

Cattlemán

THE MIDWEST

October 21, 2010 Volume 16 No. 10

GRASSLAND FARMING TODAY



Shorthorn
Scores
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CATTLEMAN

THE MIDWEST

October 21, 2010 Volume 16 No. 10 GRASSLAND FARMING TODAY

CATTLE MARKET OUTLOOK POSITIVE FOR CULL CATTLE

By: Chel Terrell,
Gulf Coast Cattleman



Cull cow and bull prices have been grasping at record-high levels in recent months, generating a slew of activity on many cow-calf operations around the country as producers aim to take advantage of the market shift in their favor. Not only is it a great time to cull unproductive animals from the herd, it's an ideal opportunity to economically boost herd genetics with new purchases.

"Obviously, cull prices are extremely good and we've seen a response to those cull prices being as good as they are," said Dr. Walt Prevatt, Extension livestock economist with Auburn University. "There's a number of those cull animals being removed from herds and going to market. The increased marketing of cull cows is obviously contributing to the decrease in the cow inventory numbers."

In fact, the U.S. beef cowherd inventory is currently at its lowest in at least 37 years, according to industry data.

"There's a number of things working in the cattle market and we can't totally explain all of it, but, fundamentally, it's certainly a supply and demand situation. We've got lower volumes of beef tonnage going to the market and the market has responded with better prices. So that's certainly been helpful," Prevatt said.

"You can contribute the higher prices for cull cattle to both supply and demand," said Kevin Good, senior market analyst with CattleFax. "Supply has been tighter because of less imports. Beef imports are down substantially year-to-date. At mid-year, imports were down about 16 percent; the biggest decline was coming out of Australia and New Zealand. Even though we've been killing more domestically, you've still got tighter supplies because of that lack of imports. A lot of that has been driven because the dollar is pretty cheap. A low dollar means that Australia and some other countries can get more money

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BACKWARD PROMOTION HAS BACKFIRED

By Todd Domer, KLA VP Communications

Life must be tough as a vegetarian and a fine food hater. It can't be easy trying to convince people to give up the sizzle of a succulent steak, complete with health benefits that will improve your quality of life. Can you imagine being the salesman who tries to persuade others that kidney beans are better than burgers?

The pitch has been around a long time, but has met with very limited success. Beef industry surveys regularly show between 3% and 4% of the population says they don't eat meat. The trend has been steady for a number of years, although I question the follow-through of those responding. It's been proven time and again people will tell you one thing on a survey, then do the exact opposite. Saying you're a vegetarian might make people feel good about themselves, in some weird, insecure way. Actually having the willpower to stick with the leafy greens from now to eternity is another thing. That aroma of beef on the grill is pretty powerful, even for those of us who don't deny ourselves the pleasure.

I've never seen a History Channel program on the roots of the vegetarian sales strategy, so I'm left to do some guessing. In the beginning, I'd say it was a soft-sell approach. Maybe they promoted iceberg lettuce as the entrée of choice for special occasions, like family dinners, graduations and holidays. When that pitch got the cold shoulder, the leaders of the lentils and the legumes settled on

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YOU'RE LOSING THE BATTLE OF TRUST

By Marlys Miller, editor Pork

Who do you trust? Beyond your family and friends, with whom do you feel most confident and comfortable? In your farm or ranch business it may be your veterinarian, Extension university specialist, or a fellow producer.



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USDA RECIPE CONTEST EXCLUDES MEAT

USDA recently launched a school lunch recipe contest that excludes meat from the recipe categories. That move, along with the USDA Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's recommendation to move to a plant-based diet, is sending the wrong message to consumers, says Kristina Butts, director of legislative affairs for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA). The newly proposed 2010 Dietary Guidelines issued by USDA and the Department of Health and Human Services suggests a plant-based

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USDA RAISES BEEF PRODUCTION FORECAST FOR 2010, 2011

USDA's monthly Supply and Demand Estimates report forecast higher beef production for both this year and in 2011. For 2010, the report raised its beef forecast to 25.83 billion pounds, up slightly from last month, noting production has been higher than expected so far in the second half of the year.



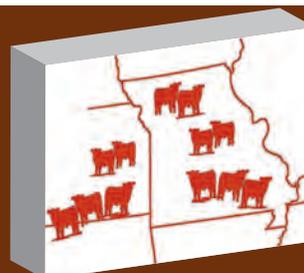
For 2011, beef output was again raised slightly compared to last month, to 25.23 billion pounds, as larger-than-expected third quarter 2010 cattle on feed placements are marketed in the first quarter of 2011. Export forecasts for U.S. beef were raised on continuing strong sales to a number of markets

The fed cattle price forecast for 2011 was unchanged, at \$95-\$102 cwt.
LMA

COALITION INCLUDING NCBA CALLS FOR QUICK ACTION ON ESTATE TAX REFORM

The Family Business Estate Tax Coalition, which includes NCBA, continues to press Congress for quick action on the federal estate tax. Coalition leaders are suggesting Congress must take action when it returns to Washing-

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This 'special friend' has taught me a lot. I admire her. As a mother and daughter, she always puts her family first. For quite some time now she has been the 'rock' in a family with many illnesses, and continues to deal with these challenges every day. She's a fighter.

Her work ethic is like that from a previous generation. She's up early, works late, and is always at every track meet or ball game. You have to respect any woman who is willing 'milk cows' before and after work or school. She's a worker.

There are those people in life you 'get to' work with from time to time that make 'work'... fun. They seldom complain, they do more than their share, and before you know it – they're like family. The only draw-back is that: 'time flies when you're having fun'. Kids grow up, plans change, and 'life happens'.

We're gong to miss you Shawna. We wish you the best of everything!

- KwC



On this occasion, please permit me to share a very personal note and 'thank you'. Like most any other enterprise, it's the people behind the scenes here at MWC who make things work and seldom get the credit. For over ten years, a very special person has designed the ads, laid out the copy, and spawned many of the ideas that have made up this publication. What she lacks in stature, she has always made up for in personality, high standards, and professionalism. She has always had a colorful combination of 'spunk', 'grit' and 'class'. I'm twice her size, but believe me... I would never 'mess with' her. She'd kick my butt.

Surging Futures Spurs Talk Of Corn Above \$7.50/Bushel

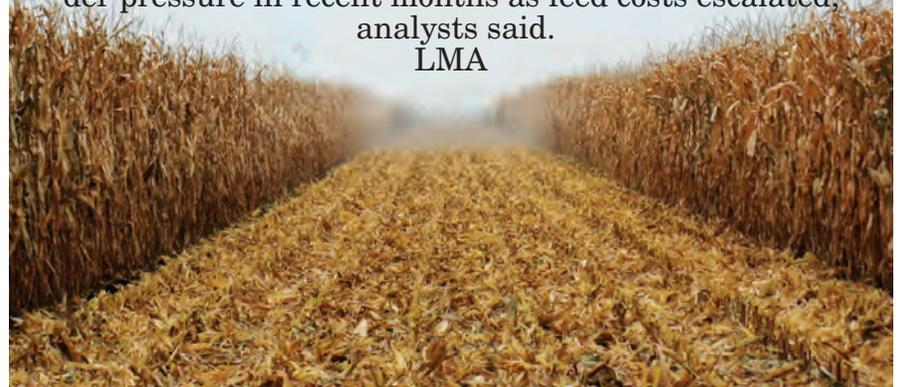
Livestock producers watched nervously as corn futures last week at the Chicago Board of Trade jumped to another two-year high. Shrinking harvest prospects and tighter supplies spurred broker talk of prices heading towards records above \$7.50/bushel.

CBT broker Matt Maloney noted that the weaker-than-expected corn harvest may cut average yields as low as 151 bushels an acre. Last Friday, USDA cut its yield estimate 4.1 percent from a previous estimate, to 155.8 bushels an acre – and Maloney said most people he talks to expects that yield number to get smaller. As for corn prices, "we're going to \$7.50," possibly by mid-November, he said. "I don't see what's going to stop it."

At the market's close, December corn futures jumped 32 cents to \$5.60 ¼ a bushel, the highest price for a closest-to-expiration contract since September 2008.

Soaring corn prices are increasingly troublesome for beef and pork producers, whose margins have already come under pressure in recent months as feed costs escalated, analysts said.

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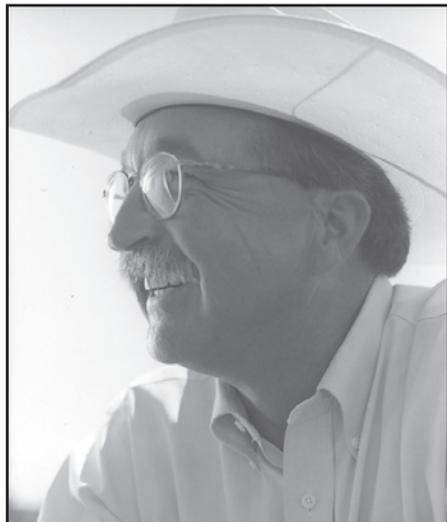
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There is a debate raging all across the country; that debate is whether or not to allow the sale of raw milk for human consumption. Those opposed to this type of transaction claim that raw milk contains all sorts of bad things that will lead to a multitude of sick people and possibly their deaths. The proponents of legalizing the sale of raw milk argue that fresh, raw milk is healthier than pasteurized milk and the bacteria that is naturally present in that milk is actually good for people's digestive systems and would result in a healthier population. Honestly, I don't know

which side is correct, but what I do know is....

