

Beef and Forage Review

February 2008

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What's Happening?

River Valley Beef Cattle Conference

9:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 13

Dardanelle Community Center

Beef producers will get educational information ranging from marketing to commodity feeding. Cost for the conference is \$20 and includes a steak lunch. Contact the office, for more information.

Tri-County Forage Meeting

9:00 a.m., Wednesday, February 27

First National Bank Comm. Ctr. – Paris

The 3rd Annual Tri-County Forage Meeting is a joint effort between Johnson, Franklin and Logan counties. This year's meeting will focus on hay production in the River Valley. Topics will include the latest weed management options, forage and fertility management and hay marketing. Robert Seay, Benton County Extension agent, will also be on the program discussing forage management options to improve quality. There is no charge for the meeting.

Johnson/Logan County Vaccination Clinic

10:00 a.m., Wednesday, March 5

Western Sizzlin, Clarksville

Producers will be presented with the latest information on herd health and vaccination procedures in the morning session. The afternoon session will take the information learned into the field for a hands-on vaccination clinic. Pre-register with our office by February 29.

Selling on eBay

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon, Tuesday, February 26

Arkansas Tech University – Ozark Campus – Paris Center

103 E. Pine St., Paris

Participants will have access to computers and be able to post items for sale on eBay. Stacey McCullough and Kim Magee, comm. dev. and ag. economics specialists from the University of Arkansas, will walk participants through setting up an account, photographing items and posting them online. Not sure this is what you are interested in? Come and observe! Space is limited. Call the Extension office to register.

Reproductive Capacity of Bull Critical

Dr. Peter Chenoweth of Kansas State University is recognized as an authority in the area of bull fertility. The following information taken from a recent report by Dr. Chenoweth supports the importance of bull fertility and the importance of breeding soundness examinations:



- A breeding soundness examination (BSE) is the best assurance of satisfactory bull fertility.
- Bull fertility affects the pregnancy rate, average calving date, average weaning weight, uniformity of calf crop and age of puberty in replacement heifers – all are of economic importance.
- A bull usually has a BSE done only once during its productive lifetime. (It should be done every year. See the first statement.) It is cheap insurance.
- Bull scrotal circumference is positively related to bull and heifer puberty as well as semen quality.
- Some surveys report that 15-20 percent of bulls that have breeding soundness evaluations have problems that adversely affect fertility.
- Utilization of a BSE has the potential to return at least \$20 for each \$1 invested in the procedure.

A bull may look good in the field, he may even look like he is working, but looks can be deceiving and he may be an unsatisfactory breeder. A BSE provides the best evaluation of the bull's reproductive potential. You can't make bacon cheeseburgers without the boar, and the same bodes for the bull. Without the burger, all you have is a BLT. Normally, a BSE should be done 45 to 60 days before the start of the breeding season. This will give you plenty of time to find suitable replacements, if your bull is found not to be a sound breeder. For the breeding season starting April 1, the BSE should be done between February 1 and March 15. Many people refer to the bull and cows as a 50-50 split in terms of importance to the breeding herd. If you have one cow that is reproductively unsound you lose one calf, but if the bull is unsound, you may very well lose the entire season's calf crop.



Ethanol Products Finding Popularity

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 Midwest 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. Reports are that the use of ethanol products will continue to rise as ethanol production increases.

Pelleted Lime vs. Ag Limestone

I have had a few questions about the quality of pelleted limestone vs. ag limestone. Pelleted lime is being marketed aggressively across the state as an alternative to ag lime. Many of the pelleted lime products are very good quality, while some are not much better than standard ag lime. Marketing claims being made imply that a rate of 300-400 pounds per acre of pelleted lime is equal to one ton of ag lime. Difficulty in locating quality lime is creating a perfect marketing opportunity for other products. The quality of lime can be determined by pounds of effective calcium carbonate equivalent or lbs ECCE/ton. To determine this number you need: percent calcium carbonate equivalent (%CCE); percent of limestone that passes a 20-mesh sieve; and percent limestone that passes a 60-mesh sieve. The Ark. Agricultural Liming Materials Act requires that all of this information be provided with the sale of all ground agricultural limestone in the state. The Extension service has a computer program to help determine the best price/quality of ag lime. You may access the program at: http://www.aragriculture.org/forage_pasture/limestone.htm. If you need assistance using the program, or if I can aid you in your lime purchase, please don't hesitate to give me a call.

