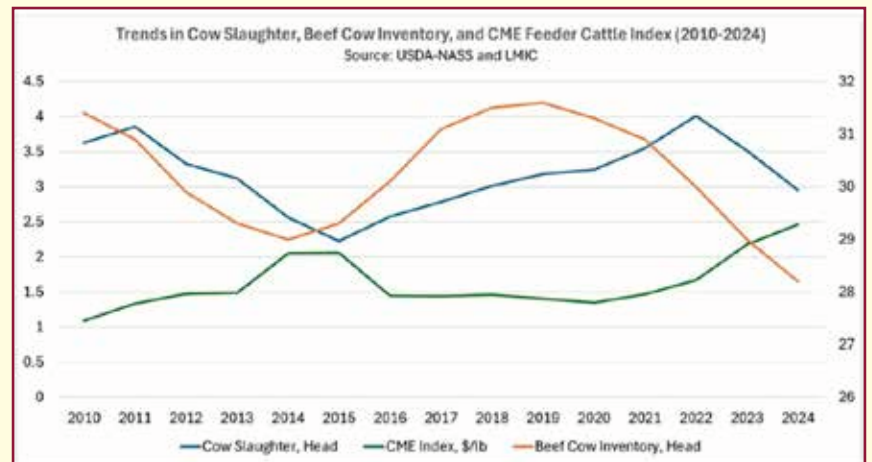
State	August 1, 2023 (1,000 head)	July 1, 2024 (1,000 head)	August 1, 2024		
			Inventory (1,000 head)	Percent of previous year (percent)	Percent of previous month (percent)
Arizona	249	249	240	96	96
California	525	530	520	99	98
Colorado	980	970	960	98	99
Idaho	280	330	310	111	94
Iowa	640	650	650	102	100
Kansas	2,350	2,220	2,210	94	100
Minnesota	95	105	100	105	95
Nebraska	2,280	2,390	2,320	102	97
Oklahoma	255	325	325	127	100
South Dakota	170	205	190	112	93
Texas	2,720	2,790	2,740	101	98
Washington	235	240	240	102	100
Other States	285	300	290	102	97
United States	11,064	11,304	11,095	100	98

Cattle on Feed by Month for 1,000+ Feedyards (USDA)

Cattle Placed on 1,000+ Capacity Feedlots – United States



Cattle Placed on Feed (USDA)



Trends in Cow Slaughter, Beef Cow Inventory, and the CME Feeder Cattle Index, 2010-2024

PREPARING CALVES FOR THE AUCTION

K-State beef cattle experts offer advice on how to make sale day successful

By Lisa Moser, K-State Research and Extension

Anyone who has ever left the house in a rush knows that it is not the ideal way to start the day, as important things can be left behind. And the stress of the exit can leave a person feeling uneasy.

Similarly, when preparing young calves for sale day, moving them in a hurry and not following health protocols can not only be stressful, but it can also result in lost income due to lower sale weights, according to the experts at Kansas State University's Beef Cattle Institute.

Speaking on a recent Cattle Chat podcast, the experts agreed that with proper planning, young calves can make this transition with minimal stress.

K-State agricultural economist Dustin Pendell said producers first need to decide how they want to market the calves.

"Look at the marketing options to see if there is a certain program that matches with your management system, and then follow the protocols of that program," Pendell said. Examples he gave were preconditioning and vaccination programs.

K-State veterinarian Bob Larson added that a lot of special calf sales will have vaccination requirements for not only the type of vaccine to give, but also guidelines for when the vaccinations must be administered.

"Vaccines work best when they are delivered at a time when the calf isn't particularly stressed, so if we can vaccinate them and then turn them back with their mothers, they are likely to respond well," Larson said. "Also, these vaccines need time, so if they are administered the day before we co-mingle them it doesn't provide much of a benefit."

Along with making sure the calves are properly vaccinated, the experts say it is important to minimize the amount of weight lost between the ranch and the auction market.

"The main thing we are concerned about is the amount of

shrink the calves experience, so if you are pulling them away from their mothers the morning they go to the sale, be sure to follow low-stress handling techniques to reduce the amount they will defecate and urinate tied to stress," Lancaster said.

Some producers will follow a preconditioning protocol that involves weaning the calves and exposing them to a feed

continued on page 14

A large advertisement for the Missouri Opportunity Sale. The top half has a black background with red diagonal stripes on the left and right sides. The text "MISSOURI OPPORTUNITY SALE" is written in a large, white, outlined, cursive font. Below this, in a smaller white font, it says "Missouri State Fairgrounds Sedalia, MO". Underneath that, in a large, bold, white font with a black outline, it says "OFFERING OVER 60 LOTS!". The bottom half of the ad features a photograph of a brown and white cow standing in a grassy field. In the bottom left corner, there is a white circle containing the text "November 3, 2024". In the bottom right corner, there is a white circle containing the text "Annual membership meeting and awards banquet @5 p.m. November 2, 2024".

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PORT STRIKES
continued from page 3

ports, but there is not enough capacity to absorb all of the trade that would be impacted.

"Redirecting to the West Coast is a potential, very short-term solution, but it's

by no means a long-term solution at all, because it's not just U.S. beef and pork. You've got all sorts of commodities that use these same ports. We're challenged to export all of our product today using all the ports, so we cannot afford a shutdown in

any part of the supply chain," Halstrom continues.

USMEF and other organizations are urging the White House and Congress to do all in their power to bring the two sides back to the bargaining table to avoid a port shutdown.

"We need to get the White House or anyone else involved that can help to spur discussions to get back to the table and avoid any kind of interruption of service," Halstrom says.

Drovers



Top 10 Ports for U.S. Pork Exports (PIERS/USMEF)



Top 10 Ports for U.S. Beef Exports (PIERS/USMEF)

FARM BUREAU WARNS OF SEVERE IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE FROM POTENTIAL EAST COAST, GULF PORT STRIKE

The American Farm Bureau Federation in a report said it is deeply concerned about the potential impact of a looming U.S. East Coast port strike on American agriculture. This labor dispute between the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and the United States Maritime Alliance (USMX) could have far-reaching consequences if an agreement is not reached before the contract expires on Sept. 30. Highlights of Farm Bureau's report:

Impact on agricultural exports:

- The stakes for American farmers and ranchers are incredibly high. In 2023, over 70% of U.S. agricultural exports by value, totaling more than \$122 billion, were transported through ocean ports.

- A strike would primarily affect containerized agricultural exports, which make up about 30% of U.S. waterborne agricultural exports by volume.

East Coast ports at risk:

- Approximately 46% of containerized agricultural exports, or 16.6 MMT, depart from East Coast ports.

- Nine major ports account for nearly 94% of all East Coast containerized agricultural exports, with Norfolk and Savannah leading the way.

- Economic Impact: Over a one-week period, the potential value of disrupted containerized agricultural exports is estimated at \$318 million.

- Commodities at risk. While bulk grain shipments are largely protected from disruption, several key agricultural products face significant risks:

- Soybeans: 2.67 MMT of soybeans were exported through East Coast ports in containers in 2023, representing 6% of U.S. waterborne soybean exports.

- Poultry: Nearly 80% of waterborne poultry exports could be jeopardized, potentially lowering prices for poultry producers.

- Other products: Hay, cotton, red meat, vegetables, dairy products and edible nuts would also face significant disruptions.

Impact on consumers:

- Over 1.2 MMT of bananas arrive annually at ILA-handled ports, supplying over a fifth of the nation's supply.

- Nearly 90% of imported cherries, 85% of canned foodstuffs and 82% of hot peppers come through these ports.

- 80% of imported beer, wine, whiskey and scotch, and 60% of rum arrive at East and Gulf coast ports.

Potential solutions and challenges:

While redirecting exports through unaffected West Coast ports could provide some relief, this strategy faces several challenges:

- Infrastructural limitations on how many containers ports can process.

- Increased transportation costs and logistical hurdles

for producers farther from West Coast ports.

- Potential vulnerabilities in certain regions lacking access to efficient transportation options.