I was raised on fresh, raw, cow's milk; as soon as I was weaned from my mother, I drank milk straight out of a Jersey cow at least three times per day until I left for college at age 18—and I loved it (OK, it was strained, filtered, and refrigerated first). In my mind, there wasn't anything better than a cold glass of milk with those silken threads of Jersey

cream running throughout the mixture. In the Crownover home, cornbread and milk was the closest thing to a delicacy that we could afford. About the only time I didn't particularly care for it was in the early spring, when the wild onions were sprouting in the pastures and the dairy cows would lap up those first sprigs as if they were cow candy. During those times, the milk tasted like an oddly seasoned mixture that

had just been pureed with onion.

I carried my lunch for the first few years attending the one-room schoolhouse, but I always had a pint jar, and later an insulated thermos, containing fresh milk. The school eventually obtained a refrigerator and had half-pints of pasteurized milk delivered weekly at a nominal cost of three cents per carton, but the only way I

Continued on Page 12

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HIGHER FEED PRICES & FEWER CATTLE

By Ron Plain, Extension Economist, UMC



The yearly average fed cattle price appears certain to break the 2008 record this year and in all likelihood it will be higher again in 2011. Yet, the U.S. cattle herd keeps shrinking. The 2009 U.S. calf crop was the smallest since 1950 and this year's calf crop is smaller still. The U.S. calf crop has been smaller than the year before for each of the last 15 years and the trend does not appear ready to stop. A larger share of the January 1 inventory of beef cows was sent to slaughter during the first nine months of 2010 than for any year in over a decade. A smaller cow herd will mean a smaller calf crop in 2011 and further reduction in cattle slaughter in 2012 and 2013.

There are a number of reasons for the shrinking cattle herd, but a big one is simply a lack of feed. This year's corn harvest is forecast to total 12.664 billion bushels, the third largest ever. But that is not enough corn. Corn use in the coming year is expected to exceed production by 816 million bushels which will deplete stocks and drive up prices. Compared to 12 years ago, annual corn usage has increased by 4.182 billion bushels. Of the increase in usage, 4.174 billion bushels, or 99.8%, is going into ethanol production and 0.008 billion bushels, or 0.2%, is going to all other uses, including livestock feed. USDA estimates feed and residual usage of the 2010 corn crop will be 5.4 billion bushels. For the 1998 corn crop, feed usage and residual was 5.468 billion bushels. If the feed supply does not expand, the livestock industry cannot grow.

USDA latest forecast is that farmers will sell the 2010 corn crop for an average price of \$5.00 per bushel. The 1998 corn crop sold for an average price of \$1.94/bushel. Higher feed costs are squeezing the cattle industry.

Feeder cattle prices are driven by the expected price of fed cattle and the price of feed. A penny increase in the expected price per pound of a 1300 pound slaughter steer increases the potential bid

price for cattle going into feedlots by \$13 per head. A penny increase in the price of a bushel of corn reduces the potential bid price of cattle going into feedlots by roughly 60 cents per head. USDA is forecasting corn prices during the 2010-11 marketing year will be \$1.45 per bushel higher than the year before. That implies an \$87 per head drop in feeder cattle values. Fed cattle prices will need to increase by 6.7 cents per pound to offset the expected increase in feed cost.

In addition to a smaller cattle supply next year, there is reason to expect stronger beef demand

should the economy improve. The U.S. dollar is losing value relative to many foreign currencies which is good news for U.S. exports. At the start of October, it only required 83.3 yen to buy a U.S. dollar, the fewest for any date since May 1995. Fewer yen per dollar means U.S. products will cost less for the Japanese to import, which should boost their purchases from us.

It currently looks like 2011 slaughter steer prices will be above \$1 per pound on a live weight basis during a good portion of the year. The normal seasonal pattern is for fed cattle prices to peak close to the start of spring then trend lower until mid summer before rebounding in the fall. If the economy improves, the 2011 high in fed cattle prices is likely to

come next fall.

Because of high feed prices, 7 weight steers may average no higher than \$110/cwt in 2011. The yearly high price for yearlings may well occur in late summer or early fall, especially if the 2011 corn harvest is huge and pushes down corn prices. Anything short of a record corn crop in 2011 is not likely to bring much relief to feed costs.

Since the cost of gain on pasture is likely to be much lower than the cost of feed yard gain, calves should stay on pasture longer and be heavier when placed on feed. Calf prices typically peak with spring pasture growth. Steer calf prices should average above \$120/cwt next spring.



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Live Cattle: The “supply” has been a little surprising lately. Supplies are a concern as slaughter has been averaging 3% higher than last year in the past four weeks. It’s been wonderful to have had great exports and low imports, but whenever supplies get burdensome, it certainly takes the bullish edge off. I suppose I’m in a “holding pattern” here waiting for the US consumer. Hopefully we’ll start to see some of these signs by the end of the year. Keep attention focused on the stock market, as it tends to be a “psychological” support factor. If you’ve wondered what has happened to cash fat cattle prices...well, we’ve just been through six straight weeks of declines in wholesale beef prices. However, we’re starting to finally see a recovery. I’m thinking that last week’s \$95.00 fats will put the bottom in this market, that coupled with the outrageous corn market.

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Feeder Cattle: Be sure to close your eyes whenever you sell your calves. You just don’t want to see this ugly of a girl coming at you. This market just flat sucks. The corn fiasco pricing system has turned this feeder issue into a quagmire. I checked with “ol Webster” on the spelling of “quagmire” and interestingly enough the definition told all about the feeder market. It said, “difficult, precarious, or (now get this)...entrapping position”. Wow, couldn’t have said it better myself. Dang, that’s for sure! I had all my calves weaned and lookin’ good for the buyer yesterday. He did a wonderful job of convincing me that I was “trapped” with these wonderful worthless black baldies. ‘Wouldn’t you know it, this pasture didn’t have a stick or rock or nothin’ for me to pick up and throw at him. Like they say, it’s hard to “soar like an eagle whenever you have to work with turkeys”. True story. ‘Nuff said.

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What Does this Report Mean to Me?

Q #1

Are you still sticking to your story that fats will be \$105.00 by April 2011?

Answer: Yep.....but it ain’t gonna be easy. This unemployment thing has got to get better or all the housewives in the city are NOT going to have the money to buy our beef. It’s simple economics 101...if you don’t have the money... you aren’t going to buy it. The last I heard, there aren’t any grocery stores selling on credit.

Q #2

Looks to me like you’ve been totally wrong with your predictions for this feeder market. What’s the deal?

Answer: Listen buster, if your crystal ball is any better than mine; just roll that thing out here. My old crystal ball admittedly is held together with baling wire and duct tape and it’s got some age on her. But this is the old girl that brought me to this dance and I’m sticking with her. Besides, I would have been right if the corn market hadn’t gone ballistic.



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Fall Fertility Checklist

By Doug Beegle, Soil Fertility, Penn State Extension

Soil Test:

Every field should be sampled once every 3 years. As soon as the crops are harvested try to get out and get soil samples collected from the fields scheduled for soil sampling this year before the weather turns bad. Follow the sampling directions from the lab and take a consistent representative sample.

- * Fall is the best time to soil test. It is important to sample at the same time each year.
- * First priority should be hay fields that are due for sampling. Sample now so that if they need nutrients you can get them on this fall.
- * The second priority would be fields that are going to be rotated to alfalfa within the

next year. Sample now so that if they need lime you can get that on this fall.

- * Some people have questioned soil test recommendations at higher yields. It is important to indicate the expected yield on the soil test information sheet so that recommendations are adjusted appropriately for higher

yields.

Lime: Liming is something that you have to do regularly. Our soils are constantly becoming more acid. A typical N application to corn creates the equivalent of about 500 lb of lime requirement each year and that is just one of the many factors that are constantly lowering soil pH.

- * Base lime rates on soil test

results.

- * Adjust liming rates based on limestone quality.
- * Fall is an excellent time to lime. This gives the lime time to react and raise the pH before the next growing season.
- * Starting in the fall will give you time to schedule lime applications for when the soils are fit for lime spreaders,

continued on page 26

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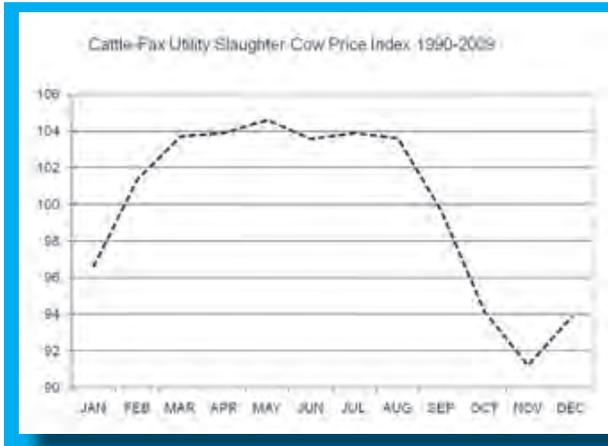
"I think you can also approach it from the demand side as well. The thought there is that over time, a higher percentage of the beef a consumer is consuming is in the form of trimmings or hamburger. So that's helping support the cull market as well."

According to industry figures, cull cows and bulls represent between 10 to 20 percent of a cow-calf operation's yearly revenue. This figure may increase as more producers haul culls off to the market this year.

"I think it's a good possibility that percentage would be higher than 15 percent, particularly as these values are a little higher, and with the higher values, farmers may cull a little heavier. So it may approach or exceed 20 percent," Prevatt said.

