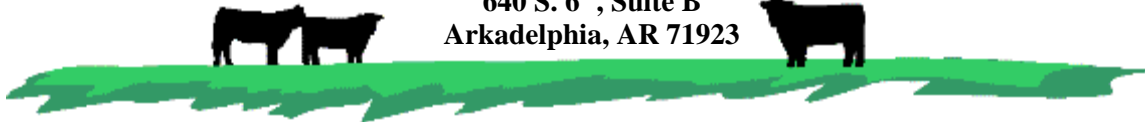


BEEF FORAGE NEWSLETTER
April, May, June 2008

Clark County Extension Service
640 S. 6th, Suite B
Arkadelphia, AR 71923



Pasture Calendar

APRIL

Establish Bermudagrass
Manage winter annual pasture for complete use
Watch for grass tetany symptoms
Fertilize warm-season grasses as they begin to grow
Rotate grazing to favor clovers in mixtures
Control weeds before they reach 4-inch height
Get hay equipment ready for early May use

MAY

Control weeds and brush
Fertilize warm season grasses
Plant summer annuals
Establish hybrid Bermuda before moisture is limited.
Harvest cool season grasses for hay at flowering
Graze winter annuals/fescue before pasturing Bermuda

Keep record of tons of hay harvested

JUNE

Last chance to control summer weeds and brush
Rotate grazing on summer pastures
Last chance to plant Bermudagrass
Harvest quality hay – cut every 4 – 6 weeks
Fertilize warm-season grasses after each cutting or every 4 – 6 weeks
Record expenses
Keep record of harvested hay or seed and make sure to forage test

Arkansas Forage and Grassland Conference

The Arkansas Forage and Grassland Conference is making some changes this year. Normally held in the fall, this year's event will be held Friday, April 25, 2008, at the Faulkner County Natural Resources Center in Conway. The council is hosting a forage bus tour to highlight excellent forage management practices on three area farms. Participants will see and hear about pasture renovation, water system development, pond access and gravity flow water systems. More information will be native warm season grasses, use of winter annual forages, wildlife management in grazing systems, agroforestry, EQIP funding, and contract grazing. Lunch will be provided during the tour. The evening programs will include dinner and a presentation by Dr. Ron Morrow, NRCS Grazing Lands Specialist, highlighting grazing practices used by area farmers. This tour will have something of use for anyone interested in forages. Participants will also have a chance to visit a wide range of commercial exhibitors with excellent forage management products. Registration begins at 8:30 a.m. at the Natural Resources Center, and buses will depart at 10 am. I encourage you to attend the entire tour and evening program. You can attend only the tours or the evening program. Registration is \$30 for a full day and \$20 to attend the evening program only. Registration includes membership in the Arkansas Forage and Grassland Council, affiliate membership in the American Forage and Grassland Council, conference proceedings, sponsor exhibits and lunch and dinner. For more information, contact Mike Looper, AFGC president at 479-675-3834 or John Jennings, AFGC secretary at 501-671-2350.

To the Table, *with Kris Elliott, Clark County Extension Agent – Family & Consumer Sciences*

Ancho Chile Rub for Steaks

1 tablespoon ground ancho chile powder
1-1/2 teaspoons dried oregano leaves, crushed
1 teaspoon freshly grated orange peel

3 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon



Combine rub ingredients; press evenly onto your favorite beef steaks. Place steaks on grill over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill until 160 degrees. Season with salt and pepper, as desired. Ancho chile powder is made from poblano peppers and has a mild paprika flavor, with sweet to moderate heat.

Are You Ready for Spring Calving?

JEREMY POWELL

Spring calving season is just around the corner, and even though the majority of cattle give birth without assistance, it's always wise to be prepared for those that will need help. When observing pregnant cows for signs of calving, you can divide the process of labor into three general stages. These include the preparatory stage (Stage 1), the fetal expulsion stage (Stage 2) and the cleaning stage (Stage 3). Time intervals and events that occur will vary between each stage as well as vary between individuals.