Bottom line: The report emphasizes that a port strike would create significant backlogs of exports, denying farmers access to higher prices in the world market. This could lead to domestic oversupply, driving down prices for key commodities and further eroding farm profitability. As the agricultural sector braces for potential rising operational costs and supply chain shifts, U.S. farmers find themselves in an increasingly precarious position.

agweb.com



By Dean Kreager, Ohio Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator

Only 20% of cow calf producers in the Eastern United States pregnancy check beef cows, according to National Animal Health Monitoring System (NHAMS) Studies. Over the years there have been improvements in pregnancy detection options but the adoption of these has been slow for many beef producers. Maybe this year the question should change from "Is it worth the expense?" to "Can I afford not to pregnancy check?"

The cost of overwintering an open cow this year could be much higher than in recent years. Much of Ohio and some surrounding states have been experiencing drought conditions this summer. The hardest hit areas are also home to a high percent of Ohio's cow/calf production. The rolling pastures have stopped producing forage and many springs have dried up resulting in cattlemen hauling water and feeding hay much earlier than normal. These conditions have led to shortages in hay and pasture, along with struggles locating sources of hay. Cattlemen may be looking at feed alternatives, as well as early weaning to stretch their feed resources.

Research has shown that even in the best managed beef herds, 5-10% of cows in a herd remain open at the end of the breeding season. This number could easily balloon to 15% in herds trying to establish pregnancies during drought conditions. Nutrition, body condition, and stress play heavy in regard to reproductive success. The reduced quantity and quality of forage available likely extended the anestrus period on cows. This is especially true in young cows that are still growing. Remember, if cows are decreasing in body condition, their food resources are likely not being used for reproduction. This issue can easily carry over into next year as nutritional resources are stretched

through the winter resulting in cows calving at a reduced body condition score.

Slaughter cow prices have been at a premium. We have been seeing prices as high as or higher than any time since 2014. Let's look at an example, a 1,300-pound cull cow could fetch \$1.20 a pound at the stock yards bringing in \$1,560. Now, let's say you

are short on pasture and hay and will be purchasing hay to make it through the winter. At \$60 a bale the cost for hay for the winter will be at least \$400 to \$500. This does

continued on page 16



Preg check vs winter an open cow?!

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MANAGE SHRINK

continued from page 5

tioning programs have been designed to reduce weaning stress' effect on calves later in production by enhancing the immune system and teaching calves to eat from a feedbunk and drink from a water tank or fountain at the ranch of origin.

Preconditioning calves before marketing reduces shrink because the stress of separation from the dam has already occurred and calves are familiarized with handling and feed and water sources. Unweaned calves transported directly to the auction market can have shrinkage of 7 to 10% while preconditioned calves can have 2 to 5% shrinkage.

Dietary interventions can be used to reduce shrink. Steers coming off wheat pasture were transported for 4-hours either directly off pasture or after they were given access to hay and water for 24-hours. Initial shrink after only 30-minute hauls were similar and only around 1/2% of initial weight. Weight loss of steers moved directly from pasture were much greater than steers fed hay before transport when hauls were 1 to 2 hours.

After 4-hours of transit, steers directly off wheat lost

37 pounds (5.1% shrink). Steers given access to hay before transport lost 28 pounds (3.85% shrink) over the same haul. This shows that shrink losses were about 1.28% per hour of transport but providing access to a dry hay before transport decreases shrinkage rates to 0.96% per hour. The reduced shrink was likely due to slower passage rate of feed through the digestive tract and less water loss.

Cattle market surveys have shown that calves that are gaunt or shrunk prior to marketing have \$2 to 4/hundredweight premium over cattle with average fill. These premiums are unlikely to cover the lost revenue from the excessive weight loss due to shrink. Calves that were classified as 'full' or 'tanked' were discounted \$4.73 and \$11.10/hundredweight, respectively, in a survey of Arkansas feeder cattle markets. These large discounts are reflective of the buyer's belief that excessive shrink will occur before cattle reach their final destination. There is value to both the buyer and seller for calves to have a fair weigh up at marketing.



PREPARING CALVES

continued from page 11

bunk and other water sources, Lancaster said. "The preconditioning diet should have about 30% forage, and then the morning you take them to the sale barn just hold them off of feed."

Along with giving the calves time to adjust to a new diet, K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers said there is a benefit to exposing them to close contact with people and machinery.

"Calves that are used to seeing humans and farm equipment will make the transition to the feeding phase of production go smoother, allowing your calves to perform better and build your reputation of selling high-quality calves," Lubbers said.

Also, when you are taking the calves to an auction, Pendell suggested letting people know.

"Let your customers know when you are taking the calves to market through the community and social media channels," Pendell said.

And the last tip they offered was to make sure the person driving them to the auction is a cautious driver.

"Research has shown that the driver matters – how they approach corners and stop signs is important," Larson said. "Remember when you are delivering your calves, which is your paycheck, it is important that they arrive in the best possible shape."

K-State



THE EVOLUTION

continued from page 5

mestic beef production in the country. In other words, it was mostly a matter increasing the quantity of beef in Mexico.

The final phase that has been added to increasingly integrated U.S. and Mexican beef markets is Mexico's emergence as a major global beef exporter. U.S. imports of beef from Mexico accelerated rapidly after 2009, with the country jumping to the number four place as a beef import source in 2010 (Figure 2). Mexican beef imports continued to grow with the country moving into the number three spot as a beef import source by 2017 and number two in 2021.

The growth of beef exports from Mexico is largely the result of the Mexican beef industry switching from carcass-based beef markets to boxed beef technology in the 2000s. Adoption of boxed beef was a huge change in beef markets in Mexico that opened up much more value as specific products could be targeted to specific markets,

including export markets. Mexico has also seen significant growth in cattle feeding and packing infrastructure in the past two decades. Mexico is now a major beef export market and beef import source for the U.S. meaning that trade has evolved from one-way flow of beef to bilateral trade of diverse products, which adds value in both markets.

Figure 3 shows beef trade with Mexico in recent months. Mexico has been an anomaly among U.S. beef trade markets in 2024 with exports increasing, despite decreasing exports to most other markets, and decreasing imports from Mexico, despite increasing imports from other major import sources. Numerous factors are no doubt contributing to current beef trade with Mexico, including Mexican macroeconomic conditions and domestic beef market conditions, along with a Mexican Peso that strengthened against the dollar from 2022 through 2023 before weakening recently.

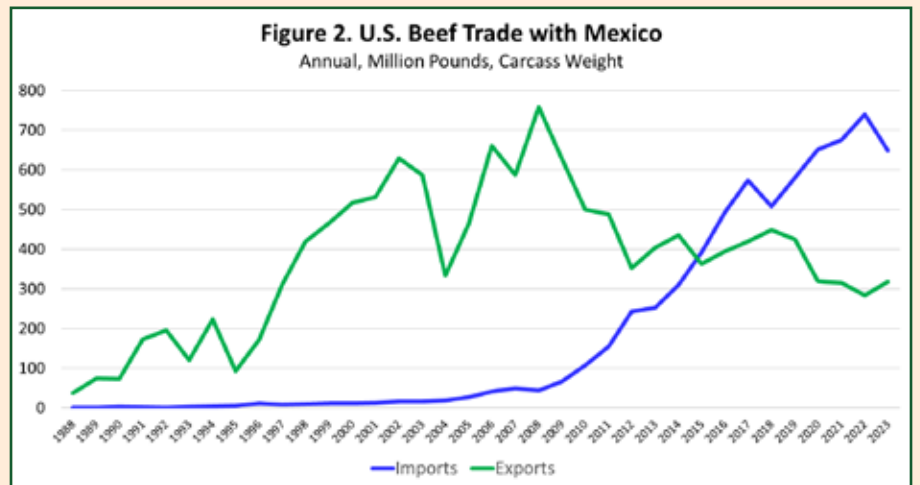


Figure 2. U.S. Beef Trade with Mexico, Carcass Weight (Peel)