"This year is probably going to be a little bit higher than 15 percent just because the cull market has advanced more than the calf market has percentage-wise," Good said. "Another way to look at it, is we are still liquidating on the beef cow side and beef cow slaughter is higher year-to-date, even though we had a smaller cowherd coming in. We're killing more, so that's more dollars, and percentage is higher. But longer term, I think it's safe to say that could trend a little higher because of the increased demand for hamburger and trimmings that will keep that cow price, over time, pretty stout."

Though the current market is robust for cull cattle, producers will probably see some weakness due to the seasonal price trend of culls as they come to market later this fall, both Prevatt and Good note.



"We typically see some weakness in the market during that October and November time period because that's when most people make fall culling decisions and a large volume of animals will come to market at that time," Prevatt said.

"Your peak cull market is typically spring/early summer. It holds together through mid-summer, and by the time you get into September and October, then you start to see it tail away," Good said. "Typically, your low is November, and that coincides with your bigger runs of your spring-born calves after they're weaned and going into the fall."

"It's extremely strong seasonal that you want to avoid late October to December if you can hold those cows over, upgrade them, get some flesh on them. It typically pays good dividends, especially if you can hold them into February, March. If you can get them to February verses January, that's usually worth another couple hundred dollars per hundredweight."

Despite the seasonal shift in market prices for culls in the fall, producers could still reap finan-

cial benefits this year by selling culls earlier if they choose not to incur the additional expense for feeding the animals through the winter and holding them over and selling in the spring.

"I don't expect the weakness to be as pronounced as we typically see," Prevatt said. "We'll generally see the market peak for us in Alabama in the mid-June to mid-July time period. It will generally be about 10 to 14 percent higher than what the October time period is."

"This year, I don't expect to see that kind of decline in cull cow prices from the July time period. I think there are a couple of good reasons for that: 1) beef tonnage, and 2) the export situation, where the weakness of the dollar is limiting the amount of imports that we're pulling into the country. That does have an impact as well."

While taking advantage of healthy cull prices, producers need to be mindful of higher replacement costs they might incur.

"If you think about the long-term trend from prices, the longer-term trend is higher because of the liquidation we've gone through," Good said. "This will be the 13th out of the last 15 years that we've liquidated on the beef cow side. That's going to equate to higher prices moving forward, and replacement costs will be higher, too."

Even though producers may

have to fork out a few extra dollars to bring in quality genetics as replacements for cull animals they've marketed, it will benefit them in the long term as the cattle market climate looks positive for the next couple of years.

Randy Blach, CEO of CattleFax, told producers attending this year's Texas A&M Beef Cattle Short Course that he sees several years of potential profitability ahead.

"It's a pretty optimistic picture," Blach said.

Production costs are expected to "remain in check," Blach noted, but beef demand growth might be slow as the overall economy continues to recover.

"But we're starting to see some stability (with the economy) and that's the first thing we need to see," he said.

"Not only in the general economy, but also in the cattle business, there's a great deal of uncertainty about what lies ahead and how strong the economy is and how long we'll have these good prices," Prevatt said. "I'm very optimistic about the cattle business during the next three to five years. I think as the economy recovers, you're going to see the market prices improve in all sectors of the cattle business, primarily because we're fundamentally so strong. Our inventories have declined at the right time."

The above chart shows the average utility cow prices over the last 20 years to help demonstrate seasonality of prices.

Courtesy of CattleFax



YOU'RE LOSING *continued from page 3*

Trust is so precious because it takes time to build, and it's as fragile as spun glass. It's based on experience and relationships. The foundation involves honesty—people are more likely to trust someone who shoots straight, someone who is sincere and truthful. Trust also depends on competency or the person's level of skill and expertise. Finally, trust depends on whether the person is a responsible actor—that he or she is committed to doing the right thing day in and day out.

Today, from a societal view, trust is in short supply whether you're talking about government, employers, corporations or, yes, the food system.

Recently, the Center for Food Integrity wrapped up its annual Consumer Trust Research, which it has conducted since 2006. Among the goals is to measure consumer attitudes toward the U.S. food system, the people involved and food related is-

sues. Each survey builds on the previous one, which allows comparisons and the ability to track changes and identify challenges facing food system stakeholders.

Specific to this year's survey, it offers guidance on how food producers can further build trust with consumers and other opinion leaders.

Over the years, the CFI survey has shown a continuous deterioration in consumers' trust regarding farmers and ranchers. They see you differently today, partly because they don't see you at all, and partly because others paint a stronger picture of you. The most dominant of the "others" is the Humane Society of the United States.

In fact, this year's CFI research shows that consumers are twice as likely to believe HSUS—or even People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals—than they are farm organizations and most farmers regarding humane

treatment of farm animals.

HSUS and PETA lead the list this year, followed by farm animal veterinarians (which traditionally rank high), USDA and university experts, state and national farm groups and "small" farmers (although there's no definition of small). Large-scale farm animal producers ranked last in terms of animal welfare credibility. A quick word about the "small" versus "large-scale" farm rankings here—neither scored terribly well, and don't think your farm or ranch falls outside of the "large-scale" label, that consumer view is as much about the way you raise and market food-animals as it is the size of your operation.

"The research shows, the closer you are to a profit motivation, the lower your credibility," notes Charlie Arnot, CFI's chief executive officer. "Information from a non-governmental organization was found to be significantly more credible than an associa-

tion that represents the livestock industry."

Bottom line, consumers see you as a business, and the perception is profit takes priority. While consumers wouldn't do their jobs for free, they don't like the idea of you having the same goals. The harsh reality is corporations like BP and AIG have made it harder for consumers to trust "businesses."

CFI's research also found that consumers favor more laws to ensure the humane treatment of farm animals in their state. Again, today's experience and climate suggests that you can't trust businesses to do what's right, so you need to enforce expectations.

The survey provides solid insight into the minds of your consumers as well as future trends, challenges and opportunities for everyone involved in today's food system.



BEEF COW LONGEVITY

By Jane Parish – Extension Beef Cattle Specialist, MSU

The focus of cow longevity discussions is often on dairy cattle. However, to a beef cow calf operator, cow longevity is a major factor affecting costs and thereby profitability. Two definitions for longevity are “the length or duration of life” and “length of service, tenure, etc.; seniority”. Considering that cows must not just survive many years but also must be productive in later years to be exempt from culling, the latter definition is the most relevant view of cow longevity to cattle operations.

Productive longevity is the age at which a cow dies or is culled from the herd due to her presumed inability to continue as a productive brood cow and dam. Unlike cows that die, cows that are culled have a salvage value. This salvage value increases with improved cow condition and health. Therefore, it is important to recognize signs that productive longevity is nearing an end and to market cows in a timely manner before salvage losses occur. The old saying, “just one more calf” illustrates that some producers push their luck when trying to get as many productive years out of a beef female as possible. Beef Quality Assurance guidelines promote timely marketing of market cows due to their role as an important food source and also from an animal welfare standpoint.

Greater longevity has its benefits. It allows producers to retain

fewer replacement heifers and lowers overall replacement costs. When fewer replacement heifers are needed, the operation can be more selective when deciding which heifers to keep. Herds containing a larger proportion of mature cows usually have a higher percentage of calf crop weaned, wean heavier calves, and have lower total energy requirements. Cow maintenance costs are also spread out over more calves. Increased longevity can both reduce production costs and increase annual pounds of marketable calf per cow. For purebred cattle breeders, increased longevity allows greater selection intensity for other impor-



tant traits. Disadvantages of greater longevity are that it increases generation interval and thus potentially reduces genetic gain per year by less aggressively replacing “old” genetics with improved “new” genetics.

It is not uncommon for breeding cattle to live well into their teens. Some producers even brag about

having cows in their herds that are “old enough to vote”. However, despite some cows reaching this advanced age and remaining in production, many more cows typically leave the herd at much younger ages. One large Florida ranch dataset showed consistent rebreeding performance in its cows through about 8 years of age. Reproductive performance consistently began to decline at 10 years of age and dropped even more steeply at 12 years of age. Some research suggests that maximum longevity for optimum economic returns is within the range of 8 to 11 years for commercial cow-calf operations.

continued on page 22

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LIFE IS SIMPLE

continued from page 5

could stand to drink it was if it was chocolate flavored. I just couldn't stand the taste of pasteurized white milk because I thought it tasted 'funny.' I kept that attitude until I left for college.

Eating at the college cafeteria three times per day, I finally adapted to the 'city taste' of white milk. I even evolved to the point that pasteurized milk became the 'normal' taste and my more infrequent visits home (especially during the onion months of spring) found me thinking that Mom's raw milk was now the variety that tasted a little "funny".

As I started my own family, without a milk cow, I never really thought about the raw milk controversy. At home, we would go through about two gallons of pasteurized milk every week. When we would visit Mom and Dad at their farm, I could detect that my wife and sons were surprised when they tasted that first drink of fresh milk, but after explanation, they enjoyed it. And, as far as I know, no one in our family ever became ill because of drinking fresh, raw milk.

I know there are strong and powerful feelings on both sides of this issue. Don't expect me to take sides. I did notice, however, on a recent trip to Ireland, that consumers there have the choice of selecting either raw milk or pasteurized milk from the same dairy cooler. Of course, in a country that has one pub for every 300 citizens, any bacteria you might find in raw milk wouldn't stand a chance of living very long in your stomach anyway.

