



THE MIDWEST **Cattlemán**

March 28, 2024 Volume 30 No. 4

GRASSLAND FARMING TODAY



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Page 18

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CATTLEMAN THE MIDWEST

March 28, 2024 Volume 30 No. 4 GRASSLAND FARMING TODAY

2024 CATTLE PRICES HIT NEW HIGHS

By Josh Maples, Assistant Professor & Extension Economist, Mississippi State University

Cattle markets through the first two months of 2024 have built upon the strong prices from 2023 and pushed even higher. Cattle auction prices are at or above record levels across all categories. The chart on page 10 shows average weekly prices for three weight categories of steers in Mississippi from January 2011 through March 8, 2024. Average prices during the first week of March 2024 were up 33 to 47 percent above year-ago levels and were roughly 80 percent above March 2022 levels.



The current prices exceeded the price records previously set during Fall 2014. Cull cow prices have similarly risen and are up roughly 25 percent over the past year and up 40 percent over two years ago in Mississippi. The

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CONGRESS PASSES ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS AGAINST LAND PURCHASES BY FOREIGN ADVERSARIES

Congress recently passed and President Joe Biden signed HR 4366, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2024, which will fund the federal government for the remainder of the fiscal year. Included in the spending bill was a provision to add the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture to the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United

States (CFIUS) review process for covered transactions under the Defense Production Act of 1950 that involve agricultural land or industry. The purpose of CFIUS is to review foreign transactions for their national security implications on the U.S. It is chaired by the U.S. secretary of the treasury and the U.S. Treasury Department is responsible for reviewing proposed acquisitions.

CFIUS was created by President Gerald Ford in 1975 and consisted of several cabinet officials including the secretaries of state, treasury, defense,

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REPLACING THOUSANDS OF MILES OF BURNED FENCES IN THE TEXAS PANHANDLE

By Kay Ledbetter

An overwhelming task lies ahead for ranchers whose pastures and ranchland were burned by the wildfires that left thousands of miles of fencing to be repaired or replaced.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service beef cattle specialists Jason Smith, Ph.D., Amarillo, and Ron Gill, Ph.D., Stephenville, said

producers should begin by focusing their efforts on perimeter and boundary fences and viable pastures with water sources.

Interior cross fences can receive less priority as they can be temporarily constructed as needed.

“Prioritize fence repair and replacement in pastures with functioning, reliable, long-term water sources,” Smith said. “Fences in pastures with only seasonal or surface water, or with wells that require repair before they can pump water again should receive lower priority and



continued on page 10

BEEF EXPORT VALUE HIGHER THAN A YEAR AGO, LED BY STRONG VARIETY MEAT RESULTS

While January beef exports to South Korea declined slightly from a year ago (18,789 mt, down 1%), export value increased 13% to \$170.5 million. Rising consumer prices continue to weigh on Koreans' spending power, including sharply higher prices for fruits and vegetables due to crop issues.

The cost of dining out in Korea rose 3.8% in February, but this was actually the smallest year-over-year



increase in more than two years. Although trading below a year ago, the Korean won has been relatively steady and is nowhere near

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Growing Season

Very soon, we'll be turning out some cow-calf pairs on that green grass and no matter how well we try to manage it – it's going to out-pace them, start to mature, put on seed heads and then – if we don't 'clip pastures' – put seed on the ground. It did it last spring in a dry year and it will do it again. It's done it every year I can remember, and grass will be doing it long after I'm gone. Why? Yes – all the above. That's what grass does. Our goal is to maintain grazing forage quality as long as possible while we try to get as many days of grazing as possible. We sent cattle 'home' in July last season and then re-stocked a few weeks later and then grazed all the way until January 4th of this year. Every year is different. We want forage quality and days of grazing. We are not in the 'seed business.'

Grazing

When that cow grabs a mouthful of grass and rips it off, it makes a loud tearing noise. One of my favorite things to do every spring, after opening a gate into a new paddock and letting



In Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 1 and verse 20 he says...

"For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse."

We were in the truck a few days ago, driving down our driveway along our grazing system. **"Man, it's starting to really get green out there!"** I said, motioning towards the pasture along the road. Then I turned to my nine-year-old grandson Korvin and asked... Why is that?

He had all the right answers, but I continued to press him to think a little deeper.

The sun? Yes. Warmer days? Yes. The rain? Yes... What else? **Because God made it that way?** Yes... and what an interesting way it is.

cattle in, is to sit for a few minutes, feel the warmth of the sun - and just listen to them graze. There is no other sound quite like it. What they are doing is harvesting chemical energy (sugar) from the sun – as they bite, tear, chew and later digest what amounts to tiny green houses or solar collectors. What they don't need ends up back on the soil surface as organic matter and fertilizer. I never will forget a friend from New Zealand pointing out all the different pieces of forage harvesting and manure spreading equipment on a particular operation that cost over \$25,000 and then he ended his sentence by saying: In New Zealand, we let our cows do that- and they do it for free." Have you ever considered it that way? In this business, all we all are doing is selling grass. The only difference is how you harvest it, how you package it, and how you get it in the trailer. Eventually, it's going to end

up on someone's plate somewhere and we hope they like it enough to want some more.

The anatomy of a blade of grass

That energy doesn't come from the sun as chemical energy. It's light energy. Straight 'sun' will give you a lot of things – not all of them good. You may like the feel of it on your face on a spring morning, but too much of that energy can be a problem. Stand out there all you want, and you are still going to be hungry! You can't eat it, although you're not going to be eating anything without it either. The plant, like the soil that supports it and the rain that keeps it alive, is all part of a system to provide you and me with something that can sustain our lives as well. That blade of grass, and that of other plants as well, turns the sun's energy into some pretty good stuff. Although we can say that 'everything we eat comes from the soil', I'm really glad we don't have to eat 'dirt'. Plants are the connection. I love blackberries and even green beans! Cows love grass. There is a reason why they run to that new paddock when the gate is opened. That blade of grass and that grazing cow are our connection to, what is for many, our favorite thing to eat. Beef is what's for dinner, but it's not if any of these components are missing.

There are some that believe that all of this 'just happened'. That it is all just an accident.

Personally, I believe that... *from what has been made, we are all 'without excuse'.*

KwC



SPRING'S COMING ... IS YOUR PASTURE READY?

The Midwest Cattleman • March 28, 2024 • P5

By Victor Shelton, Retired NRCS Agronomist/Grazing Specialist

It is approaching the time of year in which you start seeing signs of spring. I start watching for any new green growth emerging slowly from the leftovers of last year. In my neck of the woods, it seems a bit earlier than normal but that can turn on a dime.

I like to walk over the pastures in the late winter or early spring for a number of reasons. First of all, to check plant density, diversity and soil cover. If there was extra soil disturbance in the past few months, it might mean that we have small gaps in the perennial plants that could give way for optimistic weeds to surface. Now is a good time to try and address that. Overseeding or frost seeding clover is probably one of the easiest and surest methods, especially if you lack sufficient legumes in the stand.

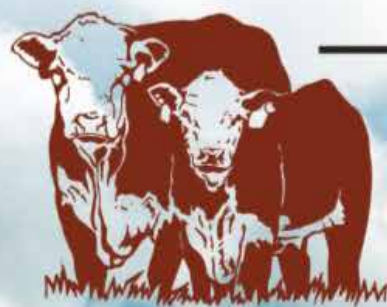
Gaps in the forage that are most optimistic for weeds

are spaces where there is no cover and bare soil presents itself. If there are areas or spots that have been grazed tightly to the ground and only tolerable species are left, such as bluegrass and native white cover, it is generally a sign of a long-term issue and it stands out quite loudly when it's adjacent to

taller avoided forage species such as rank left-over summer growth of tall fescue.

I also like to observe how much residual plant material (residue) is left behind from the previous season that might provide added protection and added benefits for slightly earlier grazing, if

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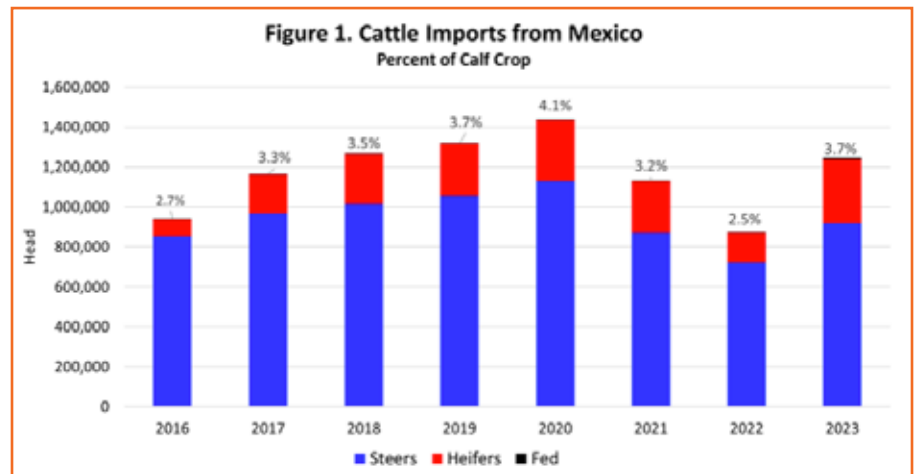
By Derrell Peel - Oklahoma State University

U.S. cattle and beef trade with Mexico has evolved a great deal over many years. Mexico became one of the major beef export destinations about 25 years ago. In the last dozen years, Mexico has become one of the major beef import sources for the U.S. as beef trade evolved from simply supplementing deficit beef production in Mexico to bilateral, product specific trade between the two countries.

One of the oldest components of U.S. beef industry trade with Mexico has been the importation of live cattle. Mexico's extensive range resources have provided the country with a comparative advantage in feeder cattle production for many years.

Imports of Mexican cattle have averaged over 1 million head annually for the last 40 years. Figure 1 shows cattle imports from Mexico for the last eight years, which consisted of feeder cattle and just a handful of fed and breeding cattle. Feeder steers made up 80.7 percent of cattle imports with spayed heifers adding another 19.0 percent of total imports. Many of the Mexican cattle imports enter stocker programs in the U.S. prior to feedlot finishing, although some are placed in feedlots directly upon arrival in the U.S.

In 2023, imports of cattle from Mexico increased 43 percent year over year. However, the large percentage increase was in comparison to the very low level in 2022. Imports of Mexican cattle in 2022 were the lowest since 2008. Flows of Mexican cattle into the U.S. market vary from year to year because



of numerous factors in both countries including relative cattle numbers and cattle prices; beef market conditions; drought; and currency exchange rates.