Stage 1 occurs when cervical dilation and early uterine contractions begin. Cows will begin to show behavioral changes like moving away from the herd, restlessness and off feed. Physical signs include relaxation of the pelvic ligaments indicated by a sunken croup and a raised tail, and the udder will also be enlarged and tight. The presentation of the water bag usually indicates the end of Stage 1 and the beginning of Stage 2.

Even though the majority of cattle give birth without assistance, it's always wise to be prepared for those that will need help. The second stage of labor can be characterized as the stage in which birth of the calf will occur. During this stage, uterine contractions are intense. The cow would normally lie down and actively be pushing to expel the calf. A short summary of the three stages is shown in the table below.

Stages of Labor

Stage	Normal Duration	Normal Events
1	26 hours	a. Uterine contractions begin b. Cervical dilation occurs c. Restlessness; separate from herd. Water bag expelled at end of Stage 1
2	30 minutes to 1 hour	a. Uterine contractions increase b. Fetus enters birth canal c. Calf delivery is completed
3	28 hours	Afterbirth is expelled (cleaning)

A couple of weeks before the calving season, cows and heifers due to calve should be moved to a smaller pasture where they can be easily observed. Always try to avoid extensive movement after labor has begun. Moving the animal during labor will slow down the labor process because a cow or heifer will stop to examine her new surroundings. It is a good idea to always have proper facilities and equipment close at hand and in working order for use

during the calving season. Movement to a maternity stall may be necessary if assistance is required.

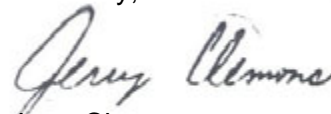
It is always easier to deal with calving difficulty during daylight hours opposed to heading out at midnight to pull a calf. One method that has been proven to increase the number of cows that calve during the day is the Konefal method. This technique gets its name from Gus Konefal, a Canadian Hereford breeder. He realized that by adjusting the time of day he fed his pregnant cows, he could have an effect on the time of day they calved.

Feeding after 5 p.m. resulted in 80 percent of the cows calving during daylight hours. This feeding method can be implemented without any additional costs and can potentially yield great benefits. The benefits of calving during the day include making it easier for you to check the pregnant animals, increasing the likelihood of identifying cows with calving difficulty and a decreased potential for calf death loss from hypothermia due to calves being born at night when temperatures are generally colder. Before calving season, monitor the body condition score (BCS) of the cows in your herd. Keeping the majority of the cows in an ideal BCS of 6 will decrease the chance of having calving difficulty. When cows have too much fat cover, some of the fat is laid down in the pelvic canal causing an increased likelihood of calving difficulty.

However, when the BCS is inadequate, cows cannot overcome the stresses that the calving season demands. The stresses of calving include the taxing labor process, starting her heavy lactation and the expectation of rebreeding in approximately 90 days. All of these burdens require the cow to be in good flesh going into the calving season. It is always cheaper to build body condition before calving starts than afterwards.

This program is open to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status or any other legally protected status. Persons with disabilities requiring alternative means for communication of program information should notify the county Extension office as soon as possible prior to the event.

Sincerely,



Jerry Clemons
County Extension Agent- Staff Chair
jclemons@uaex.edu

Five Tips to Improve Herd Health

Jeremy Powell

As a cattle producer, a few tasks can be completed each year that are essential for optimal herd health. Keep in mind that by practicing a few simple steps, you will maintain the well-being of your herd and make your operation more profitable and efficient.

1. Vaccination

Vaccination programs by themselves shouldn't be considered the complete herd health program. They should be viewed as an important part of an effective health management plan. Although herd health needs will vary between operations, a few standard vaccines should be included every year before the breeding season begins. Among these are IBR, BVD, leptospirosis and vibriosis. Each of these diseases can lead to reproductive inefficiency and loss of profitability in a cow herd. Another disease that should be vaccinated for in replacement heifers is brucellosis (Bang's). Heifers should be vaccinated between 4 and 12 months of age for this disease.