Recently, I was invited to be the after-dinner speaker at a meeting of dairy producers. I had already given what I thought was an educational, motivational, and humorous talk when the debate erupted about which side the dairymen would take regarding the issue of raw milk sales. One of the individuals who was strongly opposed to the sale of raw milk, asked if anyone there had been raised with raw milk as their only source of liquid milk. Sheepishly, I raised my hand and I was surprised to see that I was the only one. "There," the speaker emphasized, "is all the proof you need. Not only is it unhealthy, but one could even surmise that it leads to improper brain development."



USDA RECIPE CONTEST

continued from page 3

protein diet. The guidelines are updated every five years. The final report is slated to be released later this year.

"First off, USDA's Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee's recommendation for a plant-based diet causes consumers to wrongly assume that they are eating too much meat. We are not eating too much meat," Butts says.

"The fact is plants already make up 70% of our diets. On average, Americans are consuming about 2.3 oz. of red meat/day, well within 2005 Di-

etary Guidelines for Americans. By excluding meat from its healthy kids recipe contest, USDA continues to add to the misconception that meat is over consumed in the U.S."

Cattle producers need to encourage their elected lawmakers to ask USDA to use science and facts when finalizing the dietary guidelines, she says. Lean beef needs to be incorporated as part of the solution to curbing obesity and promoting a healthy lifestyle for children and adults.

Butts encourages grassroots consumers and producers to submit recipes to USDA show-

casing how lean beef complements vegetables and fruits. "USDA never specified that they won't accept meat recipes but failed to include a specific category for the protein," she says. "We have plenty of well-balanced recipes that include beef, whole grains, fruits and vegetables. We encourage our members to step up and show beef working in a healthy diet."

For more on the recipe challenge, visit "<http://www.recipesforkidschallenge.com/>" www.recipesforkidschallenge.com/.

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FALL TIMELY TIPS

By Dr. Roy Burris, University of Kentucky Beef Specialist

Spring-calving herds

- Wean calves before cows lose body condition.
- Schedule a pregnancy examination of cows if not done previously. Winter feeding costs can be minimized by eliminating open cows prior to winterfeeding.
- Obtain weaning weights of your calves and enter this in a record keeping program. Keep good records and treat your cow-calf operation like a business.
- If you have already done a preweaning working, revaccinate (booster) calves as needed. Treat calves for internal and external parasites. If you vaccinate calves yourself, be sure to handle and administer vaccines properly.
- Weaning is the time to do your first round of culling and selecting breeding stock. You can eliminate obviously inferior calves, especially those with wild or nervous dispositions. Consider the number of heifers that you will need to save for your cow herd. Bulls which are old, unsound, roguish, etc. can be culled now. It is not too early to begin thinking about replacements now.
- Evaluate the body condition of your cows and improve their condition prior to winter.

Fall-calving herds

- The calving season should be in full swing for fall calvers. Check cows frequently. Identify calves that should be castrated and implanted.
- Obtain yearling measurements (weight, hip height, scrotal circumference, etc.) on replacement animals—especially for registered ones. The largest measurements for weight, height and pelvic areas aren't what you are looking for. In most cases, you are more concerned with minimums, like eliminating heifers with very small pelvic areas so that you minimize their likelihood of calving difficulty. Or, you might even want to eliminate some animals when it appears that their size and frame is too large to fit your program and goals.
- It is time to get everything ready for the fall-breeding season, too. Line-up semen, supplies, etc. now and get your bulls ready to go (don't forget their breeding soundness evaluation).
- Put fall-calving cows on accumulated pasture (if you have any) before the breeding season.

Stockers

- Manage to keep newly weaned and/or purchased calves healthy. Calves should be penned in a small lot with adequate feed, water and shade to reduce stress. Careful handling and comfortable, uncrowded conditions can decrease stress.
- If you are purchasing weaned/stressed calves, have your receiving/feeding program in place. Feed a stress ration that contains at least 13% protein and is fairly energy dense.
- When newly-weaned calves are purchased in the fall, sickness and death loss can be a big problem. Work with your veterinarian on a health and receiving program. Consider purchasing CPH-45 feeder calves that are preweaned, vaccinated, bunk-adjusted and treated for parasites.
- Watch calves closely for a few weeks after their arrival. Have a treatment program ready for any health problems. Early recognition of sick cattle improves their chance of recovery. Watch for drooped ears, hollow appearance, reluctance to rise, stiff gait,

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an emotional appeal. Vegetarians, who also tend to hate animal agriculture, love to tell their meat-eating counterparts to practice avoidance for religious, ethical or personal health reasons. They disparage the competition to make their idea look better. How many other promotional messages, political campaigns excluded, spend more time bashing the opponent than explaining their own benefits?

Beef doesn't play that game, and for good reason. It's totally unnecessary. When checkoff dollars are used to promote beef, the message is flavor, nutrition and convenience, not how terrible broccoli tastes.

Sure, we could run radio commercials with Matthew McConaughey proudly stating a three-ounce serving of lean beef provides the same amount of protein as 1 1/2 cups of disgusting legumes, with only half the calories. The problem with that idea is legumes aren't even in the same league as beef tenderloin! Consumers, particularly women, would rather hear Matthew the movie stud say, "You gotta love a filet mignon. A simple statement of succulence. Just a straightforward steak, so tender your taste

buds won't believe it's lean. But don't be put off by a little French, because mignon's just fancy talk for mouthwatering. That's the filet. One of 29 lean cuts that make beef one powerful protein. Learn to love them all. Beef. It's what's for dinner." Those ads sell, baby.

The latest veggie attempt to make spinach look good at the expense of sirloin is a relatively new campaign called Meatless Monday, sponsored by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Organizers openly state on the web site the goal is "to help reduce meat consumption 15% in order to improve personal health and the health of our planet." Stranger Yoko Ono and extreme animal rightist Paul McCartney are among the supporters. The idea is to have one meatless day a week, in this case Monday.

One of the classic industry responses to this situation came from American Meat Institute Vice President of Public Affairs Janet Riley. During an interview with National Public Radio on the Meatless Monday concept, she pointed out it is not about health because meat is the one food group eaten in the proper

quantity, according to federal consumption data. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend 5 oz. to 7 oz. from the meat and beans group per day. Men actually consume an average of 6.9 oz. daily, while women eat an average of 4.4 oz. per day. Riley said this proves people are not over-consuming meat; they are under-consuming vegetables, fruits and whole grains, and dramatically over-consuming discretionary fats and sugars. Riley rightfully concluded if the Johns Hopkins "experts" were truly concerned about people's health, they would promote Vegetable Tuesday or Whole Grains Wednesday. She suspects this movement is coming from people who care more about animal rights than human nutrition.

You'll probably hear more

about Meatless Monday as the animal activist mouthpiece continues its crusade to improve upon the low, single-digit percentage of Americans who claim they don't eat meat. If the Great American Meatout, observed annually in March, is any indication of how these activist-coined ideas are received by the general public, Meatless Monday could backfire. Since the Meat-out began 25 years ago, total meat consumption in this country actually has increased about 10%. Keep up the good work, my veggie foes.

Todd Domer is vice president of communications for the Kansas Livestock Association.

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MORE IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER WHEN SUPPLEMENTING THE COW HERD

By Dr. Dan Dhuyvetter, Ridley Block Operations

Producers are faced with many choices to best manage their cow herd while maintaining a profitable operation that provides for their family year after year. Nutritional supplements are just one area where critical decisions can impact both the production, or output side of the equation, as well as costs or inputs for maintaining the herd.

Most everyone will agree that matching animal production expectations with available forage base resources will usually provide the most efficient outcome possible. We also realize that most biological systems, including beef cow-calf production, depend on factors that affect forage production; and there is environmental variability that impacts our forage growing conditions as well as cow nutrient demands. Things like heat, cold, wind, rain, snow, drought, etc.

One way to help take out the variability that mother nature gives us, and provide some con-

sistency back into your nutritional program, is to offer supplementation to your forages. As you evaluate supplemental inputs you should consider an old economic principle that can help manage costs and still achieve your desired production demands. The economic principle is called the Law of Diminishing Returns.

The Law of Diminishing Returns simply says that as you increase the amount of an input (amount of supplement fed) the response (cow-calf perfor-

mance) decreases or diminishes with increasing levels. You can visualize how this works in the graph on page 16.

In Figure 1 you can see that as more and more supplement is fed, the amount of response decreases exponentially. In other words, the first pound of supplement fed packs a greater response per pound than the last pound of supplement fed.

Why is this Diminishing Returns principal important to beef cow-calf producers? By looking closely in Figure 1, and focusing on supplemental nutrition, we really want to make sure we have those first incre-

mental nutrients covered as that is where the most "bang for the buck" occurs. When feeding at higher levels one should ask, "Are these higher feeding levels needed for us to reach our production and economic goals for our cow-calf operation?" Put another way, the return on investment is higher at the beginning of the supplemental input curve and your returns are much greater for every \$1 invested at this level, rather than further up where the curve starts to level off.