Figure 1 also shows the annual imports of Mexican cattle as a percent of the U.S. calf crop. It is common to talk about trade flows in absolute values which do not provide any perspective relative to the U.S. market. Imports of Mexican cattle have averaged 3.2 percent of the

U.S. calf crop for the past 25 years, ranging from 1.9 to 4.3 percent. Finally, it should be noted that the U.S. does export some live cattle to Mexico, mostly breeding animals. For the past 25 years, an average of 43,000 head have been exported annually, making cattle exports about 4.3 percent of the level of cattle imports from Mexico. In 2022, over 103,000 head of cattle were exported to Mexico, the highest total since 2002.





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Needle Care for Disease Prevention in Cattle

By Lindsay Waechter-Mead, Beef Systems Extension / UNL

Proper needles are essential tools in maintaining cattle health. Keep reading for recommendations on needle selection and health protocols.

Disposable hypodermic needles are a necessary tool in maintaining cattle health. They provide a convenient and economical route to deliver products to animals in a safe and effective manner. Understanding when and how to use them are key components in a herd health protocol.

Choosing the right needle

Needle selection is based on weight of cattle, route of administration and viscosity (thickness) of product. Gauge is determined by the size of the hole inside the needle, with the higher the gauge, the smaller the diameter of the needle. Length

is labeled in inches and will determine where the injection is placed in the animal. Longer needles are needed for deeper-route injections, such as intravenous (IV) and intramuscular (IM). The best practice is to use the smallest needle available without fear of bending (**Table 1**). This will ensure accurate de-

continued on page 14

Injectable viscosity	Route of administration								
	SQ (1/2- to 3/4-inch needle)			IM (3/4- to 1-inch needle)			IV (1- to 1 1/2-inch needle)		
	Cattle weight			Cattle weight			Cattle weight		
	<300	300-700	>700	<300	300-700	>700	<300	300-700	>700
Thin Example: Most vaccines	18 gauge	18-16 gauge	16 gauge	20-18 gauge	18-16 gauge	18-16 gauge	18-16 gauge	18-16 gauge	16-14 gauge
Thick Example: Thick antibiotics	18-16 gauge	18-16 gauge	16-14 gauge	18-16 gauge	18-16 gauge	16 gauge	18-16 gauge	18-16 gauge	16-14 gauge

Select the needle to fit the cattle size (use the smallest practical size without fear of bending).

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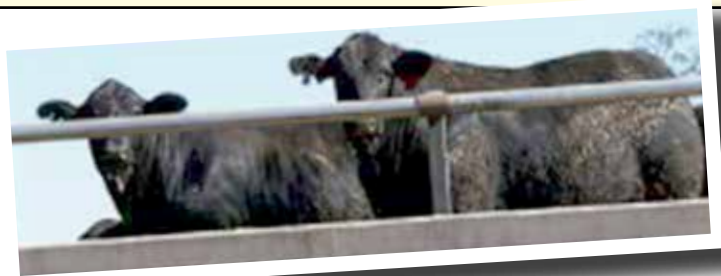
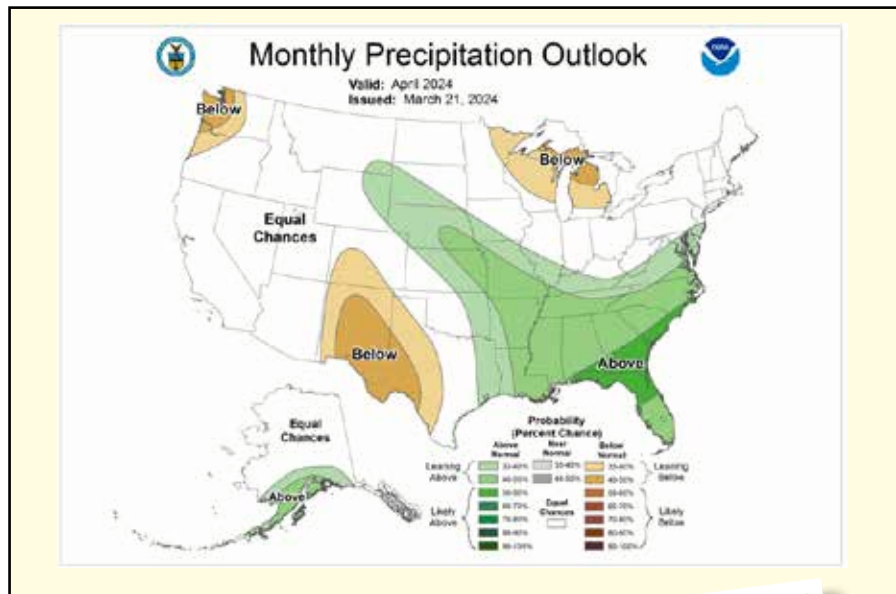
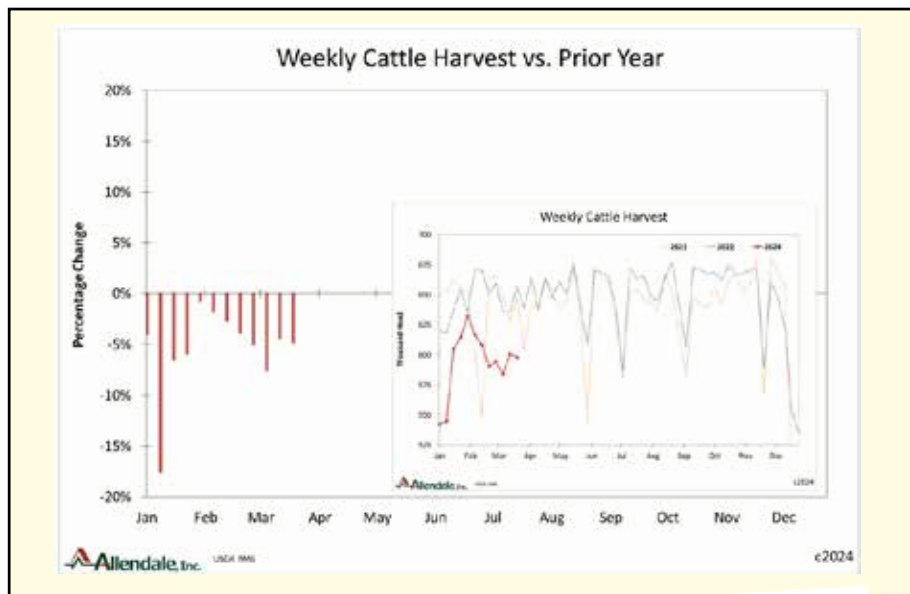
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Live Cattle:

Lower beef processing levels, now -4.7% from last year over the past six weeks, are starting to be shown in the weight data. At the end of the first week of March dressed steers were finishing out 19 lbs. over last year, heifers 13 over. Positively, even through this moderate hindrance, cash cattle advanced to \$188 the South. That is a new high for all-time. It surpasses the \$185 peak from 2023 as well as the \$173 peak in 2014. Cattle feeders have enjoyed a return to a strong bargaining position.

In reality, "right now" fed supplies are not tight. The general July – December placement period, which determines spring fed cattle supply, saw feedlot inflows only -1.3% from prior year. Additionally, finishing weights are up. The market has a concerned eye on supply for later this year. The next phase of the general 2023 – 2026 beef supply story will restart by Q4. Fed prices are now 15% over last year.

Feeder Cattle:

A favorable grass season ahead, along with general concern over the long term supply narrative, continue to bring extreme pricing. Much of the feeder trade in the past week was steady to \$6 higher. Lighter weights saw even better gains. For the category of 7# steers we monitor prices are 41% over last year. For the 5# steers we monitor the gain is 44%. Prices are getting outrageous. But we cannot say it is over. The live animal end of the beef market is where the long term supply tightness is at. Live prices, and specifically calves and feeders rather than fats, are where the price gains will be focused during the coming years. In the 2014 bull run, feeders were as much as \$35 over our computed economic value.

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What Does this Report Mean to Me?

Q: Are there any updates for cattle feeders?

A: No. All ends should be locked up now. All planned feeder purchases for 2024 should have been procured long ago via futures (\$238.37 March/\$242.80 April/ \$246.47 May/\$257.12 August/\$257.85 September). From the February 1 issue corn was procured via paper at about \$4.66 the July for just a few months of needs. Though we see a moderate rebound in feed pricing into spring the general long term story suggests patient buyers. December may eventually see sub-\$4.00. From the most recent issue we suggested a floor for cattle marketed through summer using a bought \$180 August put/sold \$186 call.

Q: Any updates to the feeder plan?

A: No. For this year's discussion a general seasonal feeder rally is expected into July/August.

Measuring the Value (or Expense) of a Bull Purchase

By Mark Z. Johnson

I recently received a call from an Oklahoma producer about which bulls to purchase for their commercial cow-calf operation. The operation needs two more Angus bulls this spring and has narrowed the selection list down to the following five bulls which were all available to purchase private treaty.

The bulls are all spring yearlings and will be approximately 15 months of age at turnout and accordingly should be expected to cover 15 cows this year. All the bulls have passed a Breeding Soundness Exam and sell with a registration paper and a Breeding Soundness Warranty. So the buying decision boils down to identifying the right bulls for this operation. The right bulls to buy are the ones most capable of adding value to the calf crop sired

relative to their purchase price. In order to do so the bulls need to:

- Complement the females to which they will be mated
- Offer genetic values of economic relevance to the marketing endpoint of the calves they will sire.

This operation intends to use the bulls as terminal sires on spring calving cows, four to six years of age. After weaning, the calves will run on cool season grass until marketed as yearlings. In this operation the trait of primary economic importance is Yearling Weight (YW).

In order to calculate the profit potential of each bull, we will assume each bull will sire 135 calves over their lifetime of service, each will have the same salvage value and the value of a pound of YW sired will be \$2.00.



Using the least expensive bull as our starting point:

Bull 5 serves as the baseline for least YW sired with a 108 YW EPD at expense of \$5,500

Bull 1 is expected to sire 12 pounds more YW per calf, this multiplied by 135 calves results in an additional 1,620 pounds. 1,620 pounds of YW at a value of \$2 equals \$3,240. The purchase price of bull 1 is \$4,500 more than bull 5. $\$3,240 - \$4,500 = \$ -1,260$. So, Bull 1 is a worse choice than bull 5 by \$1,260.

Bull 2 is expected to sire

33 pounds more YW per calf, this multiplied by 135 calves results in an additional 4,455 pounds. 4,455 pounds of YW at a value of \$2 equals \$8,910. The purchase price of bull 2 is \$2,500 more than bull 5. $\$8,910 - \$2,500 = \$6,410$. So, Bull 2 is a superior choice than bull 5 by \$6,410.

