

What's Your Beef?

Howard County Beef & Forage Newsletter Winter 2008

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Beef & Forage Clinic

Beef and Forage Clinic is scheduled for **Thursday, February 28** starting at **6:00 p.m.** at the EH House. I think we have some great topics, thanks to the Agriculture and Natural Resources Planning committee. They are: **Parasite Control Brand Name vs. Generic Products, Alternative Feed Options, Farm Bio-security**, and for those of you who still need it **Pesticide Applicator Training** (to get your pesticide license). A meal will be provided, so please call by Tuesday, February 26, so that I may get an accurate head count for the meal.

Pesticide Classes . . . Last Two!!!!

February 28 - immediately following the Beef & Forage Clinic.
March 20 - 12:00 noon at the EH House. Snacks will be provided.

Over One-Third of Cattle Feeders Are Feeding Ethanol Products

According to a USDA report 36% of cattle feeders are feeding corn ethanol co-products, while another 34% are considering it. The survey of 9,400 livestock operations also revealed that 38% of dairy producers, 13% of cow-calf operators, and 12% of hog producers fed the by-products during 2006.

Hay Quality Affects Animal Performance

Special attention should be given to hay quality, because animal performance is directly related to the quality of hay or pasture being consumed. Legumes, such as alfalfa, clovers, and vetches, usually produce the highest quality forage and hay because they contain a high protein percentage, high minerals, and are easily digested. Grasses usually produce higher forage yields but are generally lower digestibility than legumes. Annual grasses (planted yearly) are higher in dry matter digestibility than perennials (re-grow from rootstock each year). Cool season grasses are higher in digestibility than warm season grasses. These



variables suggest that a good mixture of grass types and legumes will insure that livestock on your farm receives a year-round supply of high quality forage that decreases the need for purchasing costly supplemental feeds.

Climatic conditions that favor growing, harvesting, and drying of forage for hay occurs during the warm season, therefore favoring warm season annual and perennial species. Cool season forages, such as oats, wheat, or ryegrass, can make good quality hay when climatic conditions are favorable for harvesting and drying.

Adequate amounts of plant nutrients are essential for high production and good quality hay. In addition to increasing hay yields, fertilizer improves protein level, palatability, and performance of animals consuming the hay, if it is properly harvested. A ton of 15% crude protein grass hay removes approximately 50 pounds of nitrogen, 15 pounds of phosphorus, and 40 pounds

of potassium, in addition to secondary and micro-nutrients. Since soils vary in their capacity to supply plant nutrients, a soil test is important in determining the kind and amount of fertilizer needed.

State of growth (plant maturity) is another factor that affects the quality of forage. As forage plants mature, crude protein, digestibility, TDN, and palatability of those plants decline. Harvest plants when the greatest amount of digestible nutrients per acre can be obtained. This is usually at a stage of growth slightly before the plants begin their reproductive stage. Delaying harvest may provide and increase in yield but protein, TDN, and digestibility decline radically.

Forage production is a major activity for livestock producers. Only by producing and feeding high quality forage can individuals get the maximum out of animal performance.

How Much Is Too Much To Pay For a Bull???

Brett Barham, PhD. Breeding & Genetics Specialist

I know there are several philosophies that dictate what producers think they can spend on a bull, most commonly related to the selling price of a certain number of calves. If you know exactly how the purchase price of a bull will affect your cost to produce a weaned calf, great—but you are certainly in the minority.

I often hear producers talk about buying a cheap bull, possibly even one they picked up at the local sale barn. I do not have enough space in this article to give all the reasons why a bull should not be purchased at the weekly sale. Just remember that the bull is there for a purpose—if someone else did not want him, why would you settle for him?

Driving down the cost of producing a weaned calf is very important to maintaining profitability, but is there a point where paying more for a bull might be beneficial? I would answer yes to that question, if you are getting a higher quality, bull that will increase calf value.

While there are many factors that affect the selling price of a bull, bull quality, or superiority to other contemporaries will play a large role in determining price. Other factors can also come into

play such as paying a premium for animals from a certain breeder, animals that are homozygous black or polled, animals that have ultrasound information, or animals that have certain genetic marker test results. Whether any of these other factors that might affect the purchase price of a bull will pay off in your herd is something you will have to consider.

Many producers get hung up on the ultimate purchase price of a bull instead of his value as a bull. Value of a bull considers purchase price and increase in value of the calves of a bull compared to other potential sires.

Let's look at some example bulls and compare their value or their potential to make you money. (SEE TABLE) For these calculations, we will assume that the average weaning weight for this herd is 450 lbs; market price is \$1.00/cwt; each bull will be exposed to 30 cows; the percent calf crop weaned is 85%, and each bull will be kept for five years.

We will look at three different bulls with



different purchase prices and weaning weight EPDs, all of the same breed. As seen in the table, Bull A costs \$1500 to purchase and after five years of service brought \$800 when he was sold, so his total cost was only \$700. Bull B cost twice as much as Bull A and has the same salvage value as Bull A, so his total cost was \$2,200. Bull B has a higher weaning weight EPD to go along with his higher price. The additional value of Bull B over Bull A is \$412.50 calculated over the five-year life of the two bulls. In this case, spending more made the producer more money in the long run. This value is just calculated using weaning weight improvement only; it does not account for any increase in value of replacement heifers or others ways to increase calf value.

Now let's look at Bull C, our bargain bull of the group. He only cost \$800 to buy, and I was

generous to give him the same salvage value as the other bulls. This basically makes him free. However, you get what you pay for here—his weaning weight EPD is much lower than the other two bulls. After five years of service, the cheaper bull actually lost money compared to the more expensive bulls. Compared to Bull A, he lost you \$657.88, and compared to Bull B, he lost you \$1070.38 over the five-year life of the bulls—considering the increased purchase price of the other 2 bulls.

Now this is extremely simplistic example, but it does illustrate that you can pay more for a quality bull and come out ahead. The trick is to figure out which bull adds more value to your calves. For more information on determining the value of a bull, contact the Howard County Extension Office.

	Bull A	Bull B	Bull C
Purchased Price	\$1,500	\$3000	\$800
Salvage Value	\$800	\$800	\$800
Total Bull Cost	\$700	\$2,200	0
Weaning Wt. EPD	30	45	15
Additional Value of Calves Weaned Compared to Bull A	--	\$412.50	-\$657.88

My FuNnYbOnE

(I thought you guys and gals could appreciate this.)

The Lost Dr. Seuss Poem

I love my job, I love the pay!
I love it more and more each day.
I love my boss, he is the best!
I love his boss and all the rest.

I love my office and its location
I hate to have to go on vacation.
I love my furniture, drab and gray,
And piles of paper that grow each day!

I think my job is really swell,
There's nothing else I love so well.
I love to work among my peers,
I love their leers, and jeers, and sneers.



I love my computer and its software;
I hug it often though it won't care.
I love each program and every file.
I'd love them more if they worked a while.

I'm happy to be here. I am I am.
I'm the happiest worker of the Firm, I am.
I love this work, I love these chores.
I love the meetings with deadly bores.

I love my job – I'll say it again-
I even love those friendly men.
Those friendly men who've come today,
In clean white coats to take me away!!!!

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All meetings and activities announced in this newsletter are open to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (large print, audiotapes, etc.) should notify the county Extension office as soon as possible prior to the activity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherry Beaty". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, flowing "S" and "B".

Sherry Beaty
County Extension Agent-Agriculture