Cow-calf producers generally have been in the business for

continued on page 16



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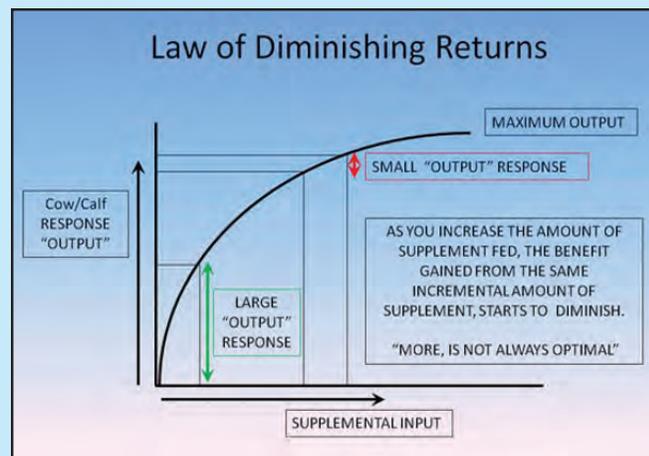
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Source: Dr. Dan Dhuyvetter, Ridley Block Operations



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FALL-TIMELY TIPS

continued from page 13

coughing and dull or sunken eyes. A good "receiving" program is essential to profitability.

General Reminders

- Remove fly-control eartags from all animals, dispose of according to instructions on package. Treat for grubs/lice.
- Test hay quality and make inventory of hay supplies and needs. Make adjustments now - buy feed before you run out in the winter.
- Avoid prussic acid poisoning which can happen when frost

ruptures the plant cells in sorghums, sorghum-sudan hybrids, sudangrass and johnsongrass releasing prussic (hydrocyanic) acid. Fields can be grazed after the plants have dried up after a frost. New growth that occurs in stalk fields is potentially dangerous whether frosted or not.

- Take soil samples for soil analysis to determine pasture fertility needs. Apply phosphate, potash and lime accordingly.
- Do not harvest or graze alfalfa now in order for it to replenish root reserves.

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GOOD GRAZING MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT TO PRODUCTIVITY

By: Holly T. Boland, Assistant Research & Extension Professor, MS State



Practicing good grazing management strategies can be very beneficial to a stocker operation. Pastureland that has been managed appropriately will be more productive for a longer period of time, have higher forage quality, and forage waste will be reduced.

Stocking rate is one of the most important management decisions you can make. It will influence the total amount of animal product your operation is able to produce. Stocking rate impacts the persistence and productivity of forages in your pastures. There are several questions to ask yourself to help determine what your optimum stocking rate will be.

What level of forage production do you have? Improved pastures with adequate fertilization will provide high forage production and create a scenario in which stocking rates can be increased to take advantage of high forage availability. When stocking rates are low, forage availability and animal productivity are initially high. However, pasture quality will eventually decline at low stocking rates because there is not enough grazing pressure to prevent forages from accumulating stems and dead leaves. Animal intake will begin to decrease along with performance. Underutilizing forages with low stocking rates is not economical. Less forage is available per animal as stocking rates are increased but forage will be better utilized and animal output per acre will go up. However, care should be taken not to allow overgrazing of pastures. A minimum forage height (which varies depending on the forage species) must be maintained to prevent the energy reserves of the forage from being depleted. The result is weaker plants and potentially loss of the stand. A decrease in the overall forage production will ultimately decrease animal production.

How accessible is your forage? If areas of shade and water are isolated in your pastures this can lead to those areas being overgrazed while others go underutilized. Portable shade structures and moving mineral or supplement feeders around to different locations within your pastures will help improve pasture utilization. Rotational stocking will also help in this situation and will be discussed later on.

What forages are in the pasture and what is their nutritive value? Cattle are selective grazers and by doing so can improve their own diet. They choose green leaves over dead leaves, and leaves over stems which are comparatively the more nutritious parts of the plant. In many cases cattle show a partial preference for legumes (such as clovers) over grasses. If your forage quality is high and forage availability is adequate then this selectivity is not a concern. Stocking rate can be used as a tool to change the composition of

the pasture itself. Heavy stocking for example will favor certain forages over others. Pasture management including fertilization and clipping dead stems can improve overall pasture nutritive value. Forage testing can provide more detailed information on the nutritive value of forages in your pastures. Knowing what plant species are in your pastures will also help you to better gauge seasonal variations in your forage production. As forage production fluctuates, so should stocking rates. Stocking

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SHORTHORN SCORES WELL ON DOCILITY

Shorthorn has long been noted as a breed to make your cowherd more docile. This year, Shorthorn cattle placed on feed in the Great State Feedout (GSF) in Iowa had the opportunity to show the docile nature of Shorthorn cattle. The cattle were disposition scored every time they passed through the processing facility, except on arrival to the feedlot. The Shorthorn cattle scored very well having an average disposition score of 1.8 on 243 head of cattle. Disposition scores of 1 and 2 fall into the calm category and are considered ideal.

Disposition is a moderately heritable trait, so selection over time can improve your herd. Half of the trait comes from the sire and dam. The other part of the equation is that disposition can be influenced by previous management or environmental situations. The cattle in the GSF were scored using the six-point guidelines from the Beef Improvement Federation.

Why should this be important to me? For many producers, disposition is becoming more and more important when selecting genetics to add to their herd. In a recent BEEF magazine survey bull buyers were asked what trait was the most important when selecting a new bull. The most important trait for those cattlemen was disposition. With the average age of cattlemen increasing each year, it makes sense that disposition is becoming more of a convenience trait that is just as important as feet and legs or udder quality in their cowherds.

Obviously, calmer cattle are safer to handle and easier on your facilities at working time, but there are several other advantages for cow-calf producers or someone retaining ownership in the feedlot. Calm cattle gain faster and offer more desirable carcasses. Wild or excitable cattle typically come into a feedlot lighter and weigh less when leaving compared to their calmer contemporaries. Docile cattle are also pulled less for sickness. For the cow-calf producer, calmer cows have shown the ability to breed back faster both artificially and naturally. For all of the above reasons, I think the docility of the breed is definitely one of its best attributes and selling points. I have visited with many commercial producers who like their Shorthorn genetics because it made their cowherds easier to handle and safer for them at calving time. As fall goes into full swing, don't hesitate to cull those crazy ones before they start having a negative effect on your herd.



DOCILITY SCORING GUIDELINES

—from the Beef Improvement Federation

Score Description

- 1 Docile** – Mild disposition. Gentle and easily handled. Stands and moves slowly during processing. Undisturbed, settled, somewhat dull. Does not pull on headgate when in chute. Exits chute calmly.
- 2 Restless** – Quieter than average, but may be stubborn during processing. May try to back out of chute or pull back on headgate. Some flicking of tail. Exits chute promptly.
- 3 Nervous** – Typical temperament is manageable, but nervous and impatient. A moderate amount of struggling, movement and tail flicking. Repeated pushing and pulling on headgate. Exits chute briskly.
- 4 Flighty (Wild)** – Jumpy and out of control, quivers and struggles violently. May bellow and froth at the mouth. Continuous tail flicking. Defecates and urinates during processing. Frantically runs fence line and may jump when penned individually. Exhibits long flight distance and exits chute wildly.
- 5 Aggressive** – May be similar to Score 4, but with added aggressive behavior, fearfulness, extreme agitation, and continuous movement which may include jumping and bellowing while in chute. Exits chute frantically and may exhibit attack behavior when handled alone.
- 6 Very Aggressive** – Extremely aggressive temperament. Thrashes about or attacks wildly when confined in small, tight places. Pronounced attack behavior.

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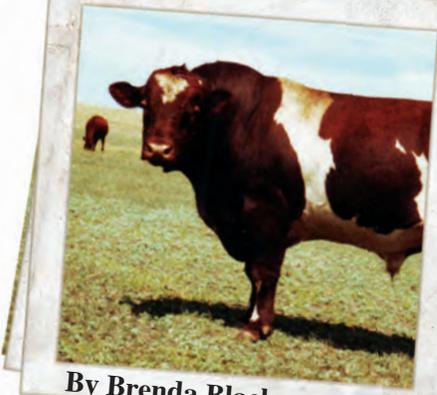
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MAKING SHORTHORNS PART OF THE MIX FROM WESTERN MISSOURI TO WESTERN KANSAS



By Brenda Black

Fescue dominates Missouri Meadows' 100 acres of pasture near Hughesville, MO, where Aaron Schroeder, age 34, raises Santa Gertrudis cattle, his breed of choice for the past 20 years. Buffalo Grass claims the arid, windswept quarter that has been in the Hoyt family since 1885 at Sodhouse Cattle Company. Way out west in Brewster, KS, on this 5th generation ranch, Craig Hoyt, at 50, runs about 80 head of Shorthorn cows. As vast as their differences, these two breeders have one thing in common - Shorthorn. Both are finding ways to make the third British breed part of their commercial operations by incorporating the Durham Red composite.

The American Shorthorn Association (ASA) introduced Durham Red about four years ago to capitalize on breed complementarity and heterosis. The composite consists of no less than 25 percent and up to 75 percent Shorthorn blood with the remainder coming from Red Angus. The parents must be registered with either ASA or

American Red Angus. It is the only 100-percent British composite, a first in the industry, and the ASA thinks the cross will contribute superior advantages.

"Once commercial cattlemen witness the benefits of Shorthorn genetics," says the ASA website, "they'll likely realize more Shorthorn is better...Biologically the two breeds complement each other with Shorthorn adding growth, efficient gain, leanness, and docility while Red Angus contribute low birth weight and fleshing ability. The Red Angus influence will also open many avenues to Angus-based feeder calf, grid-merchandising, and beef programs."

By crossing Santa Gertrudis and Durham Reds, Missouri Meadows hopes to produce animals that will perform with the least amount of management. "I use the Durham Reds with our Star5 program, [a contemporary breeding up program in the Santa Gertrudis breed]," says Schroeder. "I started in the beef business with purely commercial, Heinz 57 cattle. Then I got a Santa Gertrudis cow and started my purebred herd that now includes 50 females. The Star5 program is what got me interested in finding a breed that would complement the Santas, but not get too far from them. I was always taught that to maximize heterosis, you need a three-breed rotation."