Bull 3 is expected to sire 27 pounds more YW per calf, this multiplied by 135 calves results in an additional 3,645 pounds. 3,645 pounds of YW at a value of \$2 equals \$7,290.

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ID	CED	BW	WW	YW	CEM	HP	MW	Marb	SB	Price
1	12	0.2	70	120	9	13	76	0.35	154	\$10,000
2	4	2.9	82	141	12	6	96	0.79	180	\$8,000
3	15	0.1	78	135	14	17	86	1.80	215	\$12,500
4	5	3.5	91	157	8	5	99	0.71	185	\$7,500
5	11	0.7	63	108	8	10	65	1.90	189	\$5,500



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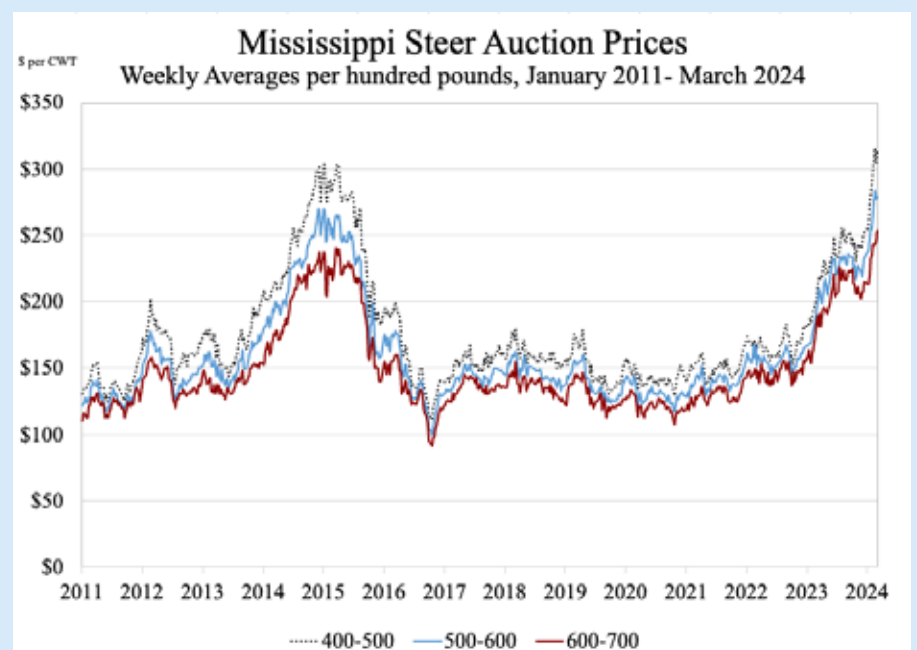
current cull cow prices are near the spring 2015 peak.

Feeder cattle supplies are the tightest they have been in a decade and are expected to tighten further this year. Higher levels of cow-culling and lower retention of heifers as beef cow replacements in recent years have likely set the stage for a smaller calf crop in 2024. Drought conditions, higher input costs, and tight profit margins have been key factors for the decline in inventory. The estimated number of calves produced in 2023 was 33.6 million head which was similar to the 2014 level and down by more than 3 million head since 2018.

The higher prices are a response to the tighter supplies and should eventually incentivize expansion as pro-

ducers' financial situations improve. But it is important to note that the cattle needed for expansion (i.e. heifers and cows) are currently supporting feeder cattle and beef totals. When widespread expansion begins and producers begin keeping more heifers and cows in their herds, there will be even fewer feeder cattle and cull cows available to be sold for beef until the increased calf crop catches up.

The majority of cattle producers in the U.S. sell their calves in the fall months and the current expectations are for prices to remain strong through 2024. CME feeder cattle futures contracts for the fall months are trading near \$270 per CWT. For reference, the CME feeder cattle contracts have never set-



tled above \$255. The strong expectations for cattle are leading to attractive risk management opportunities for producers. Whether it be using futures, options, or

USDA Livestock Risk Protection (LRP), now is a great time to analyze price risk management tools.



REPLACING THOUSANDS

continued from page 3

be repaired or replaced after fences in pastures with more reliable or functioning water sources have been mended.”

Repairing and replacing fences with a purpose

When considering what fences to replace, Smith and Gill said ranchers should keep in mind that fencing age influences the breaking strength and elongation potential of 12.5-gauge zinc-coated barbed wire.

A study by Oklahoma State University showed that fire did not affect breaking strength and elongation potential, regardless of the discoloration of the burned wire. The zinc coating remained. These effects held true through six separate fires included in the study's experiment.

Some other guidelines provided by Smith and Gill include:

–Construct fencing that will allow for rangeland recovery. That might involve using temporary or permanent fencing to keep cattle off the burned areas until adequate recovery of rangeland forages occurs.

–Priority should also be given to replacing or repairing the oldest fences damaged by the fire. While many wooden posts, braces and stays may need to be replaced, that may not be the case for burned wire.

–Reflect upon previous fence locations. Some fences may not have been constructed in the best location. For fences that need to be replaced entirely, this may be the best opportunity to re-position the fence to better meet your operation's needs.

–Strongly consider the location of gates, and position of fencing relative to watering locations and working pens. Reflect upon previous limitations and consider how the position and layout of the newly constructed fence may improve grazing management, simplify livestock movement, or benefit wildlife.

–Consider the working life expectancy of different materials and their resilience to future fires.

–Be mindful of how fence type and material may influence wildlife movement.

Rebuilding fences: Specifications could matter

Some ranchers may be looking into programs through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA, Farm Service Agency, FSA, that may be available to assist producers who suffered losses on their land or with livestock and fences due to the fires.

The Emergency Conservation Program, ECP, provides emergency funding and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to rehabilitate farmland and conservation structures damaged by natural disasters and implement emergency water conservation measures during severe drought. One qualifying practice is restoring fences on agricultural land — livestock cross fences, boundary fences, cattle gates, or wildlife exclusion fence.

Also, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, EQIP, is administered by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services, NRCS, office and offers financial assistance to landowners

to address certain natural resource concerns.

Building fences that may qualify for federal funding will require meeting their specifications, so these may be things to look for when buying or picking up donated materials. Keep all receipts for documentation purposes if a government program could be used or for insurance purposes.

Wire

–Barbed wired must meet ASTM-A121

–Smooth High Tensile wire must be 12.5-gauge, 1,300-pound break strength, tensile strength exceeding 170,000, and be Class III galvanized or above.

–Wire clips must be galvanized and match or exceed fence wire strength.

T Posts

–6 feet, not less than 1.25 pounds per foot galvanized or painted

Pipe

–Steel 2 3/8 inch minimum, but bigger is fine.



Calf Health Following Calving

By Erin DeHaan, SDSU Extension Beef Specialist

While calving season is oftentimes the most exciting time of the year for producers, it can have a dark side when sickness and death occur. Ensuring cows are in an adequate nutritional status (body condition score of 5 or 6) and not overfed can help reduce concerns of dystocia, as well as have a major role in determining the quality and quantity of colostrum. Proper post-partum practices to ensure calf health are also important.

Colostrum is Key

Colostrum is full of protective immunoglobulins that must be absorbed across the small intestine in the calf within the first 24 hours of birth to allow the calf to develop passive immunity against common diseases until its immune system is fully functional. Calves need to consume colostrum as soon as possible (within the first half hour of birth) and should have 4-6 liters of colostrum by 6 hours following birth. Ideally, calves should consume a minimum of 5% of their body weight in colostrum within 6 hours of birth. After this time, the calf's ability to absorb immunoglobulins starts to decline, and ceases after 24 hours. Good quality colostrum is key to having calves with more vigor and allows them to receive adequate nutrients and passive immunity for prevention of early-calfhood diseases. Prior to suckling, the udder and teats should also be clean and free from manure, mud, etc. This adds another layer of prevention to diarrheal diseases.

Post-Partum Practices

First off, removing the amniotic sac off a calf's head is crucial to prevent asphyxiation. Other key post-partum practices include making sure the cow has cleaned the calf off to prevent hypothermia. Cold mouths and lack of suckling reflex are common indicators of this. Warming

crates/boxes, blankets, warm water bath, etc. can help raise calf internal temperatures. The umbilical cord is a direct route to the calf's immune system. Inspecting the naval for abnormalities and dipping the umbilical cord in a navel dip can help reduce the risk of infection by helping the cord dry out faster.

Injectable vaccinations given to the dam prior to calving have been shown to provide antibodies through the colostrum. Administering vaccines has been shown to be more effective when the calf is at least one month of age as its immune system is more active, and there isn't the influence of maternal antibodies from colostrum. Nutritional supplements/injectables may be needed depending on the operation and cow status. However, proper products and protocols should be discussed with your veterinarian prior to administration.

The Sandhills Calving System (SCS) has been known to reduce pathogen exposure to newborn calves by using a series of rotations throughout various calving pastures. In brief, all late-pregnancy cows reside in a pasture at the start of calving. After 2 weeks, pregnant cows are rotated to a new pasture, leaving pairs in the original pasture. For each subsequent week, pregnant cows are repeatedly moved to a new pasture. Adoption of this system has been shown to reduce death loss and veterinary costs without negative impacts on calf performance.

A variety of other practices can be implemented, such as administering individual forms of identification and castrating bull calves. A final key step during calving is observing the calf to detect any abnormal signs or behaviors, especially during the first month following calving. This is a simple practice that has a direct impact on early calf health and catching things before they become issues.



Common Calfhood Pathogens

Calf scours is a primary threat as it can be caused by a wide range of pathogens. Rotavirus and coronavirus are common pathogens that affect newborn calves by reducing absorptive capabilities in the small intestine, resulting in long-lasting diarrhea. Escherichia coli and clostrid-

ium perfringens Type C can infect calves less than a week in age and cause bloody diarrhea. Coccidia, cryptosporidium, and Salmonella can also cause diarrhea in older calves and left untreated can progress to scours or death. Scours can result from one or a variety of these patho-

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BEEF EXPORT

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the challenge of the weak Japanese yen.

Beef exports to Mexico continued to strengthen in January, increasing 15% from a year ago to 20,111 mt – the second largest since 2020 following exports of 21,325 mt in December 2023. January export value jumped 19% to \$112.9 million. This was the highest value since 2020. Beef supplies remain tight in Mexico as it exports more feeder cattle to the U.S., imports more beef from the U.S. and exports less beef to the U.S.