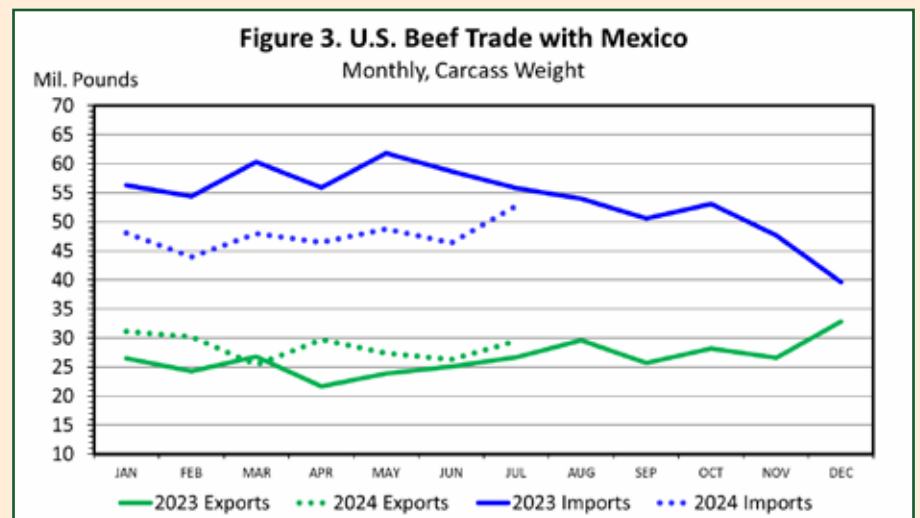


Figure 3. U.S. Trade with Mexico, Monthly Carcass Weight (Peel)

By Denise Schwab, interim IBC director

With the days getting shorter, it's time to make plans for weaning this year's calf crop. Weaning may be the most stressful time in a calf's life – they are removed from momma, their feed changes, and their home changes all at once, so everything we can do to reduce stress is beneficial, but the process needs to start long before weaning day.

First, set your calves up for a healthy immune system by vaccinating them at least 2-3 weeks prior to weaning. Work with your herd veterinarian on both vaccines and timing. If utilizing a branded marketing program, check the requirements now. Many require specific vaccinations, parasite control and castration and dehorning.

Second, help them adapt to a new nutritional program prior to weaning. If they will be backgrounded in a drylot, consider start-

ing on creep feed 2-3 weeks ahead of weaning. Introduction of creep feed allows for a smoother transition to eating from a bunk and a new type of diet. If they will be weaned and backgrounded on pasture, plan ahead on which pastures will be best in terms of fencing, water source and high-quality forage. If calves

have only drank from creeks or ponds their entire life and are expected to utilize an automatic waterer after weaning, allow them to learn that behavior before weaning.

Third, plan for the environment that calves will be moved into at weaning. If

continued on page 16



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not take into account any other expenses. Add your sales to your savings on feed expenses and you are around \$2,000 per open cow that is culled.

Finding those open cows to cull is as easy as one trip through the chute to conduct a pregnancy check. There are three common methods of pregnancy checking. They are palpation, ultrasound, and blood testing. Each method has advantages and disadvantages.

Palpation and ultrasound will involve a veterinarian visit. There will probably be a trip fee and a fee per cow checked. While the vet cost will likely be higher than for a blood test, ultrasound and palpation allow for aging of the fetus to help determine due dates and they provide immediate results. Each method will vary in how early in the pregnancy you can get an accurate result. Ultrasound is now possible around day 20 but the accuracy increases as time goes on. Rectal palpation can be accurate with a good technician starting around day 35. Sexing pregnancies is possible with ultrasound starting around day 60.

Blood testing is likely the least expensive option if you are able to do it on your own. Blood can be drawn from the tail vein with little experience needed. The cost of the supplies and testing will be around \$5 per test. Blood

test pregnancy results are very accurate after 28 days post insemination, provided at least 73 days have elapsed since giving birth. Blood tests are not able to differentiate between the ages of fetuses. There will also be a few days of delay, when shipping samples to a lab, until testing is complete, and results returned. Alternatively, there is now a blood test that you can do at home for about \$10 per test and you read your own results in about 20 minutes.

Exact timings, details, and expenses will vary between tests, technicians, and veterinary providers. Follow the instructions from the provider or for the test you choose. Pregnancy losses are much more common in the first 45 days after breeding than later but can occur throughout the pregnancy. A positive pregnancy test is not a 100% guarantee of a birth, but a negative result is nearly a 100% chance of no calf.

With the potential of 10% or more of cows being open, forage supply shortages, cull cow prices at an all-time high, and pregnancy testing costing between \$5 and \$15 per animal, this may be the year when the question changes to "Can I afford not to pregnancy check?"

OSU



THE MOST STRESSFUL

continued from page 15

they spent their entire life on green pastures, weaning into a dry lot is a shock to their system. If possible, acclimate the calves into the drylot along with the cows for a couple weeks prior to weaning. Or better yet, wean them on the pasture and move the cows. Fenceline weaning where calves can see and hear momma has proven beneficial but does require a good fence between them. Recommendations include a tight, 4+ strand fence reinforced with woven or electric wire, and an area long enough so pairs can spread out and maintain relatively close proximity to each other. Typically, the calves will start to leave the common fenceline within a couple days with the cows taking a couple more days to leave the area. Within 5-7 days they should be ready to move to a new pasture away from each other. A three-year study from California showed that fenceline-pasture weaned calves spent more time eating, less time vocalizing and had higher daily gains than

calves where the mothers were totally separated or calves were weaned into drylots. Fenceline-pasture weaned calves gained 95% more weight in the first two weeks than calves in all other weaning methods, and they were still heavier 10 weeks later.

When weaning into a drylot situation, ensure at least 1-1/2 ft/hd of bunk space. Check that bunk and water tank height can be accessed by small calves. When weaning on to dry feed, having long stem grass hay available for the first couple days with a corn by-product or grain mix sprinkled over the top typically will draw them to the bunk. Hand feeding twice a day will encourage calves to come to the bunk and aid in identifying sick animals or those not eating yet.

The more you do to reduce the stress of weaning, the more weight available to sell or transfer into your feedyard. Either way it is money in your pocket.



KLA FILES COMMENTS ON USDA COMPETITION RULE

KLA filed comments recently opposing the USDA's Fair and Competitive Livestock and Poultry Markets proposed rule. Despite its title, KLA commented that the rule would hinder, not help, cattle markets. Central to KLA's opposition was USDA's attempt to administratively redefine a key element of the Packers and Stockyards (P&S) Act by trying to claim that a complainant need not prove a practice affects or is likely to adversely affect competition. Removing this requirement not only goes against the unanimous opinion of eight federal circuit courts of appeal, but will change the inherent nature of the act, which is an antitrust law. Such a change essentially would convert the P&S Act

from a law to ensure equal opportunity in the market to one that ensures equal outcomes. KLA also commented that the proposed rule appears to be a pretext to allow the secretary of agriculture to establish minimum cash trade volumes in the fed cattle market, a concept opposed by KLA policy. In addition to KLA, NCBA and Sen. Roger Marshall filed comments against the proposed rule. As this rulemaking process unfolds, KLA will be working with Congress to prevent any final rule from becoming law and, if necessary, pursue legal action in conjunction with NCBA and other state affiliates.

KLA



HOW TO EXTEND GRAZING DAYS WITH FALL COVER CROPS

By Laura Brenner, Noble Research Institute

Ranching advisor Jim Johnson breaks down a common question he hears from ranchers – how to incorporate fall cover crops into a grazing plan.

One of the most common questions ranchers ask Jim Johnson is how to supplement grazing needs while transitioning to regenerative practices. Instead of baling or buying hay, Johnson, senior regenerative ranching advisor at Noble Research Institute, suggests adding fall cover crops to their grazing plan.

Grazing and economic benefits of fall cover crops

From a grazing perspective, there are abundant reasons to add fall cover crops to your pastures, especially if you want to reduce your reliance on hay. But these cool-season cover crops add more to your ranch than grazing days. They can boost soil health, increase plant diversity and attract pollinators and other beneficial insects.

“In the first year, you may see an increase in insects and beneficial animals. But it may take a few years for a noticeable increase in earthworms and water retention or infiltration rates,” explains Johnson.

Noble’s Red River Ranch began incorporating fall cover crops a couple of years ago. Ranch manager Kevin Pierce plants cool-season crops in December and grazes them in February and March, when his warm-season pastures are dormant. Pierce adopted this practice for soil health benefits, but Johnson believes there’s an economic benefit to increasing grazing days, too. It’s a conversation that perks up ears in the Noble Land Essentials courses he teaches.