As Schroeder looks to the composite as a way to introduce hybrid vigor, he also enjoys the

challenge of experimentation. "My favorite part about raising cattle is the vision that you have in your head and trying to get it to come to fruition. You try to use what you think you know about genetics and try to create this vision through experimenting with breeding or a niche that works."

By day, Schroeder is a middle school history teacher at Smithton. On the farm he's a cattleman with a passion for applied Ag science. When he needs help with the homework, he turns to wife, Amy, who's pursuing a masters in counseling. The city-girl and former science teacher helps her husband analyze beef cattle EPD's. "Amy loves EPD's," says Schroeder. "She breaks down the accuracies, the probabilities; spreads and medians. Her folks think it's wild that she lives in the sticks with me raising cows."

Their hunt for Durham Reds began close to home. "I was looking for a Shorthorn breeder that was not a club calf breeder," Schroeder recalls. "I wanted someone who raised Shorthorn for a commercial operator, because that's what I wanted in my Star5 program."

Just 45 minutes away, Schroeder discovered Meadow Lane Farms and owner Harold Bertz, who has been in the registered Shorthorn cattle business in Central Missouri for over 50 years. After a referral from his sister's in-laws who raise Shorthorns, Schroeder connected with Bertz.

"His program aligned with my program and what I wanted my end result to be," Schroeder says.

In a nutshell, Meadow Lane focuses on raising solid red, polled beef Shorthorn cattle backed by generations of selection for marketable traits. Missouri Meadows like, Meadow Lane, is breeding for traits that improve profit potential. Their first encounter with one another was in the fall of 2006 and their mirrored ranch names were purely coincidence. Today their Shorthorn connection continues on purpose. Bertz helped Schroeder sell a Durham Red bull and more recently the two discussed AI sires and Schroeder considered his replacement options from a pen of Bertz' females.

"The Durham Red breed is in its infancy and I feel like I need a strong line of communication with someone that is established with the Shorthorns," says Schroeder. "It's a way to market cattle and a way to feed off each others' ideas and experiences."

Over a hundred years of experience is what Hoyt falls back on at Sodhouse Cattle Company, utilizing the tried and true habits of great, great grandparents on both sides of his pedigree. "You can't beat mother nature," Hoyt says. "You have to select cattle that fit your environment and make sure they work before you go chasing extremes. Set the parameters of the environment, find cattle that work in that environment. Then adjust

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heavier during periods of rapid pasture growth and harvesting surplus forage will more efficiently utilize the forage than stocking light and allowing pastures to become too mature.

A variety of grazing methods can be used to tailor your own grazing management strategy. Efficiently managing the quality and quantity of forage in your pastures should be the ultimate goal, regardless of which grazing method you use. The decision of which method to use depends largely on the resources you have available.

Each method has advantages and disadvantages which can help you choose which method is right for your operation. Grazing methods are usually broken down into two basic types: continuous or rotational. There are also variations within these two types that differ in their management requirements.

In general, continuous stocking refers to the practice of grazing cattle within one pasture for the entire grazing season. Pastures are subdivided into paddocks in a rotational stocking system and cattle are moved between these paddocks during

the grazing season. This allows a period of rest for the paddock after each grazing period.

Advantages of continuous stocking are lower setup costs and lower management requirements. The animals also have a larger area from which to select their own diet. One disadvantage is that stocking rates must be lower. Other disadvantages are that pastures may become patchy with some areas becoming overgrazed while others are undergrazed potentially allowing encroachment of undesirable plants and decreases in forage quality if not managed appropriately.

Advantages of rotational stocking are that forages have time to rest and regrow after grazing and as a manager you can match periods of grazing to plant growth. Higher stocking rates can be used and forages can be better utilized. Animal dung and urine are more evenly distributed throughout the farm as the animals move between paddocks. Often the overall management of the operation also improves because pastures and animals are being monitored more frequently.

Rotational stocking does have some disadvantages though as more time and labor are required. Subdividing pastures will also mean additional costs for fencing and water. Rotational grazing may not work on every operation depending on the quality of soils and forages or the farm layout itself.

One point to remember is that which grazing method is used is not as important as stocking rate. The key is to think ahead when making plans for

the future and having organization within your operation. Try to assess what resources are going to be available to you throughout the year. Reviewing records from previous years is a good place to start. Plan for the changes in forage production that will occur during the year and think about what management decisions will need to be made when those times come.

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Durham Reds seem to be a good fit for Hoyt and the sparse and shadeless terrain that comprises Sodhouse Cattle Company. Hoyt added Durham Red to his 80 head of purebred Shorthorn three years ago. He started with a bull he bought from Larry Croissant, a Red Angus breeder of the Year. "I've kept back some half blood daughters and used some half blood sons back on the Red crosses and on the Shorthorns," says Hoyt.

Part of his aim is to develop genetically defect free females. Since Hoyt has a few TH carriers in the registered herd, he is trying to "nip it in the bud" by testing and retaining only genetically clean crosses. In fact, all Durham Reds need to be proven TH free by test or pedigree before an official registration certificate is issued.

Hoyt thinks the work and wait will be worth it since he is looking for cattle that won't be bailed under his low-maintenance philosophy where long droughts and bitter winters test the mettle of any breed. "Composites aren't for everybody, but they have a place in the industry," he explains. He thinks the Durham Red cattle will be powerful and a perfect fit due to their hardiness and moderate size. "We live where we get only about 17 inches of rain, so the resources



are limited. The cows have to calve every year, regardless, or we cull."

"I like cattle that grow hard and fast and then stop," he adds. "Sometimes you get bloodlines in breeds and they keep growing and that makes them higher maintenance over ones that hit the growth curve hard and are early maturing."

Size and color matter to Hoyt. "I've been a die hard and never did jump on the black band wagon," says Hoyt, whose father before him had red Shorthorn. Hoyt began his herd with five heifers he bought from Dad. "I haven't bought a female for 15 years," he adds.

While bolstering the female base, Sodhouse has also been building herd sires for the past seven years. In their Shorthorn pen is Sodhouse Little Man. His actual birthweight was 78 pounds. Hoyt says he is siring moderate framed, easy keeping calves with good dispositions. A Durham Red bull, Sodhouse Fort Wallace 596

is 50% Red Angus and 50% Shorthorn. He was the lead bull in the pen of three show at the Kansas Beef Expo in 2007 and Hoyt says he's the kind of useful commercial bull needed in the beef industry.

"We are a pretty plain jane deal," Hoyt says. "We use strict natural selection pressure to sort our cattle and we think these Durham Reds are tailor made for the commercial industry. I think people are finding out that black hides don't necessarily mean profitability and grading ability."

Schroeder agrees and further believes any successful herd has a commercial component. He says: "If you run a pure, straight bred herd, your quality is not going to be the greatest. I believe only elite animals need to be incorpo-

rated into purebred herds. If you register every animal, you are really cheating yourself or your potential customer because you are not being as selective as you need to be. Every breed has flaws and the fastest way to achieve some of the goals for improvement is by introducing animals in order to infuse a little of the best qualities of each of them into a breed without sacrificing its own strengths."

Missouri Meadows and Sodhouse Cattle Company are pioneers when it comes to forging the way for Durham Reds. If things continue as they each hope, the impact of this historic composite may last as long as the sodhouse built by Hoyt's family over a century ago that still sits on Kansas soil.





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Longevity is a convenience trait that is highly variable. Yet it only takes small changes in longevity to greatly impact herd profitability. Many traits influence cow longevity including age at puberty, direct and maternal calving ease, milk production, mature size, ability to store body fat (fleshing ability), ability to endure weather extremes, udder soundness, skeletal soundness, disposition, freedom from genetic defects, and many more characteristics. Physical soundness limits the productive life of a cow as she ages. For example, tooth wear and loss occurs over time and affects a cow's ability to harvest forage, consume feed, and maintain body condition. Fertility, maternal ability, health, and survival of a cow and her calves are the primary determinants of longevity.

Cows are culled from herds for many reasons. Age or bad teeth (57.8% of operations) was the most commonly declared reason for marketing cows followed by pregnancy status (25.6% of operations) as reported in the National Animal Health Monitoring System's Beef '97 study. The percentages of operations culling cows for other reasons were 14.1% for economic reasons such as drought, herd reduction, or market conditions; 11.7% for poor producing calves; 8.2% for other reproductive problems; 6.4% for physical soundness; 6.4% for temperament; 5.8% for udder problems; 4.1% for bad eyes; 1.0% for respira-

tory problems; and 0.3% for digestive problems. Larger operations, in terms of herd size, were less likely to market cows for economic reasons than smaller operations. Calving difficulty, advanced age at first calving, and producing less than one calf per year increase the likelihood of culling.

Valuable data in evaluating cow longevity include records of how long each cow stays in a herd and the reason why each cow leaves a herd. Whole herd reporting (including herd inventory reporting) and reporting reproductive data is important to breed associations tracking longevity for use in genetic predictions. Genetic predictors for longevity include EPDs for stayability. Stayability indicates differences in the percentage of daughters remaining in the herd at 6 years of age. Six years is used because a study showed that cows typically did not repay their development cost until their fifth calf (born to 6-year old cows if calving annually starting at 2 years of age). Genetic lines that produce a greater percentage of females producing to 6 years of age are more likely to also be productive at much older ages and produce more lifetime revenue. Relatively effective selection for stayability is possible due to moderate heritability of this trait.