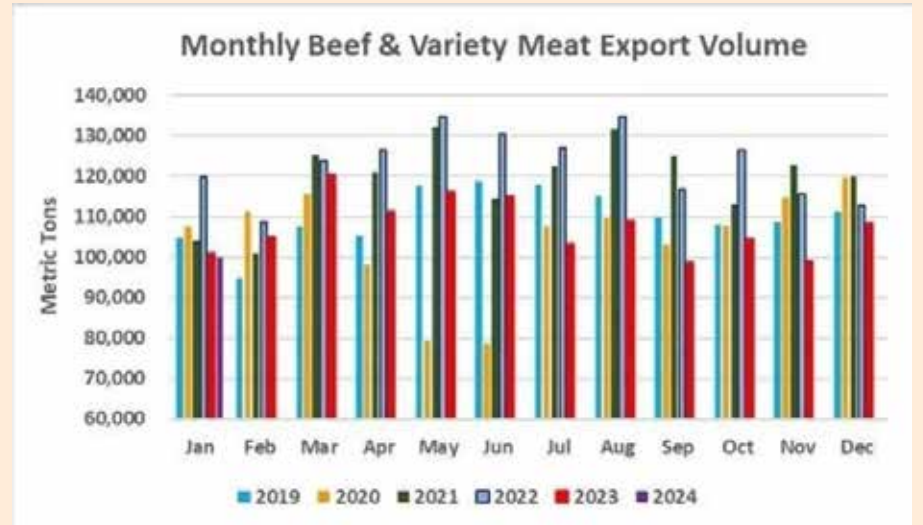
U.S. beef exports to the Middle East struggled mightily in 2023 primarily due to a slowdown in beef liver shipments to Egypt but have showed signs of a rebound the past two months. January exports jumped 68% compared to the low year-ago totals, reaching 4,869 mt, while value increased 73% to \$19 million. Exports to Egypt, the largest destination for U.S. beef livers, increased 58% to 3,627 mt valued at \$5.5 million (up 33%). Exports also increased significantly to the United Arab Emirates (468 mt, up 105%), Kuwait (296 mt, up 658%) and Qatar (265 mt, up 597%), nearly all of which were beef muscle cuts. January exports to both Kuwait and Qatar were the highest since 2022.

Other January results for U.S. beef exports include:

- January beef shipments to Japan declined 6% from a year ago to 21,149 mt, but export value increased 6% to \$153.8 million. Beef variety meats (primarily tongues and skirts) were definitely a bright spot, with exports increasing 33% to 3,721 mt, while value climbed 40% to \$39 million. Demand from yakiniku restaurants remains strong and it is not possible for them to replace U.S. beef tongue and skirt. Lower tariffs on beef variety meats (under the U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement) also contributed to relatively stronger demand for these items.

- Hong Kong's demand for U.S. beef strengthened last year and exports performed well in January, climbing 62% from a year ago to 2,715 mt, while value soared 93% to \$32.3 million. Exports to China did not fare as well, declining 12% in volume (11,755 mt) and 6% in value (\$102.1 million). The combined result for the region was a 3% decline in volume to 14,490 mt, while value increased 7% to \$134.4 million.

- Following a record performance in 2023, January beef exports to Central America increased 9% from a year ago to 1,950 mt, while value was up 2% to \$12.7 million. Exports to top market Guatemala were the sixth high-



est on record at 900 mt, up 30% year-over-year, valued at \$6.5 million (up 20%). Exports to Panama more than doubled year-over-year, climbing 126% to 337 mt, valued at \$2.4 million (up 91%). Exports to El Salvador were also significantly higher at 211 mt, up 80% year-over-year.

- January exports to Peru, a key destination for U.S. beef variety meat, nearly doubled from a year ago in volume (601 mt, up 99%) and more than doubled in value (\$2.7 million, up 107%). Variety meats accounted for 77% of the volume and 41% of the value.

- Despite lower shipments to the Dominican Republic and Jamaica, January beef exports to the Caribbean were up 15% from a year ago to 2,684 mt, valued at \$20.8 million (up 6%). Growth was led by smaller destinations,

including the Leeward-Windward Islands, the Netherlands Antilles, Cuba, and Haiti.

January exports of U.S. beef variety meat increased 12% from a year ago to 23,138 mt, while value climbed 16% to \$89 million. In addition to growth in Japan, Egypt, and Peru (see chart), variety meat shipments increased significantly to Mexico, China/Hong Kong, Korea and El Salvador.

- Beef export value equated to \$360.18 per head of fed slaughter in January, up 9% from a year ago. Exports accounted for 12.8% of total January beef production, down slightly from a year ago, and 10.5% for muscle cuts (down from 10.8%).

U.S. Meat Export Federation



CALF HEALTH

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gens and therefore makes it tough to control. Scours vaccinations can greatly help prevent the effects of some of these pathogens and reduce the risk of scours outbreaks. Electrolyte supplements and antibiotics may help treat calves with symptoms. However, consult your veterinarian to determine protocols for your situation. Scours outbreaks are costly, not only because of death loss and cost of treatment, but also the added time and labor needed to care for these calves. In addition, calves affected by scours can have reduced performance following calving,

as well as throughout the rest of their life.

Summary

Collectively, calf health is crucial to the viability of an operation. The survival of calves is important not only for live calf crop percentages, but as well may determine if the cow remains in the herd or is culled. Considering calf health following calving is a number one priority for calving season and to better prepare the calf for the rest of its life.



CONGRESS PASSES

continued from page 3

and commerce; the attorney general; the U.S. trade representative; the chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors; and the director of the Office of Management and Budget. It was designed to be a central group that would review foreign investments, analyze developments, and make recommendations to the president. If a purchase by a foreign company raises security concerns, the president has the power to step in and block a transaction that might harm national security.

Recent purchases of agricultural land by foreign

adversaries have increased public scrutiny on such purchases. As a result, NCBA and KLA supported the Foreign Adversary Risk Management Act introduced by Sen. Tommy Tuberville of Alabama and sponsored by Sen. Roger Marshall, and the Agricultural Security Risk Review Act introduced by Rep. Frank Lucas of Oklahoma, both of which included language similar to the CFIUS provisions contained in the Consolidated Appropriations Act.

KLA



CALVING-RELATED CHALLENGES FOR THE COW

By Lisa Moser, K-State Research and Extension

K-State Beef Cattle Institute veterinarians share tips for managing cows with retained placentas as well as those experiencing a rectal, vaginal, or uterine prolapse.



Cows need to be monitored for calving-related issues, according to veterinarians at K-State's Beef Cattle Institute.

When a new little one joins the world, it can be an exciting time, but not all births are easy. For beef cattle, it is important to know what is considered a medical emergency, according to the veterinarians at the Kansas State University Beef Cattle Institute.

Speaking on a recent Cattle Chat podcast, the veterinarians discussed two calving-related challenges that cows can experience — retained placentas and prolapses.

The placenta nourishes the calf while in the womb. Often after the cow calves, the placenta comes out of her body on its own, said K-State veterinarian Brad White.

“With a cow, the attachment between the placenta and the uterus is like fingers going into little holes, and so it is important to let the cow shed that placenta without pulling on it or there will be little pieces of tissue left behind and that can damage the inside of the uterus,” White said.

A retained placenta is not a medical emergency for a cow, and it is best left alone, said K-State veterinarian Bob Larson.

“It is important to monitor the cow and if she is acting normal the placenta will like-

ly come out on its own within a couple of days,” he said.

Larson added that retained placentas often occur following an abortion, or when the cow has had a difficult birth or cesarian section.

Along with monitoring the placenta, producers also need to monitor cows for prolapses. There are three types to watch for — rectal, vaginal, and uterine.

“With a prolapse, the parts that should be on the inside of the body are now on the outside and then have little protection from the elements, so those must get put back in place quickly,” White said.

To help producers recognize which part has come out of the cow, K-State veterinarian Brian Lubbers made this analogy: a rectal prolapse is the size of a softball; a vaginal prolapse is the size of a volleyball; and a uterine prolapse is bigger than a beach ball.

“If it is before calving, it is most likely a rectal or vaginal prolapse, while post-calving it is almost always a uterine prolapse,” Lubbers said.

Larson added: “A uterine prolapse is always a medical emergency and needs to be addressed immediately, while the other two types of prolapses need to be dealt with in a timely manner.”

Depending on what type of prolapse has occurred, producers may choose not to retain the cow in the herd, Larson said.

“There is a genetic component to a vaginal prolapse

that is related to the structure around the vagina, while a uterine prolapse is almost always related to a difficult birth,” Larson said.



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livery of product while minimizing pain and tissue damage. Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) guidelines require all injections to be given in front of the shoulder, regardless of animal age. Always follow the label on products for recommended dose and route of injection.

A study compared the transmission of anaplasmosis between needle and needle-free injections in Holstein steers. The results showed a 60% transmission rate of anaplasmosis in the needle-injection group. Changing needles after every animal is one way producers can help stop the transmission of pathogens in a disease-positive herd. Controlling external parasites and disinfecting surgical instruments such as tattoo pliers, dehorning tools and castration knives are other ways to help stop the spread. Having these

standard guidelines in place should help operations maximize time and health efficiency.

Proper use of needles

It is important to have preventative measures in place when using disposable needles. Needles should be changed before becoming dull. A good rule to follow is to change needles every 10 animals. Only new, sterile needles should be introduced into bottles of product to prevent polluting the contents inside. Needles also need to be changed when contaminated with visible feces or dirt, or when the needle point is damaged or bent. Bent needles pose a risk of breaking and should not be straightened. Broken needles must be treated as an emergency because they may migrate within the tissue and become difficult or impossible to find.



BQA guidelines recommend developing a standard operating procedure (SOP) for handling broken needles in animals.

Suggested SOPs should include:

1. Marking the location where the needle was injected.
2. Immediately contacting a veterinarian to have the needle surgically removed.
3. If unable to recover the needle, the animal's ID must be recorded to ensure it does not enter the food chain. The animal should be euthanized and disposed of properly at the end of its productive life.

Remember biosecurity

Bacteria and viruses that cause disease and can be carried in blood are defined as blood-borne pathogens. There are several different bovine diseases that fall into this category, with bovine leukosis virus and anaplasmosis as two of the most recognized. Both conditions are spread through herds by transferring infected blood to non-infected animals. Examples of this include vector transmission from biting flies and ticks and mechanical transmission from infected needles and surgical instruments.



MEASURING THE VALUE

continued from page 9

The purchase price of bull 3 is \$7,000 more than bull 5. Bull 3 generates \$290 more relative to his purchase price than bull 5.

results in an additional 6,615 pounds. 6,615 pounds of YW at a value of \$2 equals \$13,230. The purchase price of bull 2 is \$2,000 more than bull 5. \$13,230 - \$2,000 = \$11,230. So, Bull 4 is a vastly superior choice than bull 5 by \$11,230.