“The economics would be a lot better, for one, because you’re not paying to cut, rake, bale, and haul hay off,

then haul it back and feed it to (the cattle),” he says. “You don’t have the shrink from it decomposing in a field, or the capital expenditure if it’s in a barn for storage.”



continued on page 18

Jim Johnson, senior regenerative ranching advisor at Noble Research Institute, suggests adding fall cover crops to the grazing plan.



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Determine if fall cover crops are right for your pastures

But before ranchers haul out their planting equipment, Johnson says it's important to know why you're planting the cover crop, and how you plan to use it.

"How does that grazing field fit into the rest of your grazing plan? Does it match a time when you have a forage need and allow you to reduce hay feeding?" he asks. "Maybe instead of a cover crop, think of it as a second forage crop. I think it can still provide a lot of the same benefits to the ecosystem if we manage it properly when you graze a cover crop."



If you know why you're planting the cover crop, then you can begin to determine the right crop – or mix of crops – to plant. For example, a cover crop to increase plant diversity and add forages to your grazing plan might be a specific mix of grasses and legumes, while a cover crop to break up compacted soil or attract pollinators will focus on plants with deep root systems or flowering plants, respectively.

Johnson recommends connecting with a neighbor who uses cover crops or contacting your regional Cover Crops Council for more information about what works well in your area. If local producers aren't an option, he suggests starting with a seed company website or catalogue. There are many good ones available, but his preference is Green Cover, based in south-central Nebraska.

"Many seed company websites have some kind of in-

teractive tool to help producers determine the right mix for their operation," Johnson says. "You might have to tweak their recommendation, but it gets folks started on a good path."

Adopt best practices for planting fall cover crops

The easiest way to integrate a fall cover crop is to let the first frost stop the growth of your warm-season grasses, then plant your cool-season cover crop. Johnson acknowledges that access to a no-till drill – the tool he believes is the best way to plant a crop into pastureland – can be limited for many ranchers.

"You can broadcast or tread in with cattle, but it's not as dependable and predictable as a no-till drill. Though, if you can get some good rain right after planting, you might get closer," Johnson says. He also points out that broadcast seeding rates may need to be higher than those

recommended when using a no-till drill. He knows ranchers may not like hearing this, but Johnson often responds to their requests for specific cover-crop advice or recommendations with, "it depends." He knows every ranch is unique and every rancher employs a different philosophy about achieving their ranch goals. Generally, he encourages producers to experiment on a small section of their pasture to determine what works best for them.

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Look for ways to reduce calf stress at weaning

By Dr. John Yost, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Ohio State University Extension

We are quickly approaching your neighbor's favorite time of year. That being one where the air is filled with the melodious serenades of newly weaned calves and their separated mothers. We know that the bawling will end after a few days, but your weaning process can affect the calves' performance the rest of their lives. It doesn't matter whether the calves are destined to find their way onto a truck headed to a feedyard, or if they will be staying on farm to become a future replacement in your herd, you want to prepare them for the next stage of the production process.

We often think of weaning as an abrupt change. Cows with calves in the morning, then cows and calves on different parts of the farm in the afternoon. In order to be efficient with our time,

we will combine many weaning tasks into the same day. There isn't a perfect system, but there is a system that will work best for each operation. We should recognize that every procedure performed on the calf creates stress, and stress decreases production potential. Vaccinations, castration, dehorning, retagging, branding, changes to their diet, and a change (if only temporary) of location, are all stress events that the calf will need help to overcome. Your goal should be to design weaning protocols to make this process a transition and not an abrupt change.

We know that the calves will be through the chute at least once, usually twice, during the weaning process. If you vaccinate your cows before breeding, can you let the calves walk through the



chute without being caught? While you have the calves sorted off so you can work mom, can you expose them to the feed you will be transitioning to at weaning. Are you able, or willing, to begin creep feeding the calves a couple weeks ahead? Novelty, just like being dehorned,

castrated, or vaccinated, is a stressor. You may find that the calves will work calmer if they have had a couple positive experiences in the handling facility prior to a processing day.

Feed is a great motivator to get animals to do what we

continued on page 20

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want. Getting calves up on feed after weaning is highly important for future growth and ultimate carcass performance. It is estimated that up to 40% of a calf's dry matter intake is milk as they approach weaning time. That milk provides a significant portion of the calf's protein and energy requirements. By exposing them to their transition feed early, they will be

more likely to stay on or get back on feed after weaning.

It is also important to organize the order you perform calf processing tasks. Stress limits an animal's ability to fight off disease challenges and reduces their response to vaccinations. You should consider laying out your schedule so that all you are doing on weaning day is sorting cows and calves. The

earlier you can dehorn and castrate, the lower the potential stress will be. You should consider speaking to your veterinarian about providing an analgesic to help the calves manage the pain. It is also recommended that you deworm and implant a few weeks before weaning. Anything you can do to have the calf at peak health, before the final challenge, will keep them progressing.

When it does come to the final days before sorting calves, there are several techniques you can implement to reduce calf stress. Nose clips can be placed on the calves a week or two before weaning to prevent them from nursing while still with mom. You can utilize fence line weaning, where the calves are sorted into an adjacent pasture or pen and allowed fence line contact to ease the separation. Some have found success with allowing a dry cow or two to run with

the calves. There are also a number of products on the market that you apply topically to the calf that are supposed to reduce stress.

In summary, there is no perfect system to coordinate weaning. There is only the system that fits your management style. You should evaluate your protocols and weaning calendar to see if there are ways to reduce the amount and frequency of stress events on the calf. Work with your nutritionist and veterinarian to design the best feeding and herd health programs to prepare your calves for the next stage of production. Finally, don't forget about yourself. Weaning isn't just stressful to the calf, but it can be a stressful time for you too. After all, the bawling does eventually stop.



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Fenceline Weaning

By Mark Z. Johnson, Oklahoma State University Extension Beef Cattle Breeding Specialist

Regardless of when and how many calves you will wean, methods of reducing stress on fresh weaned calves is of great interest to cattlemen and of benefit to cow-calf operations. Traditional methods of weaning calves typically involve total separation of calves from cows by moving calves to a new pasture or dry lot pen. Here we address the concept of “fenceline weaning,” a management process that allows fenceline contact between calf and dam for at least four to ten days following weaning. Fences need to be sturdy enough to permit nose to nose contact while preventing nursing. The objective of fenceline weaning is to allow social interaction between calf and dam while weaning the calves off of mother’s milk.

Studies have shown several benefits of fenceline weaning:

- Calves bawl and walk less for the first several days post weaning.
- Calves spend more time resting and eating during the first several days post weaning.
- Calves gain more weight in the first couple of weeks post-weaning.
- Calves that eat and drink more during the first days after weaning stay healthier.

Best Practices for Successful Fenceline Weaning

- Move the cows and leave calves in the same pasture or lot. When this is done, calves already know the location of water, feed and grazing areas. If this is not possible, locate water troughs and feeders along the fenceline where calves and cows will



initially congregate increasing the likelihood calves will find water and feed early on in the process, thereby minimizing walking perimeter fences.

- Avoid adding unnecessary stress like castrating, dehorning, branding or vaccinations at the time of weaning by completing these processes several weeks prior to weaning, or after weaning is complete.

•Fencing needs to be adequate. A typical five-strand barbed wire fence will usually be satisfactory. If calves are still able to nurse through the fence, adding a single strand of electric fence offset from the main fence, possibly on both sides should be adequate.



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CERTIFIED ANGUS BEEF'S NEW DIRECT-TO-CONSUMER PROGRAM

By Abigail George

Certified Angus Beef developed a new direct-to-consumer program. The Ranch to Table program allows producers to put the CAB brand and logo on their own freezer beef to market directly to consumers.

Many producers take pride in raising Certified Angus Beef (CAB). Now these producers can take the CAB brand and logo to their freezer beef market with the new direct-to-consumer Ranch to Table program.

The Ranch to Table program was designed for Angus producers to market their beef directly to consumers as a CAB product. While the producers must follow some guidelines, which may include having an American Angus Association active membership, proof of bull registrations and being Beef Quality Assurance certified,

the program is designed for producers to take their Angus genetics combined with the brand's trusted reputation to increase marketability and financial gain for their operation's products.

According to Certified Angus Beef, the Ranch to Table program aims to provide another way for producers to have "equity in the brand."