Breed differences exist in longevity, so replacement rates differ by breed. In one study, cows were culled for different reasons, and

breed influenced culling reason. Another study showed that crossbreeding to Brahman increases longevity of cows for beef producers in the South more so than crossbreeding to Angus, Hereford, or dairy breeds. Within breeds, a key factor in longevity is matching cow mature size and milking level to the production environment. When production resources cannot keep up with the demands of a particular cow size or milking level, rate of culling is likely to increase.

Longevity of crossbred cows is generally greater than that of purebred cows. Crossbred cows typically live longer and are more productive than their purebred counterparts. Maternal heterosis (hybrid vigor) increases longevity by more than

one year. Because of the low heritability of cow longevity and lack of indicators of longevity expressed early in life, implementing crossbreeding systems to take advantage of maternal heterosis becomes even more important to improving longevity of the breeding herd.

To improve cow longevity, keep good reproductive and herd removal records, take advantage of the maternal heterosis of crossbred cows, and use stayability EPDs when available. Decide on the best balance of retaining females in the herd to advanced ages and culling earlier to increase rate of genetic improvement and protect cow salvage value.



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Missouri Livestock Symposium Features Experts On Beef Cattle Feeding, Reproduction And Health

The 2010 Missouri Livestock Symposium, held December 3 & 4, 2010 in Kirksville, MO, will feature internationally recognized speakers on several topics of interest to beef producers. Dr. Bill White of New York will talk about the role that Plum Island and the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory plays in keeping our livestock industry healthy. Beef cattle producer Steve Radakovich of the Radakovich Cattle Company in Earlham, Iowa, will speak on his operation and chasing the profit gene. An expert panel of beef cattle specialists from the University of Missouri will provide the latest information important to beef cattle producers related to feeding, reproduction and genetics. Dr. Bruce Shanks, Lincoln University, will tell you about the top ten cost cutters while still adding value.

According to Garry Mathes, Chair of the 2010 Missouri Livestock Symposium, the beef section of this year's Symposium will provide information that every beef cattle producer will want to hear! "I guarantee that you

will learn something to benefit your operation if you attend this year's Symposium."

Bruce Lane, University of Missouri Extension Livestock Specialist and vice-chair of the Symposium committee, says the Missouri Livestock Symposium is especially proud of the beef section lineup. The information producers will be exposed to will be timely and applicable to their operations. This will be an opportunity to hear from some of the leaders in the beef industry regardless of the size of your operation. "From learning the latest information about how beef breeds stack up in 2010 to timed artificial insemination, from the latest on feed efficiency to how we protect the industry from foreign animal diseases, the Missouri Livestock Symposium committee has coupled industry experts with present day topics sure to be of interest."

There will also be programs on forages, stock dogs, equine, sheep, meat goats and various other interesting topics at this year's Symposium. There will be a free meal on Friday evening, Decem-

ber 3 at 6 p.m. and a free co-sponsored Governor's Style Luncheon on Saturday, December 4. Becky Blackaby ([HYPERLINK "http://www.beckyblackaby.com"](http://www.beckyblackaby.com) www.beckyblackaby.com) will close the program Saturday evening with a concert at 7:30 p.m. Tickets for the concert can be purchased by calling 660-665-9866.

The Missouri Livestock Symposium is free and no pre-registration is required. The Symposium

will be held at the Kirksville Middle School, 1515 S. Cottage Grove and hours are 4-9 p.m., Friday, December 3 and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, December 4, 2010. A list of Trade Show vendors can be found on our Website along with more information about the 2010 Missouri Livestock Symposium at "<http://www.missourilivestock.com>" www.missourilivestock.com or call 660-665-9866 or 660-341-6625.



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COALITION INCLUDING NCBA

continued from page 3

ton, D.C., for the lame-duck session. If nothing is done, the estate tax will revert to 55% on estates exceeding \$1 million in value beginning January 1, 2011.

NCBA President Steve Foglesong said allowing this to happen essentially would represent a death sentence on family-owned farms and ranches. He said this is not a tax only on the wealthy elite, who can afford accountants and estate planners to minimize the tax. The Illinois rancher said small- to medium-sized family businesses without abundant financial resources are those hurt the most.

"Farmers and ranchers are often forced to sell land, equipment or even the en-

tire ranch just to pay off tax liabilities," said Foglesong. "This is money that could otherwise be reinvested to grow the family business and hand it down to future generations."

The ultimate goal of the coalition is a full repeal of the estate tax. However, the groups strongly support the Lincoln-Kyl amendment and H.R. 3905, both of which would increase the exemption level to \$5 million and reduce the rate to 35%. These proposals ensure any relief related to the exemption is tied to inflation and that a stepped-up basis is included.

KLA



ELIMINATING COSTS IS ALWAYS BETTER THAN REDUCING COSTS

By Jim Gerrish, American Grazing Land Services LLC, Idaho

It seems we give too much attention to reducing costs and not nearly enough to eliminating costs. If all you ever do is reduce costs, you will have to make adjustments every time prices increase. However, if you eliminate a cost, you will never have to deal with it again. Kicking the hay habit is a good example. If hay is no longer a part of your operation, it is a cost you no longer have to manage. If you just reduce hay feeding from 120 days to 45 days, then it is still a cost that must be managed.

A lot of producers have trimmed their hay feeding way back from what it used to be - but did they sell their equipment? Often not. They still have it and rather than making 500 tons of hay a year, they only make 150 tons. A lot less operating cost, but no reduction in the overhead cost of owning equipment. The cost per ton of hay is now likely to be even higher than it was before. If the equipment were sold, the overhead cost would be eliminated.

Another downside of keeping the hay equipment is you can easily be tempted to start mak-

ing hay at the drop of a hat. Got a little extra grass this year? Bale it up. Made some extra hay last year? Let's feed a little longer. Pretty soon you're right back in the same rut - enslaved by the hay paradigm.

When and/or if you need hay, purchase it from someone else. When you buy hay, you are also buying fertility. A ton of mixed grass-legume hay contains about 40-50 lb. N, 12-14 lb. phosphate, 40-50 lb. potash, an array of micronutrients - and after consumption leaves 500-1000 lb. of organic matter behind. At today's N-P-K prices, a ton of hay is worth \$30-40 just for those three macronutrients. Add in the calcium, magnesium and micronutrients and the value is around \$50-55/ton. If you can buy hay for anything less than \$55/ton, you're either getting your feed or your fertilizer for free.

We can talk all we want about cost reduction, but the only real step forward comes when we embrace cost elimination.



CULLING WITHOUT THE BELLS AND WHISTLES

By Clay Wright

A railroad claims official once said that trains have done more harm to the genetic quality of America's cow herds than anything else. He said every cow that ever met her doom on a rural track was invariably the best, most productive cow in the plaintiff's herd. Often, the deceased cow was "nursing twins and close to calving again" just before her demise. It makes you wonder how much better our industry would be today if it hadn't been for this accidental culling over the last century and a half. I guess we're still making up for this lost genetic ground in our breeding and selection programs.

Seriously, commercial cow-calf producers often ask about culling protocols for their cow herds. Selection is the process of deciding which animals stay in the herd another year and is based on defined criteria for reproduction, functionality and production within the herd. Culling is simply passing out the pink slips or removing cows that no longer have a place in an operation. Routine criteria vary

from ranch to ranch, depending on producers' goals and objectives, and from year to year, depending on economic factors.

One culling criterion that I consider etched in stone addresses the most important economic trait in a cow herd: reproduction (fertility). Assuming you have given the cow an adequate environment (such as for health, reproduction and nutrition), you should demand that she conceive a calf every 365 days. If she is open at pregnancy check, she should be culled. The only decision to be made is when to sell her.

Then there are those cows that are pregnant, but failed to raise a calf to weaning. Most of the time, these calves die within 14 days of birth. From a long-term, hard-nosed production perspective, this loss usually reflects a lack of mothering ability, and these cows should be removed. At certain points in the cattle cycle, agricultural economists may suggest that you relax this criterion, especially for those cows that are historically good producers and are bred to calve early in the next calving season. If you do allow any of these cows to stay in the herd, they should

be identified and given only one reprieve. Note: If calf losses are excessive, you should evaluate your management practices for potential problems.

Another culling criterion I consider imperative is poor disposition, a subjective evaluation. For some, a couple of crazy cows just make things more interesting. For my money, a cow not only has to breed on schedule, but also has to act civilly. In any situation, a wild animal can harm the attitude of the herd around her and can hurt herself, other cattle or the working crew. When you have the chance to get her in a trailer, ship her.

At culling time, cows should be examined for functionality. As a rule of thumb, if a physical problem interferes with a cow's production potential, she should be culled. Permanent lameness, bad udders, so-called hardware disease and blindness are just a few of these problems. Cow age is in this category. Badly worn or missing teeth can reduce a cow's production and even her ability to survive. Longevity in a cow herd is a desirable trait, but consider culling a cow while she still has acceptable salvage value.

Besides culling for reproduction and functionality, many operations have set production criteria for their cows. The most common culling criterion in these herds is based on the weaning weight of the calves. Weaning weight is a measure of mothering ability of the cow and growth potential of the calf. Actual weaning weights for all calves can be standardized to 205 days of age and adjusted for the age of the dam. The adjusted 205-day weight of each calf is compared with the average weight of its sex and contemporary group. This ratio yields a relative comparison of production between cows for that calf crop. Using adjusted 205s, a producer can identify cows with high, average and low production capability, and make accurate culling decisions on cow performance.