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Bull 1 will sire 135 calves at a cost of \$6,760.

Drovers



By Madison Kovarna, and Erin DeHaan, SDSU Extension

Introduction

Recordkeeping is not a new practice for beef producers around the nation. There are many details that must be kept in line, such as feed directives, veterinary visits, sale barn receipts, and the seemingly endless list continues. During busy times of the year, proper recordkeeping can easily take a backseat, and calving season is no exception. Complete and well-maintained calving records hold large amounts of information that can be used to improve or evaluate your operation.

Why are calving records important and what should be included?

Calving records do not have to be overly complex. Even small pieces of collected data can provide insight into your herd. Data collected can be used to not only evaluate calf performance, but also examine cow performance and production history. Details recorded can be utilized to make difficult management decisions a little easier, such as what cows to cull or which herd bull to replace. Records can illustrate the production history of females in the herd in terms of which ones have poor maternal instincts; which required assistance during labor; and which had stillbirths, abortions, or poor calf performance. Additionally, udder and teat scores can be taken at calving to assist

Table 1. Sample calving record.

Dam ID	Calf ID	Birth Date	Birth Weight	Sex	Calving Ease Score	Notes
057	401	2/1/2024	75	H	1	Vigorous
886	402	2/4/2024	64	H	1	-
596	403	2/6/2024	87	B	2	Slow, Assisted with nursing

Source: SDSU Extension

in decisions about female longevity.

Traits and qualities that are included within calving records depend on what a producer is interested in tracking and monitoring. Breed associations require varying reporting levels, but when deciding to keep your own calving records, it is imperative to decide what is important to you. If you are just starting to increase emphasis on keeping calving records, start small! Recording three traits consistently for all calves born is more beneficial than recording ten traits for only 50 percent of the calf crop. Examples of items that can be recorded regarding the calf include birth date, birth weight, calf ID, calf sex, calving ease score, and coat color. Table 1 is a sample entry for a calving record.

What is the best method?

There are many methods for recording data during calving season, and the best

method is the one that works best for the operation. A producer can utilize mobile phone apps or paper copies. A multitude of mobile apps are available for download to a smartphone. Some producers utilize computer software, like Excel or Google Sheets, to make spreadsheets to record data. Additionally, these spreadsheets can be accessed on a mobile device for easy viewing and editing when a computer is unavailable.

SDSU Extension has record books, commonly called Redbooks, available that provide pages for calving data, as well as several other production measures and benchmarks. No matter which format suits you and your operation best, be sure to keep at least two copies of records in case of damage, misplacement, or loss.

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Livestock Respiratory Issues Expected Following Texas Wildfires

By Kay Ledbetter



be a lot of secondary bacterial infections in cattle's lungs because of damage from smoke inhalation, which can also spread throughout the body and lead to lethargy, weakness, and an elevated temperature."

option for many of them," she said.

All animals — cattle, horses, chickens, companion animals — can be affected by smoke inhalation and may show similar signs. More treatments are available for horses and companion animals than cattle and poultry.



Weeks after the smoke has cleared from the wildfires in the Texas Panhandle, the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory is alerting livestock owners to watch their surviving livestock for respiratory issues.

Alexis Thompson, DVM, Ph.D., DACVPM, veterinary diagnostician at the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory in Canyon, said the diagnostic lab expects to see an uptick in samples from livestock that were near the flames or smoke from the wildfires.

"Those on the ground are now reporting respiratory signs such as heavy breathing and wet coughs from cattle," Thompson said. "Smoke has a high concentration of fine particulate matter, which can lead to respiratory irritation in animals, as well as humans.

"I suspect in the coming weeks we will have a lot of people asking questions on infectious causes of bovine respiratory disease. There will

Effects on livestock long after the fires are gone

The warm to hot air from wildfires can lead to damage in the respiratory tract as well, Thompson said. The combination of these factors can damage the integrity of the respiratory lining and lead to fluid in the lungs, also known as pulmonary edema.

Cattle with pulmonary edema can have an increased respiratory rate and effort. Some may have wet coughs and serous discharge from their nose that ranges from clear to yellow to light pink.

Thompson said antimicrobials will not help with the initial damage but may help prevent secondary bacterial infections. However, she expects the secondary wave of mortalities will likely stem from this.

"Unlike in human medicine, our medical interventions for cattle with smoke inhalation are limited, and euthanasia may be the best

"Our poultry can get inflammation in their air sacs and lungs, which can result in coughing and difficult breathing," Thompson said. "Respiratory disease in poultry is also a sign of avian influenza, which is a prevailing issue in the U.S. It is strongly recommended that poultry with respiratory signs be tested for avian influenza from a public health standpoint."

Wildfire research on livestock

According to a Beef Quality Assurance, BQA, publication based on a study of the California fires, indirect losses were primarily associated with smoke inhalation and included cases of pneumonia and reproductive losses, such as reduced conception, low birthweight, rare abortions, poor weight gain and drops in milk production.

Another consideration, the study said, is the stress from evacuations or confinement following the fire.

The BQA program recommends when monitoring cattle, pay attention to signs of respiratory irritation such as coughing, fast or heavy breathing, and general signs of illness such as droopy ears or discharge from nose or eyes.

Reducing exercise or movement during these periods will help the animals recover more quickly, as wildfire smoke and higher temperatures can cause increased respiratory rates and the inhalation of more harmful particulates.

Low-stress handling and good stockmanship are more important during times when air quality is poor. Constant and clean water sources for proper hydration are key because they will help the immune system, minimize the effects of heat, and help clear respiratory airways.

TVMDL provides diagnostic testing

Thompson said TVMDL offers diagnostic testing and can make sampling recommendations, but generally recommends people work with their veterinarians first and foremost.

She said sensitivity tests of bacterial cultures can help in antimicrobial selection for all species. As people treat animals for burns, sampling wounds can guide the antimicrobial selection to help prevent secondary infections that burn victims are at risk for.

"For antimicrobials, we always recommend that people work with their veterinarians," Thompson said. "This is especially important for our food animals to maintain a healthy and safe food supply. I have been in contact with most of the veterinarians in the area, and they are up and running."

TVMDL also conducts testing on insured cattle and horses that have died, if a necropsy or post-mortem evaluation needs to be submitted for insurance purposes for an official cause of death.

Drovers



EMERGENCY CATTLE NUTRITION STRATEGIES AFTER A WILDFIRE

Wildfire can leave a ranching operation without forage, requiring a sudden and radical change in management to maintain animals immediately after the event.

Fortunately, the ruminant animal is resilient and can adapt to a wide range of diet composition and feeding management levels. David Lalman, Oklahoma State University Extension beef cattle specialist, and Dana Zook, OSU Extension west district livestock specialist, suggest the stop-gap nutritional management strategies provided below. These alternatives are intended to minimize stress and weight loss in cases where standing forage or hay is limited or non-existent.

These emergency nutritional management programs are based on a limit feeding strategy because a) digestive upset and founder can occur when concentrate feeds are overfed to unadapted animals, and b) it is assumed the hay resource will be limited for the next

several months until pasture green-up occurs. Limiting the amount of hay that is fed dramatically reduces hay waste and stretches the forage supply.

Strategy No. 1: Creep feed for four to five days

In cases where there is no forage immediately available, a low-protein, low-starch commercial feed product can be used for a short period to minimize weight loss until hay can be secured. Many commercial



Tragic wildfires not only destroy livestock but also the forage and pastureland they need to survive. Photo by Todd Johnson, OSU Agriculture

feed companies produce and inventory calf creep feeds or a growing ration/feed with similar characteristics. These

products will generally contain around 12% to 14% protein and 8% to 12% crude fiber. Some of

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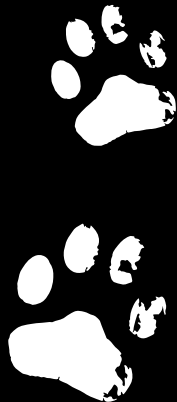
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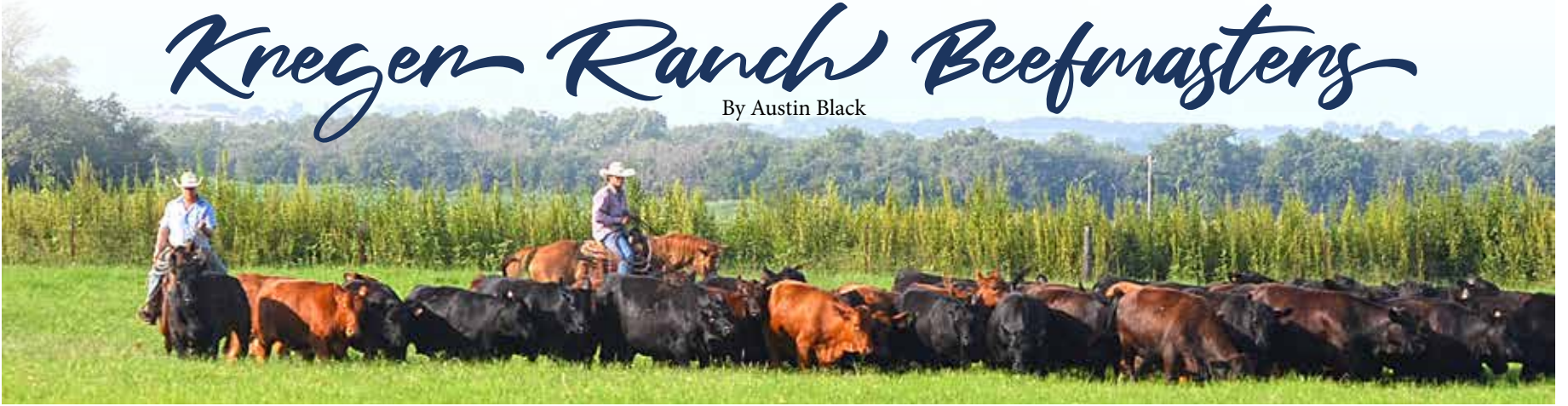


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Kreger Ranch Beefmasters

By Austin Black



While some seedstock producers say they raise bulls for commercial cattlemen, the Kreger Ranch proves it. Located in North Central Oklahoma, near Tonkawa, the father-son operation strives to produce Beefmaster cattle that thrive on any operation.

Senior partner and father Joe R. Kreger became a Beefmaster Breeders United (BBU) member in 1977, but the history of cattle on the Kreger Ranch dates all the way back to 1950. Managing partner and son Joe B. Kreger said his dad and grandpa were one of many

registered Hereford breeders in the area in the 1950-60's. "They were good cattle and known for their fertility," he said. "They were probably the most hardy of the English breeds."