Cattle will have to meet the CAB brand's live-animal evaluation standards with a predominantly solid-black hide, and carcasses must meet CAB's 10 specifications. The Ranch to Table program's end product is going to be consistent with traditional CAB product, not compromising any of the brand standards.

The program application is open to all Angus producers, and eligibility will be evaluated on the business's



Photo by Paul Marchant.

operating plans and marketing approach for the beef produced rather than limiting it to operations with specific numbers of cattle, CAB says.

CAB says the goal of the program is to provide Angus producers an asset – something that can add value to their program and their

own products. They know direct-to-consumer beef merchandising can expand an operation's financial opportunity, "perhaps allowing the next generation to come back and join the family business," CAB says.

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THE LINK – STARTING YOUR MARKETING PLAN.

By Troy Marshall, Angus Director of Commercial Industry Relations

The fall calf run is upon us, and most everyone is looking to sell their cattle at higher prices this year. However, very few commercial ranchers have a marketing plan that goes beyond selecting the preferred sale barn and expected marketing date. Beyond that, we tend to turn it over to third-party entities that focus on marketing cattle on a daily basis.

Those who specialize on the

transaction side of buying and selling do a good job for the most part. They provide an invaluable resource to the industry, helping to create more uniform load lot sizes that can be managed and marketed effectively.

As good of a job as they do, it is rarely part of their business model to help you differentiate your calves. Their role tends to be more about price discovery than value creation

and capturing that value, which is the essence of every marketing plan.

While it is oversimplification, cattle marketing can be summed up as putting the right cattle with the right information in front of the right people at the right time.

The right cattle

The first step is to determine your definition of the right cattle. What will differ-

entiate your cattle from others in the marketplace, and what are the right genetics, right weights, right marketing window, right target market, right buyer, right information and right documentation?

Let's imagine going to a car dealership, with the goal of buying a pickup truck. The dealer shows you a lineup of trucks of all different sizes, colors, option packages and transmissions, then turns

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you loose with the only caveat being that the black trucks will cost more than the silver ones, which will cost more than the red ones, which will cost more than the camouflage-painted ones.

The right info

You would want to know what is under the hood. Is it a V6 or a V8? Is it diesel or gas? What is its towing capacity? Horsepower?

What type of transmission does it have? Is it the plain Jane version, or does it have leather seats, a moon roof and electric windows?

The right people

There are buyers looking for work trucks. There are others looking to haul big loads down the highway in comfort, others looking to go off-roading, others to make their neighbors envious when they pull into their driveway.

What they all need is the information to make a good buying decision, information that they trust, whether it be third-party-verified like mileage estimates or horsepower ratings, or as a result of the confidence that comes with a brand.

Removing the risk

Not every truck is right for every buyer. That is why marketing becomes so important. Of course, it is only natural that certain dealers would specialize in certain types of trucks. They would develop trust with buyers who are looking for those types of trucks; and they would be able to provide specialized knowledge, service and insight to make the purchase more enjoyable while removing the risk buyers feel.

One of the primary goals of marketing is to remove the risk associated with making a purchase.

One of the primary goals of marketing is to remove the risk associated with making a purchase. AngusLink does that by providing buyers the information they need to make a purchase.

AngusVerifiedSM and the Genetic Merit ScorecardSM

together provide an objective, reliable and accurate way of describing the genetic merit in a pen of feeder cattle from a trusted source and brand they respect. It also works to put those cattle in front of the right buyers who are looking for Angus genetics to fit their marketing programs.

Once you have determined what product you are selling, who the right market is for your product, and the right avenue and time to market your cattle, marketing largely becomes about execution. Ex-

ecution in marketing is usually nothing more than combining discipline with action. Ultimately, your marketing program is about creating a brand or brand identity for your product.

We tend to think of marketing as having a great slogan, the right logo or a unique selling proposition. All of these things help, but there are three attributes I consistently see with successful marketing programs in the cattle industry:

1.a disciplined approach;

2.passion for the mission; and

3.perseverance.

Certified Angus Beef, the greatest marketing entity in the history of our industry, which serves as an example of marketing excellence, embodies these three attributes.

For producers wanting more information on AngusLink, AngusVerified or the Genetic Merit Scorecard, contact AngusLink at 816-383-5100 or call IMI Global at 303-895-3002.



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Lot 81C

CED	BW	WW	YW	RADG	SC	DOC	Claw	Angle	HP	CEM	Milk	HS	CW	Marb	RE	FAT
9	1.1	86	155	0.31	0.94	34	0.46	0.45	18.7	12	38	0.60	82	1.48	1.12	0.018

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\$M	97
\$W	91
\$F	125
\$G	98
\$B	223
\$C	386



Lot 87

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6	1.3	86	146	0.28	1.48	32	0.26	0.27	12.8	9	35	0.38	73	1.10	1.00	0.038

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THE MAN BEHIND THE BRAND

The year was 1976 when USDA had just lowered its standards for the Choice quality grade. The industry that lobbied for the change was quickly moving toward a lean, commodity product. Angus cattle sold at a discount and registration numbers were in steep decline.

One Angus breeder in Ohio had an idea to turn things around: create a high-quality, specification-based brand.

The American Angus Association producer board ran with it, placing Association Regional Manager Louis “Mick” Colvin at the helm. He was tasked with a project most said couldn’t be done.

On October 18, 1978, the first pound of the Certified Angus Beef brand was sold in Columbus, Ohio. Two weeks later, USDA cancelled the program.

Most said that was the end. Nice try.

Most people aren’t Mick Colvin.

Before the brand

Born the son of a dairy farmer in 1938 near the village of Shellsburg, Pa., Colvin was more likely to milk cows than launch the world’s largest beef brand.

It was the gift of a Hereford heifer from his father at age 11 that sparked his love of beef cattle.

He went on to study animal husbandry at Pennsylvania State University, where he also worked in hog barns for 80 cents an hour and was an avid member of the livestock judging team. As a sophomore, he married high-school sweetheart Virginia.

Upon graduation, on the advice of his judging coach, Colvin took a position as herdsman for Mole’s Hill Farm, a registered Angus outfit in Connecticut.



Colvin stands next to his portrait, which is displayed in the Saddle and Sirloin Hall of Fame.

He led the herd to win three international championships in four years, winning a prestigious trophy for herdsman of the year in 1963. He met people like Ohio Angus breeder Fred Johnson and developed relationships that would change his life.

Colvin’s success caught

the eye of Hereford breeders, who offered him herdsman positions he politely declined. As a reward for choosing to remain at Mole’s Hill, he was given choice of a heifer each year, the start of a registered Angus herd he could call his own.

In 1966, the Colvins moved

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to South Carolina where he would manage another purebred Angus operation, Longleaf Plantation. The farm had never exhibited cattle before Colvin took the reins, but promptly won a Supreme Champion female ribbon at the All-American Futurity in Lexington, Ky.

Johnson, of Summitcrest Farm, had been watching his young friend with appreciation.

“Mick was enthusiastic, knowledgeable and a hard-working herdsman with great integrity, even then,” Johnson remarks on an archive video made in 1999.

It was just the beginning of multiple awards, banners, accolades and hall-of-fame inductions throughout his career, but the one that meant the most to him was having his likeness hung in the Saddle & Sirloin gallery in Louisville, Ky.

“He was a farmer always,” says Saddle & Sirloin portrait painter Richard Halstead. “A very brilliant man, and a visionary.”

Colvin is most unassuming and possesses a “tremendous mind,” the artist says. “This man is of enormous value to the entire livestock industry, but especially to the Angus breed for what he did in building the Certified Angus Beef brand.”

Nearly impossible

It was no easy feat.

Knocking on seemingly every door in the beef business, he heard the same phrase repeatedly.

“Young man, this program sounds like a good idea. You come back or give me a call when you get it started.”

He kept knocking, until he finally got the answer he was looking for: “Yes.”

“I thought when we got

that first pound sold that we were just about as successful as we could ever be,” says Bob VanStavern, meat scientist who helped create the 10 science-based specifications the brand is based on today. “Because the concept had worked.”

It took 22 months to sell the first million pounds of the trademarked but not-yet-registered brand.

Now, 19,000 Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand licensed partners around the world market more than 100 million pounds a month.

“I wish I could say we had a plan, but we flew by the seat of our pants,” Colvin says.