Whether you call it culling or selection, the result should be the same. The cows that meet your criteria get to stay. Those that don't, go to town.

And whatever you do, keep the railroad right-of-way fences mended.

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FALL FERTILITY CHECKLIST

continued from page 9

thus there will be less potential for compaction.

* Regular liming is especially important for no-till systems. Never let the pH in no-till systems get too low. It is easy to maintain pH but very difficult to correct a low pH in no-till.

Fertilize Hay Fields: Having adequate fertility, especially potassium (K) going into the winter is critical for good forage stand survival.

* Soil sample early so you have time to make phosphorus (P) and K applications this fall.

* Any field testing low in K should have at least some of the recommended fertilizer applied in the fall to help with winter survival. Splitting high recommendations, some in the fall and some after first cutting will improve nutrient uptake efficiency.



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ARE YOU ON OFFENSE OR DEFENSE?

By Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension

The U.S. beef cow herd has shrunk for 12 of the last 14 years for a variety of reasons. The late 1990s was normal cyclical liquidation extended by drought into the mid 2000s. Two years of cyclical expansion in 2004 and 2005 was truncated by more recent economic shocks, including dramatic increases in input prices and volatility from late 2006 through 2008 followed by recessionary weakness in cattle prices in 2009. Cattle prices in general, and calf prices in particular, have rebounded significantly in 2010. That along with some moderation in input costs suggests modest profitability potential for cow-calf producers.

In general, cow herd liquidation occurs for only a couple of reasons. One is severe, widespread and prolonged drought, which occurs occasionally. More commonly, producers reduce the cow herd due to lack of profitability. Historically, cyclical variation in calf prices, with relatively stable costs, led to periods of poor profitability that spawned phases of liquidation followed by expansion after calf prices improved. Since 2006, it has been high input prices relatively more so than low cattle prices that has eroded profitability. Whatever the reason, producers have spent much of the last 14 years and the last four years especially on the defensive, trying to maintain equity and avoid catastrophic financial impacts. The extended period of liquidation results today in the lowest cattle inventories in nearly 50 years.

Macroeconomic recovery is underway, albeit slowly, and input markets and prices have stabilized somewhat. Those factors, combined with the cow herd at current low levels, suggest generally higher cattle prices and improved cow-calf profitability for the next several years. This is likely at some point to lead to cow herd expansion. Cow-calf producers may have the best chance in many

years to be more on the offense than the defense. Individual producers should consider their unique situation and determine a strategy for the next several years. If your financial situation is still precarious, repairing that will logically continue to be your primary concern. If not, it may be time to consider if you should be more aggressive and exactly how to do that.

What you really want to do is anticipate when lots of producers will want to expand cow numbers and do it just ahead of them. This is for two reasons. First, you want to purchase replacement breeding animals before they get more expensive. Any significant expansion at this time will result in very expensive replacement heifer and cow costs because cattle inventories are so low. Secondly, not only will you want to take advantage of high calf prices but you may have opportunities to sell replacements to other producers resulting in additional profit potential. If high cattle prices are going to cause you to want to expand your cow herd in the next two to three years, you probably want to do it sooner rather than later.

What are the risks? Because we have had many non-cyclical factors affecting cattle markets, it is difficult to predict when cyclical expansion will begin. The U.S. and global economies are still rather precarious and many markets are quite volatile. There have been no indications of expansion yet; in fact, cattle numbers are still declining. But numbers could stabilize in the next few months and modest expansion is possible by late 2011. Caution is advised, but being prepared for more aggressive production and being willing to step out ahead of the rest of the industry is the best way to capitalize on market opportunities.

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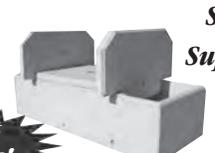
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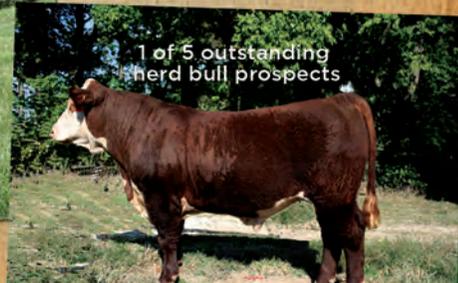
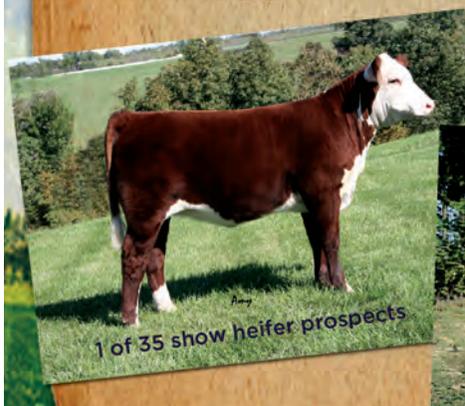


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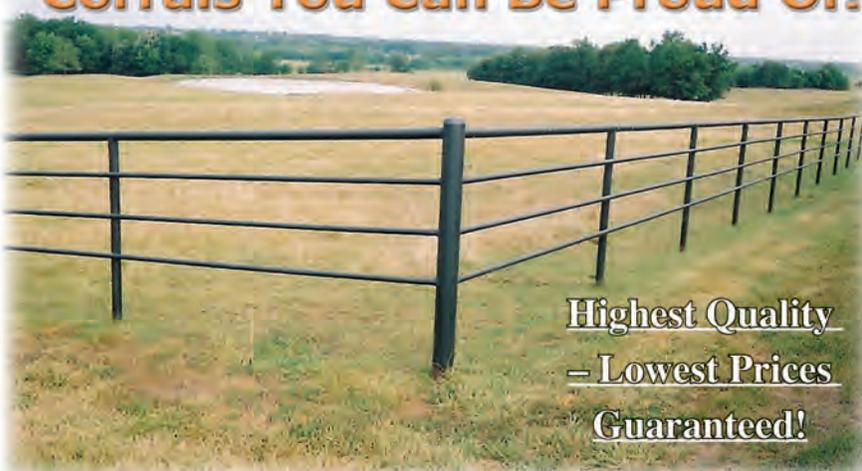
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- Nov 5-6 * GeneTrust at Chimney Rock Cattle Co, Concord, AR 877-GENETRS
- Nov 6 * 8th Annual Braunvieh Herd Builder Sale, Marshall, MO 620-583-5226
- Nov 6 * HAGA Gelbvieh Female Sale, Springfield, MO 641-473-2489
- Nov 6 * Irvine Ranch Annual Production Sale, Manhattan, KS 785-313-7473
- Nov 6 Missouri Charolais Breeders Fall Bull & Female Sale, Bois D'Arc, MO
- Nov 6 * Professional Beef Genetics, Montrose, MO 800-PBG-BULL
- Nov 6 * Reynolds Herefords, Huntsville, MO 660-277-3679
- Nov 6 * "The Andras Kind" Red Angus Female Sale, Manchester, IL 217-473-2355
- Nov 6 * The Fall Gathering, Carthage, MO 918-342-2225
- Nov 7 * Baker Angus Farm, Butler, MO 660-679-4403
- Nov 7 Heritage in the Homeland Limousin Sale, Seminole, OK
- Nov 13 * Gibbs Farms 5th Bull & Replacement Heifer Sale, Ranburne, AL 336-468-6363
- Nov 13 Moser Ranch 19th Annual Bull Sale, Wheaton, KS
- Nov 14 Four State Shorthorn Assoc. Sale, Diamond, MO
- Nov 15 Oklahoma Hereford Assoc. Sale, Sulphur, OK
- Nov 19 * SW Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Sale, Carthage, MO 417-466-3102
- Nov 20 * NE Arkansas Angus Association Sale, Charlotte, AR 662-837-4904
- Nov 20 * Show-Me Polled Hereford Classic, Sedalia, MO 660-527-3507
- Nov 20 * Walk of Fame VI Shorthorn Production Sale, Jerseyville, IL 618-498-5848
- Nov 20 * Sydenstricker Genetics, Mexico, MO 573-581-1225
- Nov 21 * Green Springs Performance Tested Bull Sale, Passaic, MO 417-448-7416
- Nov 27 Butch Meier Angus, Jackson, MO
- Nov 27 KS/NE Gelbvieh Assoc. "Pick of the Herds" Female Sale, Salina, KS
- Nov 27 * West Central Show-Me-Select Heifer Sale, Kingsville, MO 816-380-8460
- Dec 3 Missouri Angus Advantage Plus, Marshall, MO
- Dec 4 North Central Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Sale, Green City, MO
- Dec 4 * SE Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Sale, Fruitland, MO 573-243-3581
- Dec 5 * Missouri Hereford Assoc 2010 Opportunity Sale, Sedalia, MO 660-676-3788
- Dec 6 * Buffalo Creek Red Angus Complete Female Dispersal, Leiter, WY 307-736-2422
- Dec 11 NE Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Sale, Palmyra, MO 573-985-3911
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**November 19, 2010
7 PM**

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Program Requirements:

- Heifers have met minimum standards for reproductive soundness, pelvic size, body condition and weight and are free of blemishes.
- Heifers have been bred to bulls meeting strict calving ease/birth weight EPD requirements.
- A strict immunization program has been followed including official Brucellosis calfhood vaccination. Heifers have been tested and found negative for PI BVD.
- Heifers will calve from late January to April 30 and were preg checked within 30 days of the sale.

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