When Joe R. attended Oklahoma State University in the 1960's, he took an internship with Winrock Farms in Morrilton, Ark. The ranch was owned by Gov. Rockefeller and raised Santa Gertrudis cattle. It was Kreger's first exposure to a Brahman influenced American breed, and he liked what he saw. The combination of maternal performance, heat tolerance and parasite resistance appeared to be a solid fit for his part of the country.

After college, Kreger leased a farm in Arkansas, bought some bulls from Winrock Farms and crossed them with English breed cows. The hybrid vigor was evident and Kreger turned commercial cattleman.

By the late 1960's, a drought prompted Kreger to return to the

family ranch in Oklahoma, where he expanded his cow base to include some Continental breeds also. During that time, he was learning about the Beefmaster breed and was intrigued by some of the additional traits it offered in comparison to Santa Gertrudis. He also liked that Beefmaster included Milking Shorthorn and Hereford in its breed composition, as opposed to the straight Brahman-Shorthorn mix of Santa Gertrudis. They were breeds he favored, and he believed the 3-way cross would create maximum heterosis.

But the final piece that made Kreger attracted to Beefmaster cattle was the philosophy of breed developer Ed Lasater. Kreger trusted Lasater's "6 Essentials of Economic Cattle Production" achieved a proven formula for profitable breeding.

Kreger found a prominent Beefmaster breeder in Southwest Oklahoma and bought a couple bulls to cross with his English and Continental cows. The calf crop was more than he ever expected.

When Opportunity Knocks

Fast-forward to 1975 and Kreger was offered to be the exclusive distributor in Oklahoma for DewEze Manufacturing. Their new hay handling technology for feeding round bales was taking the beef industry by storm. As Kreger started selling bale beds and setting up dealers throughout Oklahoma, he noticed that his customers were mostly cow/calf producers buying commercial bulls.

Kreger knew how good Beefmaster bulls would per-

form for these operations, but no one in the region raised registered bulls. He decided to change that. In 1977, Kreger purchased 30 bred heifers from Zipperer Beefmasters and began raising bulls.

With a plethora of prospects in his dealer network, Kreger had no trouble building a customer base. In fact, the 1980 calf crop was purchased by one prominent rancher in Oklahoma. And that was all it took to put Kreger Ranch on the map.

In 1999, after earning his MBA, Kreger's son Joe stepped in to assist with ranch management before becoming the managing partner in 2004. Today, Joe owns a wealth management firm and works with his foreman, Joseph Huber, along with a top-notch crew of cowboys and his ranch secretary, to raise nationally recognized Beefmaster cattle.

Capitalizing on Diversification

The success of the Kreger Ranch stems from a passion for good genetics, a focus on balanced traits and a commitment to serving their customers at a deep level. Joe said the most unique aspect of the Kreger Ranch is its combination of seedstock and commercial cowherds. The ranch runs a moderate sized registered herd, along with a couple hundred recip cows, and a similar sized herd of Beefmaster x Angus and Beefmaster x Red Angus commercial females. This approach allows Joe to capitalize on multiple market outlets for registered bulls and females, commercial re-



placement heifers and market steers. But the real benefit for the Kreger Ranch is using, and proving, its genetics in a real-time commercial or seedstock setting. “That’s the most essential piece to the dynamic of our breeding program,” he said.

Through the Kreger Ranch’s registered herd, Joe markets around 50 bulls each year through private treaty and select cooperative bull feed tests and sales. These marketing outlets allow him to gather feed efficiency data and measure the bulls against larger contemporary groups. Kreger also hosts an annual female production sale in May called the Genetic Investment Sale. This sale features mostly registered bred heifers, with several registered open heifers, and a handful of donor females, pairs and embryo packages.

These outlets primarily target commercial bull buyers and registered seedstock producers looking for replacement females. But Joe doesn’t stop there.

The Kreger Ranch commercial cowherd is just as vital to the operation’s revenue stream. A strong believer in optimum heterosis, Joe said Beefmaster x Angus and Beefmaster x Red Angus females produce the best replacement heifer package on the market. “Beefmasters have the highest retention of heterosis of any mainstream breed in the U.S.,” he said. “You cross that with breeds that have higher marbling traits, like Angus and Red Angus, and you have cows that raise more calves with heavier weights.”

Kreger offers replacement females and pairs in the Maternal Compass Beefmaster Replacement Female Sale each year, in addition to retaining ownership on all his crossbred steer calves. And to make the registered and commercial herds fully support each other, Kreger Ranch Beefmaster bulls often sire 75% of the commercial replacement heifers. “Our selection for what bulls will benefit commercial producers isn’t just theoretical,

we’re proving what our cattle do through a commercial cowherd,” Kreger said. “No Beefmaster breeder has been doing this longer than us.”

Finding Balance

Whether selecting genetics for the seedstock or commercial herd, Kreger has always held a progressive view on what traits are important. “Our historical cowherd excelled in longevity and hardiness,” he said. But when ultrasound technology surfaced, he quickly realized the need for improved carcass quality in his breeding program. “We didn’t want to lose the foundation of our cowherd, so we started selecting more for cutability and marbling through REA and IMF to improve the area of highest impact,” he said.

Over the past 15 years, Kreger has put a strong emphasis on incorporating these traits into his breeding. And recently, he purchased FMC Magnitude, the #1 bull for REA. “He’s in the top 5 individuals of all mature sires for \$T, the top 15% for \$M, the top 1% for feed efficiency, and he’s red and polled,” Kreger said. “We’ve been working on those traits, and he was a fast way to dramatically improve them.”

In addition to maternal and carcass performance, Kreger has consistently bred for solid color and polled genetics. He noted that for years, Beefmasters did not have a recognizable color pattern. Instead, they had multiple colors and therefore, were often mistaken for different breeds. “We had a lot of good cattle that wouldn’t get credit for being a Beefmaster. And in the 1980-90’s, if someone saw bad cattle that were colored, they were called Beefmasters,” Kreger said. “So we got the bad end of both coins.” Through selective matings, Kreger Ranch Beefmasters became solid black or solid red. “Both have very meaningful places in the industry,” he said.

Making an Impact

After decades of breeding, Kreger Ranch has built a rep-



utation nationwide for quality registered and commercial Beefmasters. But moving forward, he would like to see his customer base more concentrated in the 4-state area of Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas. With the increased heat and endophyte tolerance Beefmaster genetics provide, compared to traditional English and Continental breeds, Kreger believes there is huge potential for producers in fescue country to reap benefits of crossbreeding.

To accomplish this goal, he’s excited to partner with a reputable Angus breeder

in Northeastern Oklahoma to sell bulls in their production sale next fall. “They’re adding Beefmasters as a second breed and they’re at the gateway to the Fescue belt,” he said.


Whether his customers are registered or commercial producers, Kreger works to provide exciting opportunities for each to succeed. “I want folks that want to go from raising five or six calves during a cow’s life cycle to nine or ten and make their calves heavier,” he said. His bulls consistently produce quality commercial replace-

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Cows Without Crowns

By Christine Gelley, OSU Extension

Spring calving season is an important time for culling decision making. Cows that have been treated well but lack in performance should be evaluated at this time.

Set Excuses Aside

This winter I had the opportunity to attend the American Forage and Grassland Council Annual Meeting and Conference in Mobile, Alabama. It is my favorite agricultural conference to attend because inspiration for developing better farm systems comes together from producers, academics, industry, and extension in the same space on an equal platform. From the start, I was looking for the idea for the article you are reading now, and it didn't take long to find.

The first speaker of the conference was Dr. Will Carter who operates a veterinary clinic with his wife, Dr. Monnie Carol Carter, and their centennial family farm raising beef cattle. They were recently honored as the National Cat-

tlemen's Beef Association Environmental Stewardship Producers of 2023. In Dr. Carter's presentation he shared that one of the first lessons they learned and implemented in regard to the cattle was how critical it is to choose and keep cows that thrive in their system and to get rid of those that do not. He stated that in the spring they "kick the crutch out from under their cows" and see who can run in the system. I liked that analogy, and it reminded me of a program topic we offered at a local beef school several years ago called "Cows Without Crowns." Both phrases refer to the same idea. The cows you keep need to perform in the system you have without excuses.

If you have spent much time in the cattle industry, you have probably heard this advice a time or two, but maybe still have some trouble implementing it. When you spend money and invest time in your cow herd it can be bittersweet to say goodbye to those cows that

we want to fit the system but fit like square pegs in a round hole.

Cows that arrive on the farm with a high price tag have a tendency to be crowned as queens before they prove themselves in the system. They get special treatment when it comes to performance, because the investment cost to get them on farm was so substantial. Hopefully, they are worth that special treatment and they pay for themselves quickly, but it takes time to find out.

If performance is inadequate, they might get crutches instead of making the cull list. No one wants to lose money selling an expensive cow, so she might get an excuse and a second chance. The challenge with handing out crutches in the form of more time and chances to perform is that they come with significant cost too. That expensive cow gets more and more expensive with time, but not necessarily more valuable.

Crowns and crutches don't make the farm money. They take food out of the family's mouths and revenue out of the farm accounts. Every cow should be adding value to the farm as marketable beef either as healthy calves or a hefty carcass.

When evaluation time comes around, it is important to review the cow's job description.

The Brood Cow's Responsibility

The job expectations of the brood cow are not very complicated. She should:

- Be ready to carry a calf by the time she is two years old.
- Get bred within your defined season.
- Calve within your defined season.
- Wean a marketable calf.
- Do these tasks on a regular basis.
- Do so under the management style that meets the goals of your farm.

If the brood cow is not able to meet these criteria, then she



isn't worth having on your payroll.

Lack of performance in these areas leads to the following barriers to profitability:

- Low reproductive efficiency.
- Non uniformity of calves.
- High feed costs.
- High capital investment.

The most efficient way to increase revenue is to reduce costs. In many cow-calf systems the following strategies can be implemented to boost profitability:

- Reduce supplemental feed costs by maintaining efficient cows.
- Implement rotational grazing with highly mobile cows.
- Use good genetics by selecting for easy births, adequate milk, and good mothering instincts.
- Reduce your labor costs by only keeping cows with pleasant dispositions.
- Maintain a good herd health program so you have healthy cows all year.
- Maintain reproductively efficient cattle that get pregnant and stay pregnant.

• If everything in the system is going well, except the cow, market her before the situation goes too far downhill.

Spring calving time is a great time to do performance reviews of your current cows on staff and determine if they are worth keeping another season. Get rid of any crowns or crutches you encounter and move forward toward a more profitable situation with the only cows that consistently add value to the farm.