In the early days, he and Virginia were the driving force. While her husband knocked on doors trying to sell the program, Virginia made folders, kept records and tracked how the pounds were used that came from

the one or two carcasses certified each week.

Today, nearly 10 carcasses are certified each minute.

“Looking back, it looks easy,” Colvin says. “But it wasn’t.”

A solid foundation

He built a brand based on his core values — the most important being integrity. Colvin describes the word as “endless” — a term that could stand the test of time.

It’s a foundation that was tested more than once throughout his career leading the brand.

“I remember when we cancelled our first foodservice distributor,” he says. “I was scared to death, I really was. But the man didn’t have integrity, and we knew it.”

The decision led to the brand’s first major lawsuit.

continued on page 26

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“We ended up winning, because it was all about integrity,” he says.

The ability to stand behind its marketing claims set the Certified Angus Beef brand apart from the others that would follow. From the beginning, each pound has been tracked from the packing plant of certification to the final sale.

Colvin always made sure the brand could stand behind its name and claims.

Being true to his word was more than the key to his success, it was integral to the brand’s existence.

As he built the brand he encountered more stumbling blocks. From Association board votes that nearly ended the program to meetings with the New York mafia to secure packers, Colvin persevered.

“To try and get someone to believe in Certified Angus Beef the way we did — a packer, distributor or retailer

— was a huge hurdle,” Colvin recalls.

Through it all he kept the brand’s mission at the center of his tough decisions and the onslaught of rejections.

“I never saw a time where he put his personal interests above what was in the best interest of the program,” Fred Johnson had recalled.

This philosophy and tenacity laid the foundation for the brand’s growing success. Some partners like Houston’s Taste of Texas steakhouse and Boston’s Oxford Trading, the brand’s first foodservice distributor, are still CAB partners 40 years later.

Making a difference for cattlemen

More than just building the first brand of fresh beef, Colvin had to provide returns for the cattlemen who owned the brand. He knew the consumer pull-through-demand model worked, but the brand’s mission is to in-

crease demand for registered Angus cattle.

He delivered on that seemingly impossible feat, too.

For more than 20 years he led efforts to encourage packers to pay premiums for cattle that qualified for the brand. It took 9 years before the first incentive was recognized but today the CAB premium is an expectation on settlement sheets. Packers now pay more than \$75 million dollars annually just for the CAB line item on the grid for cattle that meet the brand’s standards.

“The Certified Angus Beef Program is the most significant advancement in the beef business since carcasses began to be ribbed and graded in 1965 or when boxed beef got its foothold in the early ’70s,” says Tim Hussman, Colvin’s first hire for the brand in 1983 and past president of Newport Meat Co., Irvine, Calif. “Through Mick’s leadership, breeders, feeders,

USDA, packers, purveyors and retail stores continue working together to produce and deliver the highest quality beef we know how.”

He’s humble, gentle and never takes the well-deserved credit.

“It’s astronomical what we’ve done,” he says. “I don’t know what more I can say about the success we’ve had.”

It’s never I, always “we.”

All about his people

It’s been nearly two decades since the cofounder stepped down from that helm, but his presence and legacy still permeate the brand.

He walks in the front door at the Wooster, Ohio, office like it’s his home. Familiar, excited faces greet him, and he chats with scores of them, including many who joined the brand during his tenure. They’ve carried the torch he lit on the mission he began.

Today the staff is bigger, the pounds and commissions



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break records like clockwork and the computers tracking it all are newer. After 14 years of consecutive growth, it seems like CAB has always been a wild success.

“We hired people for their people skills. We made people a part of the program and it paid big dividends,” Colvin says.

Modest and casual by nature, Colvin has been an enormous presence in that world. His emphasis on people, integrity and perseverance transitioned the beef industry—after its diversion to mere pounds of commodity—back to a sustaining focus on quality that performs for all people in the production chain.

“I had to hear from other people how important Mick Colvin was, because he would never say anything like that,” Halstead says. “He never spoke of himself or all his other accomplishments; he just spoke highly of other

people. It was his staff and colleagues who emphasized his impact.”

Ask Colvin about greatness, and it’s no surprise that his answer looks outward to CAB staff.

“To me, being great means every person who works for the brand is happy,” he says.

Some will say Colvin’s legacy is the brand, but those that know him realize it’s much more. He will always be known as a man of integrity—one who values doing the right thing above personal or commercial gain.

“That’s someone who’s a great personality, somebody with real character, somebody great,” Halstead says.

This story by Nicole Lane Erceg originally ran in the Angus Journal.

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Hold the Net Wrap and Twine

By Erin Laborie, Nebraska Extension Educator

Net wrap is an efficient forage binding method and significantly reduces harvest and storage losses compared to twine. According to a forage binding survey conducted by South Dakota State University (SDSU), net wrap was the most preferred method of forage binding (67%) compared to twine (26%) or both (6%) depending on the crop harvested or livestock being fed.

Oftentimes, to save time and labor, net wrap or twine is not removed prior to feeding hay to cattle. The SDSU forage binding survey reported 54% of producers removed net wrap or twine when feeding bales whole, but only 11% of producers removed it when grinding bales.

Whether it occurs by accident or simply out of boredom, cattle can consume some of this net wrap or twine, which then accumulates in the rumen. The buildup of forage binding material in the rumen

can result in cattle weight loss, diarrhea, and other symptoms similar to hardware or Johne's disease.

Research by North Dakota State University (NDSU) has shown that the rumen microbes do not digest plastic net wrap or biodegradable twine. Sisal twine does get digested but at a much slower rate compared to hay. In another NDSU study, steers were fed net wrap in a ration until 14 days prior to harvest to determine if the material would pass through the digestive system. However, there was still a significant amount of net wrap remaining in the rumen after 14 days. In non-related livestock mortality cases, 26% of SDSU survey respondents had postmortem exams conducted by a veterinarian and 30% of those recovered net wrap from the animal.

Cows fed ground, net wrapped hay for 140 days in an SDSU study accumulated

a softball-sized mass in the rumen consisting of 0.8 to 1.1 pounds of net wrap. The entangled mass of net wrap and feed measured around 3 feet in length when stretched out. Based on the amount of net wrap offered through the diet, about 53% of the net wrap was recovered through rumen evacuations. Research by Montana State University has shown similar results where 47% of the net wrap offered to cows was recovered from the digestive tract.

While grinding net wrapped bales may reduce the particle size compared to feeding intact net wrap, health issues can still occur. It is important to consider how failing to remove forage binding materials may affect rumen function and capacity of the cattle being fed long-term. Due to differences in diet and the amount of baled forage consumed, cows are likely to be more at risk than feedlot cattle. There is



Photo by Erin Laborie. The buildup of forage binding material in the rumen can result in cattle weight loss, diarrhea, and other symptoms similar to hardware or Johne's disease.

no treatment available for the buildup of forage binding materials in the rumen, so prevention is key to avoiding any health issues.

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Nitrogen fertilizer boosts fescue yields but increases toxin

Know when toxin levels peak during growing season.

It is difficult to make blanket recommendations on fall nitrogen fertilizer rates to pastures because of the variability in how forages are managed in the Fescue Belt, says University of Missouri Extension state nutrient management specialist John Lory. But fescue pastures need a source of nitrogen to thrive, he says.

“Judicious use” of nitrogen fertilizer, prioritizing low fertilizer rates to stands deficient in nitrogen, will maximize yields while limiting toxicity in fescue commonly found in Missouri pastures, Lory says.

As a general rule, limit annual fertilizer nitrogen applications to 60 pounds per acre to mitigate fescue toxicity in Kentucky 31 tall fescue, Missouri’s most-grown fescue variety. It is infected with an endophyte that is harmful to animal health.

Nitrogen boosts tall fescue yields, but it also increases

toxic ergot alkaloid production. Failure to provide a nitrogen source such as fertilizer or an interseeded legume to hayfields and pastures will rapidly reduce productivity and the quality of the stand, says Lory.

Toxins in fescue affect overall animal health. Some animals such as pregnant mares should not consume any. Applying nitrogen increases the potential for low-performing animals and, in some cases, serious health issues.

Good management begins with an understanding of how toxin levels vary during the different plant growth stages, says Lory.