Early Weed Management

Do you remember late last spring when your pastures were a pretty shade of yellow with all those flowers? It was pretty as a picture, wasn't it? Well, that pretty little flower is called buttercup, and spraying with a herbicide is the best way to control it. However, it is too late to spray if you are already seeing the flowers. So, when is the best time to spray, you ask? Late February to early March is a good time since this is a winter weed. You will need 3-4 consecutive days above 50-55°F. An application of 1-2 pt/acre of 2, 4-D will take care of the problem; however, you will have to spray for 2-3 years to effectively control the buttercup. A word of caution about fields with legumes – 2, 4-D will severely injure or kill most legumes. The only exceptions are established white clover and lespedeza (more than 2" tall).

With the cost of nitrate and other fertilizers, now is the time to plan your weed control programs. If you would like herbicide recommendations for your pasture or hayfield, give the Extension office a call.

Grass Tetany

Caused by a magnesium deficiency, grass tetany can become a major problem in Arkansas although not too many cases are reported. It typically occurs in beef cows during early lactation and is more prevalent in older cows. The primary reason older cows are thought to be more affected is that they are less able to mobilize magnesium reserves from the bones than younger cows. Grass tetany most frequently occurs when cattle are grazing lush, immature grass pastures and tends to be more prevalent during periods of cloudy weather. Symptoms include: uncoordination, salivation, excitability (aggressive behavior toward humans) and, in final stages, tetany, convulsions and death.

It is known that factors other than simply the magnesium content of the forage can increase the probability of grass tetany. High levels of potassium in forages can decrease absorption of magnesium and most lush, immature forages are high in potassium. High levels of nitrogen fertilization have also been shown to increase the incidence of tetany although feeding protein supplements has not. It is likely that a combination of factors, mostly related to characteristics of lush forage, are involved.

When conditions for occurrence of tetany are suspected, cows should be provided mineral mixes containing 12-15% magnesium and be consumed at 3-4 ounces per day. It is best for the supplements to be started a couple of months ahead of the period of tetany danger so that proper intake can be established. Because tetany can also occur when calcium is low, calcium supplementation should also be included.

Symptoms of tetany from deficiencies of both calcium and magnesium are indistinguishable without blood tests, and the treatment consists of intravenous injections of calcium and magnesium gluconate, which supplies both minerals.

Invitation to Activities

All of the activities mentioned in the newsletter are open to everyone regardless of race, color, national origin, age, religion, gender, disability, 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.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
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OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300

Free Stuff!!!

The Animal Science section of the Cooperative Extension Service has developed a searchable CD containing over 125 publications that include information on beef and dairy cattle, horses, goats, and hay and pasture management. It also contains Excel spreadsheets to help with beef cattle feeding and nutrition and PDA tools; Arkansas Seasonal Pasture Planning software program to optimize cattle forage intake with forage production; Limestone Quality Calculator software program to calculate the cost effectiveness of each lime product; frequently-asked questions about beef cattle nutrition and feeding; drought management articles; ABIB newsletters; Beef Cattle Research Update newsletters; Arkansas Cattlemen's articles and 800 photos of grasses, forbs, woody plants and legumes for ID.

The Logan County Extension Office will be offering the 2007 Livestock and Forage Management CD free of charge to interested beef producers. In order to receive this CD, all you need to do is contact the Paris or Booneville Extension office, and we will be happy to order you one. I have had the opportunity to use this CD, and it is one of the most complete Animal Science reference materials that I have used.