For assistance with developing your culling criteria and maintaining your farm records, reach out to your local Extension service for additional information and tools.



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CALVING RECORDS
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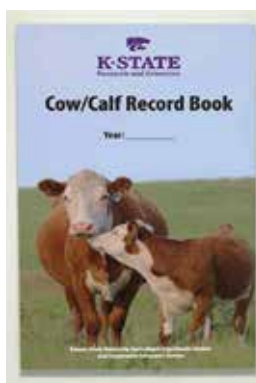
IRM – NCBA Redbook, often found at extension offices for cattle producers to use in their operation.

K-State Cow/Calf Record Book

This is a pocketbook developed by Kansas State University Research and Extension. This book is similar in its concept to the IRM Redbook, but in a condensed version.

It includes basic herd metrics, such as international year/ letter designations for identification, gestation length table, calving ease score, body condition scores, timing of when to body condition score cows, herd inventory, herd health and treatments, calving records and activity, breeding records, cattle sales records, and death losses.

Additionally, there is information for biosecurity measures, beef quality assurance practices, and pasture supplementation records. This is another great source to provide beef producers with information throughout multiple phases of production.



Kansas State University Extension Cow/Calf record book.

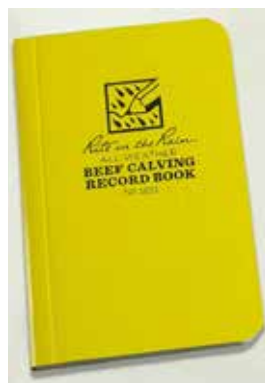
Rite in the Rain™ Record Book

As the title states, these record books pose an environmentally friendly option for producers to use.

This book is unique, as it is equipped with weather-proof pages, which can be particularly helpful for producers when they are calving in the rain, snow, or mud.

The book is primarily geared towards calving, as it has a place for recording calf birth details, weaning information and descriptions, a gestation length table, and a section for recording other pertinent production notes.

These books can sometimes be purchased in hardware and farm/ranch supply stores, but they are more commonly found on online retailers.



Rite in the Rain™ all-weather beef calving record book.

The Bottom Line

In the end, a producer can only measure what is recorded throughout the year. Proper calving records can provide insights into herd performance, such as high-performing females and calf growth. Additionally, records can indicate low-producing females within the herd or genetic lines and combinations that are not producing high-quality offspring. No matter how the recordkeeping is accomplished, the information that comes from the tedious process is invaluable.



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Program topics focus on how the beef industry can enhance value through genetic improvement.

The BIF Symposium features two and one-half days of educational programming focused on improving maternal traits and efficiency. Monday, June 10, kicks off with the Young Producer Symposium at 1 p.m. followed by the Welcome and Scholarship Reception. Monday evening a Feeder Cattle Panel will focus on capturing value of improved genetics and health in feeder cattle production.

Tuesday's general session will focus on "Building a better cow" and will include presentations by Dr. Jared Decker, University of Missouri; Dr. Darrh Bullock, University of Kentucky; Dr. Bob Weaber, Kansas State University;

and Dr. Dave Lalman, Oklahoma State University.

Wednesday's general session will continue the theme of building maternal excellence and speakers will include Dr. Christine Baes, University of Guelph; Dr. Larry Kuehn, U.S. Meat Animal Research Center; and Dr. Mike Coffey, Scotland's Rural College.

Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon technical breakout sessions will focus on a range of beef-production and genetic-improvement topics.

For registration and more symposium details, including hotel information, visit BIFSymposium.com. Prior to and during this year's symposium, be sure to follow the event on social media channels using the hashtag #BIF2024.



Each year the BIF symposium draws a large group of leading seedstock and commercial beef producers, academics and allied industry partners. The attendance list is a "who's who" of the beef value chain, offering great networking opportunities

and conversations about the issues of the day. Program topics focus on how the beef industry can enhance value through genetic improvement across a range of attributes that affect the value chain.



EMERGENCY *continued from page 17*

these feeds are pelleted and some are textured.

Another advantage of this program is that many companies keep an inventory of this type of feed bagged and ready to ship immediately. Feeds with these characteristics can be fed daily at around 0.6% of body weight to minimize weight loss in pregnant beef cows. This feeding rate is equivalent to 8 pounds of feed per day assuming cows weigh about 1,200 pounds. The low feeding rate is intentional because a sudden switch from free-choice forage to a grain (or concentrate) diet can result in digestive upset and founder. The risk is increased tremendously if the concentrate is overfed to animals that are not adapted.

Therefore, this program should be used no more than four or five days because weight loss will occur (due to the limited feeding rate), minerals will not be balanced, and the roughage component in the diet is not adequate to maintain long-term health of the cattle. The cattle should be fed every day and at about the same time each day. Weight loss should be limited to about 0.75 to 1 pound per day until hay or another forage source can be provided.

Once hay is available, priority should be given to providing enough long-stemmed hay to keep the rumen healthy and provide a balanced diet to sustain the animals until adequate spring forage is available. If hay supplies are limited, the inventory can be stretched by using a limit feeding strategy.

Strategy No. 2: Limited hay with creep feed

One method is to provide very limited hay (about 0.5% of body weight) plus about 1% of body weight concentrate feed like creep feed. Cattle must be fed both hay and concentrate every day. Be sure both feed sources are distributed far enough to allow all animals abundant access. Begin feeding about 8 pounds of concentrate, and gradually increase to 12 pounds.

If hay is more abundant, 15 pounds of grass hay fed with 5 pounds of a 28% to 32% range cube can maintain a 1,200-pound cow in the last trimester of pregnancy. Again, the hay should be rolled out to ensure each animal has equal opportunity to consume their share of the limited hay resource. The cattle must be fed every day, and again, it is recommended that cattle be fed about the same time each day.

In both cases, the priority is to meet nutritional needs while stretching the hay supply.

Mineral supplements and wheat pasture

Producers should consider working with their feed industry professional and/or Extension educator to ensure a well-balanced diet for their cattle. In most of these limit-feeding scenarios, a mineral supplement with a high level of calcium is essential to offset high levels of phosphorus in concentrate feeds. Wheat pasture mineral is a good option for this, but producers should also ensure that salt and vitamin A are also included in the diet. As always, a source of clean, fresh water is paramount to all other feed sources.

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needed. That leftover forage does a decent job of armoring the soil surface, especially if it comes from significant tall cool season forages which, in turn, will then have a more substantial root mass below ground to support livestock under slightly wet conditions and provide excellent dry matter to go with new high moisture early green forage. I've found that the more pasture you have with ample leftover forage, the quicker or earlier you may be able to graze without hurting later production.

Though it is not the most perfect time to evaluate legumes in the stand, it does give you the opportunity to get at least an idea on how much clover or other legumes you may have in the stand. Clover estimated at this time of year is generally about half of what is actually there. It's best evaluated later in the spring but then it's past the frost-seeding time frame.

A transect is a good way to get an accurate account of what is there by species or by group. You can do this by "stepping off" so many steps using the same number of steps each time and landing on the same foot each time and then recording the species present at the toe of your boot. If you do this at least 50 times and then add up the number of each species noted and multiply it times two, you will get a good estimate of each species present. This method is commonly called "Step Point."

There are several factors that will affect the nitrogen content and somewhat the correspondingly crude protein content of the new spring growth which includes the quantity of existing legumes we've been talking about, the amount of stored organic nitrogen in the soil, and certainly any nitrogen that has been added from commercial fertilizer or additional animal manure.

Legumes fix nitrogen with the help of Rhizobia bacteria

species. As soon as the legume roots start growing in the spring and the root hairs start to multiply, the Rhizobia start to colonize and the legume nodules start to form. Inside the nodules, the bacteria continue to multiply and convert the nitrogen from the soil's air spaces to ammonium. Ladino type white clovers can add up to 200 pounds of nitrogen to a well-managed healthy pasture. Each Rhizobium is species specific, thus the reason it takes specific inoculants when planting legume seeds. Have I sold you on legumes yet?

Commercial fertilizer is always an option. Nutrients need to be kept in balance. Too high a level of potassium may result in grass tetany and milk fever problems. Too much nitrogen and you may get more growth than you can use at one time. Excessive nitrogen applied in the spring can create a lot of competition for the cool season legumes in mixes, especially recently frost-seeded ones.

Most people will fertilize with nitrogen or a combination with nitrogen in the early spring. This is not a problem if we want to cut it for hay, but for a pasture with cool season grasses such as orchard grass and fescue, we are just adding fuel to the fire. These cool season forages will normally produce two thirds of their total dry matter by mid June. Fertilizing early promotes early growth that may be difficult to manage in a grazing system – especially if we have a wet spring.

If you think the grass stand is thin, then you can enhance the stand temporarily by broadcast seeding some Italian or annual ryegrass on the stand at about 40 pounds or ideally drill it into the stand at about 20-25 pounds per acre. This will help provide quality forage in thin areas for the present season but will most likely be overtaken by taller cool-season forages within a year or

so depending on the density of the existing stand and grazing management.

Frost seeding or broadcast seeding large grass like tall fescue and orchardgrass is generally a waste of time, money, and seed. It is advisable to use a non-selective herbicide to either kill the entire existing stand or at least set it back quite a bit in order to allow the new seedlings a fighting chance to survive. Small seedlings have a hard time competing with established forages, thin or not. If you truly want to change or improve the forages of the pasture, then starting over and killing out the existing stand is probably the best thing to do.

On the conservative side, if the stand is really only a little thin and you are satisfied with the existing forages and your livestock likewise,

then I would probably rely a little more on the existing seed bank and do any needed creative grazing required to return the stand to its prior level of performance and condition. Allowing longer recovery between grazing periods, allowing more desirable forages to fully express themselves and then grazing in a slightly more mature stage will help revive the stand.

Lastly, that early spring walk is a good time to start checking and fixing fences for deer damage, tree limbs or large fallen pieces of trees. Dead and dying ash trees are quickly becoming a menace and in some cases a huge workload.

Remember, it is not about maximizing a grazing event, but maximizing a grazing season! Keep on grazing!



KREGER

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ment heifers, which helps his customers improve their herd's longevity. Kreger also offers to buy back weaned heifer calves from commercial bull customers.

On the seedstock side, Kreger Ranch Beefmasters are an ideal foundation for new breeders getting started. "Our ideal client on the seedstock side is a new Beefmaster breeder who wants to start out with cattle that are highly proven and have

consistent production traits, with a very attractive phenotype and solid color," Kreger said. He allows seedstock customers to consign qualified registered replacement females in the Genetic Investment Sale also. "We became national seedstock breeders, but I'd like to get more regional to the Fescue belt to see the impact our bulls will make on producers in that area," he said.