Toxicity occurs in all aboveground parts of the plant, with seed heads being most toxic. Leaves peak in toxicity in spring and again in the fall. Do not overgraze toxic stands, as stems near the crown are highly toxic.

Even without added nitrogen fertilizer, toxin levels quadrupled between April and June on fescue pastures at the MU Southwest Research, Extension and Education Center.

Lory recommends these strategies to limit the impact of toxic tall fescue on animal health:

- Limit nitrogen fertilizer applications on toxic tall fescue.

- Selectively graze or feed hay from toxic tall fescue. Graze when fescue is fully vegetative. Hay up to the boot stage. If seed heads have formed or are forming, consider clipping seed heads before harvesting or grazing. Do not overgraze.

- Dilute toxic fescue with other feed. Interseed legumes to reduce toxicity and to meet nitrogen needs of the fescue stand. This also dilutes the toxicity of the forage. When feeding hay, consider mixing



other sources of feed to dilute the tall fescue.

- Manage excess forage. Stockpile tall fescue in the fall. Ergovaline concentrations in stockpiled tall fescue peak in September and then decrease during winter. By late winter, concentrations are low and considered nontoxic. Toxicity of tall fescue decreases by at least 30% in stored hay during the first month. However, high-moisture options such as baleage or silage preserve toxins.

- Renovate pastures by removing toxic tall fescue and planting new nontoxic novel-endophyte varieties over time.



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MANAGING WEEDS

By Jordan Penrose, Ohio State University Extension

With fall approaching, though it doesn't seem like it, it seems like weeds are more noticeable here. In southeastern Ohio, we are extremely dry with very little to no grass left in the pastures, and the weeds more noticeable. In Morgan County, the weeds that I have been getting the most questions about are spotted knapweed, hemp dogbane, cocklebur, and johnsongrass. Some other noticeable weeds that I am seeing as well are ironweed, Canada thistle, horsenettle, bedstraw, and others. On the family farm, we are seeing a newer weed, small carpetgrass, that I haven't seen before until last fall. We just started to see it come up around mid-August in the field where we feed most of our hay during the winter.

Why are we seeing more and more weeds show up? I remember when ironweed used to be the biggest problem weed on the farm, now it

seems like a weed that we are willing to live with as compared to some of the other newer weeds, like cocklebur or spotted knapweed. Some of the reasons as to why these weeds pop up and we notice more and more of them can be caused by different reasons like ground disturbance, due to winter feeding or heavy rainfall, overgrazing, having a weak stand of forage in your pasture, drought conditions, and where we source some of our feeds from to feed our livestock.


What can we do to control these different weeds that we are seeing? One of the best things is management of these areas. Here in Morgan County and many of the surrounding counties as well, we are in a severe drought, according to the US Drought Monitor. Right now, we are noticing weeds more because that is what is left in the fields, and this could lead to more weed

The Midwest Cattleman · October 3, 2024 · P30
problems in the future. This can happen in many different ways. First, it can lead to overgrazing of pastures because we as farmers are trying to stretch everything we can out of the pastures. Overgrazing in general can lead to more weeds showing up in pastures because of the recovery time that it takes for the forages to fully recover to be ready to graze again. Some forages, like orchardgrass, could be grazed right out of a pasture and weeds can easily take their place, due to the pasture not having a long enough rest period. But, if you are rotationally grazing your pastures, in drought conditions you can overgraze your pastures. With grass not growing back fast, more drought-tolerant weeds will start to show up and out-compete the desired forages that you have in that pasture. It is hard to say how to manage it because everyone's situation is different. If you are in a continuous grazing system, then the recommen-



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dation is to try rotational grazing, to extend your pastures' timeline. But when you are in a drought and are rotationally grazing then the recommendation is to graze until you need to start supplementing feed. Once the drought is over then you go in and see how weak your forage stand has become and plan from there, from anything as simple as frost seeding to a complete pasture renovation. Weak stands can also lead to more weeds even when you are receiving adequate rainfall.

Ground disturbance is prime time for weeds, as some can be established quickly, and ground disturbance can happen very easily. The new weed that we are seeing on the farm, small carpetgrass, is in the same place where we feed our hay in the wintertime where it gets muddy, and the ground gets disturbed very easily. The way that you could manage this in times when the ground can easily be disturbed is to feed on a heavy-use pad. Though that may not be avail-

able to all, you still have some options like moving where you feed your hay around to different places and not having the water and or mineral all in the same place so that the livestock will move around to different places, so they don't stay in one spot. You could also have a sacrifice lot that is easy to get to and reseed in the spring. We have also seen many different weeds move in from places where we source the supplemental feed that we can't grow. On our farm, we believe that cocklebur came in when we had to feed corn to our cattle due to not having enough hay and we supplemented with some corn to stretch out our hay. So be aware that the supplement feed that you buy like hay or corn can have weed seed in it and can cause the spread of new weeds on your farm.

If you are looking for a more detailed strategy on how to manage weeds in your pasture, or even your hayfield, contact your local extension office.



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VIRTUAL FENCING

By Krista Ehlert, SDSU Extension Range Specialist

Recent advancements in technology have made their way into precision agriculture, with emphasis placed on using new technologies to increase crop yields and profitability, while simultaneously lowering levels of inputs needed like water, fertilizer and herbicides. Although widely used in row-crop production, precision agriculture is only just beginning to move into the ranching world. Virtual fencing, though, has started making waves in the cattle industry. Time and research will tell us more about how adaptable and transformative this precision technology is in the cattle industry; we are researching its use and utility at the South Dakota State University (SDSU) Cottonwood Field Station.

Virtual fencing – borders without physical barriers – can be used to implement precision grazing management. Fences are the traditional tool used to dictate boundaries on livestock grazing and to manage landscapes. There are mixtures of private, state and federally owned lands across the Northern Great Plains that create unique challenges for providing adequate natural resource management and implementing conservation practices, such as rotational grazing. Many ranchers are hesitant to adopt rotational grazing, because it requires the installation of new water sources and fences, and those additional costs are unat-

tractive; material and labor costs for one mile of fence can easily exceed \$10,000. This reluctance is exacerbated on property that is leased privately or has a state or federal grazing permit. While expensive, fencing is also necessary in some instances, such as excluding cattle from a riparian area to allow for landscape regeneration.

About Virtual Fencing

Virtual fencing transforms manual labor into cognitive labor, and therefore has the capacity to improve producer efficiency and have a positive effect on animal efficiency. Virtual fencing is most often thought of as the “invisible fence” for use with cats and dogs, but the technology and interested parties have since evolved to include applications for other species, such as goats. Research investigating virtual fencing for cattle is relatively new, with few published studies. A virtual fence consisting of a collar worn by cattle and an above-ground induction cable was effective in one study; however, the above-ground induction cable acted as a visual deterrent and was the main determining factor in keeping the cattle contained. In contrast, a virtual fence collar with an auditory stimulus followed by electrical pulses successfully contained grazing dairy cattle within predetermined areas 99% of the time. Newer advancements in virtual fencing for cattle have fo-



An animal at the SDSU Cottonwood Field Station outfitted with a virtual fence collar.

cused on a GPS-enabled collar that is placed around each animal's neck. There is a three-way interaction between the collars, a base station in the field and a software subscription. The software subscription allows the user to “draw” their pastures. These boundaries transmit to the base station (operated by cellular and solar), which pushes the virtual fence to the collars. The user can see the position and movement of each collared animal and can easily rotate animals among paddocks with a few clicks.

Potential Benefits

Virtual fencing as a tool to implement rotational grazing has several potential benefits for producers with respect to their resources (financial, time), grassland management and animal performance. First, virtual fencing allows a producer to “draw” a paddock to allow access to existing water features, saving money and labor on unnecessary water

development. Second, minimal time is required to move cattle and check fences as it is all done via software. Third, virtual fencing provides the means for producers to capture the environmental benefits of rotational grazing. Fourth, it could easily be implemented on leased land, because livestock operators do not need to attach permanent improvements (fences, water developments) to someone else's real property. A final benefit of virtual fencing is that producers have greater control over animal movement on the landscape, and therefore animal performance. Fence boundaries can be drawn based on factors like elevation, soil type, plant communities and forage quality, so that animals can be moved to areas with the highest quality forage. Ultimately, virtual fencing exemplifies the potential impact technology has on increasing animal and producer efficiency while creating positive impacts on the landscape.