2. Nutrition

Supporting herd health with proper nutrition is essential. Maintaining a cow in a body condition score of five or higher when she is going into the calving season will ensure good calf health and speedy breed-backs. Studies have shown that cows that calve in a body condition score (BCS) of about six have a 90 percent or higher breed-back rate during the 90-day period required to keep a cow calving on a yearly schedule. If she was in a BCS of five, then breed-back rate drops to about 80 - 85 percent, and a BCS of four typically limits her to a 60 percent breed-back rate. Another important factor is that providing proper nutrients for cows will assure adequate production of high-quality colostrum. Colostrum is important to the calf's immunity during the early part of its life. Colostrum contains a high amount of antibodies that are passed from the cow to the calf during the first milk, and antibodies are made up of protein. Therefore, adequate protein is essential in a cow's diet before she goes into the calving season. The last 60 - 90 days before calving is a very important time for high-quality nutrition for the pregnant cow.

3. Farm Biosecurity

Performing simple biosecurity steps will help decrease the likelihood of a disease outbreak on your farm. Remember to control vehicle and visitor access to animal areas to limit possible spread of disease. Always wash your hands as well as change your clothing and boots after returning from a livestock fair, sale, show or farm before tending your own cattle. Try to maintain a closed farm if possible - that is, avoid bringing animals from outside sources onto your farm. Furthermore, if you do bring in new cattle, try to transport them in your own trailer, isolate them from your main herd and observe them for illness for a 30-day quarantine period. Do not share feeding, watering or other equipment between the two groups during this time. Finally, if you ever observe sudden, unexplained deaths or serious illness affecting many of your stock, contact your veterinarian.

4. Cow Culling

Managing culling decisions will impact the future herd performance and profitability of the herd. Many factors should be considered when choosing which cows to put on the cull list, with the most important factor likely being pregnancy status. Most experts agree that holding onto an open cow for one year causes operating losses that will take that cow three productive years to recover from. It is also important to recognize other red flags that make a cow a candidate for the cull list. Factors such as poor calf performance, lameness, bad eyes or poor disposition are also important considerations. This past year, with severe drought conditions and most producers with a limited amount of hay, it is vital to take a hard look at which cows are performing to their best potential and contributing to herd profitability.

5. Bull Management

Yearly breeding soundness evaluations are imperative for every bull that will be turned out with cows during the breeding season. In order to count on a large percentage of the cows being pregnant at the end of the breeding season, you have to start with a reproductively sound bull. The national average for bulls that fail a breeding soundness evaluation is somewhere between 10 and 20 percent. When I see a cow herd that has a large percentage of cows that are open, my first thought is typically about a bull problem.

These five steps are simple procedures to implement in your herd each year. By doing so, you can improve your herd health while also increasing the productivity and success of your operation.

Across-Breed Expected Progeny Differences

U. S. Meat Animal Research Center, Nebraska

U.S. MARC scientists presented their annual across-breed expected progeny differences (AB-EPDs) at the 2007 Beef Improvement Federation annual meeting (see table below). The AB-EPDs enable commercial producers to compare bulls of different breeds on the same EPD scale by adding the appropriate adjustment factors to EPDs produced in the most recent genetic evaluations for five British, eight Continental and three Brahman-influenced breeds.

Breed	Birth Wgt.	Weaning Wgt.	Yearling Wgt.	Maternal milk
Angus	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hereford	2.7	-3.1	-12.7	-15.7
Red Angus	2.5	-4.7	-0.7	-5.1
Shorthorn	7.0	32.5	46.1	16.1
South Devon	5.8	23.1	41.7	8.0
Braunvieh	6.3	30.3	17.4	24.5
Charolais	9.6	40.9	48.7	3.5
Gelbvieh	4.4	7.0	-21.2	6.2
Limousin	4.0	-1.3	-24.0	-12.6
Maine-Anjou	7.1	-2.9	-31.9	-6.2
Salers	4.2	30.7	43.5	12.8
Simmental	5.7	24.4	17.0	13.7
Tarentaise	3.0	31.9	18.3	20.0
Beefmaster	9.0	42.2	43.7	-4.1
Brahman	12.1	38.5	2.6	26.7
Brangus	5.0	24.3	26.5	-3.1