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Reducing Mature Weight and Increasing Cow Productivity

By Mark Z. Johnson, OSU Extension Beef Cattle Breeding Specialist

The increasing mature weight of United States beef cows is concerning. Larger cows have higher nutrient requirements. Improving the efficiency, sustainability and profit potential of commercial cow calf production involves reducing feed costs while improving pounds of calf weaned. Reducing the mature weight of beef cows has a favorable impact on feed costs. Cumulative weight weaned throughout a cow's life in production is the result of total pounds of calves weaned and will be higher for cows that annually calve earlier, wean a healthy calf, and avoid being culled as a result of reproductive failure, unsoundness or bad disposition.

The Role of Selection and Mating

Mature cow size can be effectively controlled through sire selection. Mature cow weight is a high heritability trait with literature estimates ranging from 35 to 70%. Selection pressure applied to Mature Weight Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) in sire selection should be an effective means of changing mature weight.

Fertility is low in heritability with estimates ranging from 0 to 15%. Selection pressure, based on additive genetic merit alone, results in very slow progress in im-



Photo - Lauren Berger UNL

proving fertility. Fertility is more largely influenced by nutritional environment and non-additive genetic merit. Non-additive genetic merit (or gene combination value) is the result of mating decisions. The mating decision to crossbreed generates hybrid vigor (or heterosis) because of the gene combination value created by combining alleles from two (or more) different breeds at loci across the genome. Considerable research by various State Agriculture Experiment Stations and the USDA has clearly demonstrated the potential for increasing beef cow productivity through crossbreeding. Accumulated experimental data indicates pounds of calf weaned per cow can be increased by as much as 25% in well designed, systematic

crossbreeding programs involving Hereford, Angus, and Shorthorn. Approximately half of this increase in total production is dependent upon use of the crossbred cow to take advantage of heterosis for fertility, reproductive fitness, longevity, and maternal performance.

Crossbreeding is a mating system that provides the commercial producer the opportunity to increase the cumulative weight weaned throughout a cow's lifetime in production. A well-planned crossbreeding system re-

quires a high level of management to reap maximum benefits. The same breeding principles should be applied to the selection of breeding stock for a crossbreeding program that would be used for a purebred program. In both cases, the use of genetically superior breeding stock will result in offspring with better performance levels. Once the decision has been made as to which breeds to include in a crossbreeding program, selection pressure should be applied based on the additive genetic merit (EPDs) of traits of primary economic importance.

Bottomline

Improving mature cow size and productivity can be accomplished in tandem through selection and mating decisions. Sire selection can be an effective means to reduce the mature size of a cowherd. Total pounds of calf weaned during the productive lifetime of a cow can be improved by a well-planned crossbreeding system.



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Farm and Ranch Injuries

By Barry Whitworth, DVM, Senior Extension Specialist, OSU Cooperative Extension

In January, I attended the Oklahoma Veterinary Conference. While waiting for one of the sessions to start, a classmate of mine made the comment of how many of the attendees walk with a limp, used a cane, and/or have damaged hands. We all agreed that working with animals is hard on the body. In general, anything associated with farming and ranching is dangerous.

Most farmers and ranchers know that agriculture is a dangerous occupation. According to the United States Bureau of Statistics, workers involved in agriculture, forestry, and fishing had the highest occupational fatality rate in 2022. The fatality rate of 23.5 per 100,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) workers for this group is much higher when compared to the overall occupation fatality rate of 3.7 per 100,000 FTE. Most of the agriculture relat-



ed fatalities are associated with transportation such as tractor overturns and vehicle crashes, but a fair number involve livestock.

Livestock accounts for a significant amount of human injury and deaths. A survey of seven states in the central United States (US) found livestock were a frequent cause of injury. One survey found cattle accounted for almost one third of the injuries. In another survey, cattle

were responsible for 36% of the fatalities. With their unpredictability and enormous power, bulls can be extremely dangerous. One study reported 261 attacks on people with 149 reported as fatalities and 112 as injuries.

Most victims of cattle incidents are struck, trampled, gored, and/or kicked. The most common types of injuries are contusions, fractures, and lacerations involving the lower and upper extremities.

More severe injuries are related to head trauma, internal damage, and crushing injuries.

Many factors play a part in causing injuries and fatalities. One survey found that the age of the victim was significant. Groups with younger people were at higher risk of injury when compared to older ranchers. This may be due to human error and overconfidence of the handler as was pointed out in one report as a cause of injury and death. However, medical conditions such as hearing loss and arthritis, which are more common in older people, can play a role in being injured. These conditions may restrict a person's ability to move out of danger or hear activities that may warn them to move. This relates to another reported risk factor of individuals working alone. It is reported that one third of the

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fatalities occur when no one else is present. Another interesting fact associated with fatalities is that one third of the deaths were caused by animals that had previously shown aggressive behavior.

It is wise to cull aggressive animals.

Another factor to consider is facilities. Several studies indicated that cattle equipment, housing, and working facilities contributed to in-

juries. This was especially important in bull incidents. Unfortunately, over 40% of cattlemen in one survey reported that they do not think their facilities are safe but hesitate to improve them. The reasons given include the cost of new equipment, satisfaction with the current facility, and lack of both time and knowledge on how to build a new facility.

Most if not all injuries and fatalities caused by livestock can be prevented. Livestock producers can reduce the risk of injury by studying animal behavior, by using proper handling techniques, and by using equipment correctly. Beef Quality Assurance as well as many other groups provide training in animal behavior and low stress cattle handling. Facilities and equipment are costly, but when designed and used correctly, accidents are reduced. Individuals need to protect themselves by wear-

ing proper footwear, clothing, and head and eye protection. Also, many accidents happen when farmers and ranchers work alone. A partner present to keep watch may prevent an injury. Lastly, producers need to recognize their limits. When animals are involved, overconfidence will get someone hurt.

From a personal standpoint, I have had my share of incidents. I have been bitten, scratched, clawed, trampled, tossed around, mashed, and crushed by a variety of them. All of the incidents were the result of overconfidence, human error, lack of knowledge, and poor equipment and facilities. My life's experiences are the same as many other farmers and ranchers. We all have one life to live, so we all need to take better care of ourselves.





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Intersection of Innovative, Intriguing, and Insanity

By Garth Ruff, Beef Cattle Field Specialist, Ohio State University Extension

January through March is what we in Extension call "Meeting Season." While in most cases I am teaching at the meetings I attend, I often learn several things about beef production from producers and other speakers that often fall into one of three categories: Innovative, Intriguing, or Insanity.

Let's start with the innovative. Farmers are some of the most innovative people I know when it comes to creative solutions to a given problem. As they say, "necessity is the mother of invention." Cattle handling facilities are some of the first things that come to mind in this area, functional handmade solutions to a common issue. Discussions about whole herd management, logistics, trial and error, I really enjoy these conversations.

Intriguing – These are the things that I go back to the office and take a deeper look at. These are often statements made from other presentations at meetings that are often cutting-edge precision technology, advancements in genetics, risk management, and farm economics. These are the most beneficial topics as an Extension specialist

when there is an opportunity to ask questions and then dig a little deeper.

The insane. Several times a year I hear comments at meetings that are in direct contrast of well-established research-based facts in beef production systems. Examples include, "it doesn't pay to castrate bull calves if selling them at the sale barn" or "hay is hay" (in reference to quality), or one of my personal favorites, as I was teaching a session on keeping production records; "I have 35 cows, they had 35 calves, and how would you ever know if they made any money?" Some nights I do a lot of head scratching.

Someone once defined insanity as doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting different results. When I started in this position, at the Eastern Ag Research Station there was a piece of paper on the white board that read:

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If you do what you always did, you'll get what you always got.

As we go into the bulk of spring calving and breeding, my challenge to you as producers is to try to build on and expand upon what you have previously done. You don't have to go crazy but experiment with one or two management decisions that will pay dividends in the future.

Improve genetics

The bulls that will be available this spring will have the most advanced genetics that are on the market. This cull market has been really good with many bulls selling for over \$1.00/lb. That 5-year-old bull that weighs over a ton and has several daughters in your herd will be a significant down payment toward your next herd sire.

Buy bulls from proven, reputable genetics and producers

There is a reason bulls are hauled to the weekly livestock auction. Not knowing any genetic information, or health status can be a risky business.

Shorten your breeding season

If you currently have a 120-day breeding window, work towards 90 days. If at 90, ask yourself if there is opportunity to tighten things a bit further to improve calf uniformity, lot weights, and identify chronic late calving and sub fertile cows.

Begin pregnancy checking if you don't do so already

As already mentioned, this cull market has been really active. With cull cow prices hovering at or above \$1.00/lb for lean cows in good condition, you'll have a hard time justifying keeping open cows in 2024, even if rolling them into a fall herd is an option.

Improve fertility of hay and pasture ground

One thing we have all experienced is rising land prices. To maximize the value of the acres currently dedicated to forage production, soil testing, lime and fertilizing deserve more consideration. Consider the current hay supply. As I write this, several cattle producers across the region are buying hay they hadn't planned to. Improved fertility should result in increased yield.

Given the current status of the cattle markets and looking ahead to the next couple of years - if there was ever a time to try something innovative it's now. If you have questions about something cattle related that was intriguing, talk it over with your partners, neighbors, or extension personnel. If planning to do what you always have did, don't be surprised to get what you always have got.



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HOW WHEAT'S FIRST HOLLOW STEM PHASE AFFECTS PROFITS WHAT TO KNOW FOR THE 2024 SEASON

Wheat producers across the state are closely monitoring fields for signs of first hollow stem, the maturity stage of the plant that indicates the time to stop grazing cattle. Paul Beck, Oklahoma State University Extension beef cattle specialist, said first hollow stem is right around the corner.

Timing is crucial in late winter and early spring. If stocker calves are pulled off grazing fields too early, producers risk losing the weight gain on their livestock. If calves are left on pastures too long after first hollow stem, wheat profit potential will drop.

OSU Extension agricultural economist Eric DeVuyst said research shows producers should remove cattle from grazing fields before first hollow stem.

By the numbers

DeVuyst said grazing just one day after first hollow stem could cost \$6.26 per acre in wheat yield loss. Producers could see a loss of \$41 per acre if fields are grazed one week after first hollow stem.

According to DeVuyst, Oklahoma-grown wheat would need to bring \$2 per bushel and stocker calves would need to produce \$1.90 per pound at finishing weight for producers to break even at harvest. Wheat would need

to sell for \$5.50 per bushel and stockers would require a market price of \$5 per pound to justify grazing past first hollow stem.

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