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Matching Cattle Genetics to the Environment

“Is it worthwhile to try and match your genetics to the environment?” asked Dr. Jared Decker, Wurdack Chair of Animal Genomics, University of Missouri, to launch his presentation during the Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Symposium in Knoxville, Tennessee, this summer.

According to Decker environmental stressors, like fescue toxicosis, cost the beef industry approximately \$1 billion a year. Decker shared information regarding a study conducted in the 1960s that moved cows from the Brookfield Research Station in Florida to the research station in Miles City, Montana, and cows from Montana to the station in Florida. Pregnancy rates for the cows in Florida from Montana were 55%. In comparison, to the Hereford cows native to Florida, this was 28% lower making a strong case for genetics by environment (G x E) interactions. Reproduction is one of the most impacted traits by G x E interactions. Body condition and metabolism are the other two most impacted traits.

Decker went on to introduce BIF Symposium participants to three USDA-funded projects that are underway to study the impact of, and best ways to, address G x E interactions. In multiple studies from the first project, genes tagged by G x E interactions and local adaptation selection had functions affecting blood vessel constriction/dilation. This is an important indicator of fescue toxicity, altitude stress, and thermotolerance. Additional genes associated with G x E effects were involved in immune response and metabolism. These functions affect the animal’s ability to adapt to their environment and deal with multiple stressors.

“Adaptability is defined as an animal’s ability to appropriately sense and respond to the environment,” Decker said. “If you are describing your cattle as ‘adaptable’



without actually measuring their ability to sense and respond to environmental stressors you’re just telling us stories.”

The latter two projects that Decker described are designed to develop tools to help producers measure and match genetics to their environment more effectively than just buying animals from similar environments. EPDs and crossbreeding are

both approaches that Decker recommends to address G x E interactions.

“We have the technology now to measure traits that are greatly impacted by environment and generate genetic evaluations for these traits,” he said.

Some examples that Decker talked about include genetic evaluations for fertility (defined more robustly than heifer pregnancy as a

binary trait), pulmonary arterial pressure (PAP), which occurs in environments of high altitude, and hair shedding which can address thermoregulation and sensing changing seasons.

“Hair shedding is an economically relevant trait, and I challenge anyone who doesn’t think so to come mend fence with me while wearing their winter parka,” Decker explained.

He tied addressing G x E interactions with biological rules like Bergmann’s rule and Surface law. He suggested leveraging new technologies like 3D imaging to measure surface area for truer genetic evaluations of metabolism than body weight. To find Decker’s full presentation and more information about this year’s Symposium and the Beef Improvement Federation, visit BIFSymposium.com.



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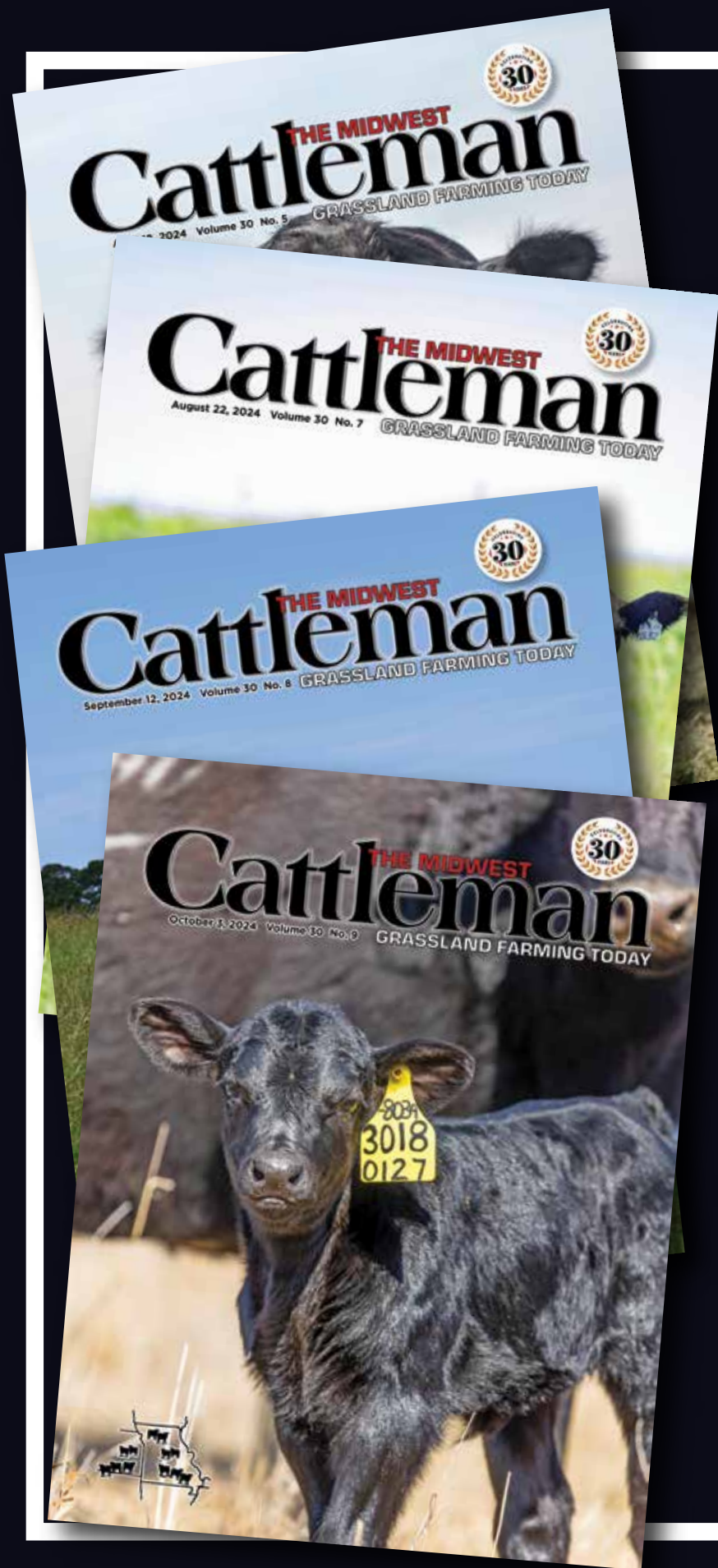


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ANTIBIOTIC USES IN CATTLE

K-State beef cattle veterinarians share reasons for making drug selections

By Lisa Moser, K-State Research and Extension

When tackling a building project, many find it helpful to follow a plan and use the right tools to save time, which will often also increase the likelihood of the desired outcome in completing the task.

In much the same way, veterinarians make choices regarding antibiotic selections in cattle, said the experts at Kansas State University's Beef Cattle Institute. How those antibiotics work is a question that the veterinarians answered on a recent Cattle Chat podcast.

"The basic definition is that an antibiotic is a chemical that interferes with bacterial growth or replication," K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers said.

He added that antibiotics interrupt that replication in many ways, including some

that interfere with bacterial cell wall growth, some that inhibit bacterial protein synthesis and others that stop bacterial replication by interfering with the DNA and RNA of the bacteria.

To better understand why an antibiotic is selected for one bacterium and not another, Lubbers suggests that producers ask their local veterinarian.

"The reasons veterinarians might choose one antibiotic over another are not only related to the drug's mechanism of action; there are a lot of factors we think about when deciding to use a specific antibiotic for a certain case," Lubbers said.

He said they also consider antibiotic resistance, especially when opting to prescribe antibiotics that fall into the same class of drugs



A calf receiving treatment at the K-State Stocker Unit.

that are also used to treat sickness in humans.

Another factor that is considered when prescribing antibiotics for food animals is withdrawal time K-State veterinarian Bob Larson said.

"With food animals, we need to be aware of the time those antibiotics remain in the body before they are harvested so that they are free of harmful antibiotic residues when they enter the human food chain," Larson said.

To get more information about how each antibiotic works, the veterinarians recommend reading the product labels.

"Producers often get questions from consumers, so those who are educated about antibiotic use are able to better portray how we practice antibiotic stewardship," Lubbers said.



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Not all "Angus" bulls are **REGISTERED** Angus bulls.



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One is validated by the **power of a pedigree.**
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Adam Conover
Regional Manager
816.676.8560
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