FROM THE COUNTY AGENT’S DESK...

Summer 2013 has all but wrapped up, and thankfully, it wasn’t quite as bad as ’11 and ’12. July was fairly dry, and up until the last week or so, we’ve been pretty dry through the latter half of August. Hopefully, most folks learned the lesson of overgrazing when drought was pending from the previous two years, and pastures are still in good shape heading into fall. Bermudagrass will be all but closing its doors for the season with these night temperatures in the upper 40s and 50s. Fescue, however, should hold out for several more weeks. Now is the time to be planning for your winter feeding, though, and I’d recommend getting in those hay samples now and start looking to where you’ll get feed ingredients, should you need them. Not to mention, fall soil sampling should be on your mind, as well.

Remember, most of our hay is more than sufficient for dry cows and feed supplementation isn’t needed. And, more often than not, TDN is what is lacking in the ration, not crude protein, even for a
lot of growing calf situations. No need to be feeding something just because that’s what you’ve always done. Also, there’s no need to be feeding a ration that isn’t putting lbs. on an animal in the most profitable way (see Ration Balancing Workshop). Don’t plan to feed and just hope that you get 2 lbs./day. That can all be calculated out, and the cost associated with different rations can be determined too. Let me know if you need help hay sampling or interpreting soil test results this fall, and please plan to attend the ration balancing workshop. The information you get from that could save you hundreds, if not thousands, of dollars this fall in unnecessary feeding costs.

**FALL BRUCELLOSIS (BANGS) VACCINATIONS**

The fall brucellosis vaccinations are coming up soon. Myself and ARL&PC technician, Franky Sharp, will be out sometime around the end of October – mid-November. We don’t have our dates set yet, but I’m going to go ahead and work on getting everyone’s cards turned in and work on the route. Typically, we’ll do them on a Friday and a Thursday morning if we have more than we can get in one day. If you have heifers to be vaccinated, please let us know by Tuesday, October 22nd. Return the enclosed cut-out card to our office or call us at 870-895-3301.

Cut this card out, fill out the details, and mail to:

Fulton County Extension Office  
P.O. Box 308  
Salem, AR 72576  

***Write in directions to your farm on the back of the card.***

Vaccinations will be made by an ARL&PC technician and are free of charge. Heifers must be at least 4 months old but not older than 12 months old to be eligible for vaccination. We will use the same procedure as in the past and notify you
by letter before you are scheduled for vaccinations. You will need handling facilities to confine and work the calves. Also, you or a representative for you must be present at the time of vaccination or the technician will not vaccinate the heifers. If no one is there, we’ll have to move along to the next stop. Remember, the time that we schedule for your stop could be give or take an hour or so. It depends on how fast or held up we are at prior stops.

**FALL PESTICIDE LICENSE TRAINING FOR PRIVATE APPLICATORS**

Your fall opportunity to get or renew your private applicator pesticide license will be on **Thursday, October 17th at 6:00 at the Fulton County Fairgrounds Hickinbotham-Miller building.** This will serve as the only opportunity in Fulton County to get your license training this fall. The next chance will come sometime late winter 2013/early spring 2014. If you know that you can’t make this one, there will be trainings in Sharp and Izard County. Here are their dates and locations:

**Sharp Co. – November 7th at 6 p.m. at Ozarka College in Ash Flat**

**Izard Co. – January 30th at 6 p.m. at Ozarka College in Melbourne (tentative)**

For those who don’t know, a license is required to purchase restricted use pesticides. Two of the most common, 2, 4-D to control broadleaf weeds and lambda-cyhalothrin to control armyworms, are both restricted use.

Pesticide Applicator Training is approximately a 2-3 hour course to certify Arkansas agricultural producers who wish to purchase and apply Restricted Use Pesticides (RUP’s). However, the information presented could also be useful for anyone interested in learning more about pesticide regulations, labeling, application equipment and safety issues. This training is NOT for certification of commercial (for-hire) pesticide applicators!

There is a $10 per person fee which must be paid at the door at the time of training. This fee is not related to the licensing fees charged by the State Plant Board. It is only for the training. The fee for the license is $10 for one (1) year or $45 for five (5) years. That amount you will pay in later to the State Plant Board, not the Fulton Co. Extension Office. Please feel free to call us at the office at 870-895-3301 if you’ve got any questions. There’s no need to call to pre-register.
RATION BALANCING WORKSHOP FOR WINTER FEEDING OF CALVES

The Fulton County Extension Office will be hosting a beef cattle workshop on balancing rations for growing calves on October 14th at 5:30 p.m. at the Orange Room at North Arkansas Electric. If you run a stocker operation or are just looking to put some additional gain on some fall calves, then this workshop is meant for you. Dr. Shane Gadberry, our Extension Beef nutrition specialist will be conducting the workshop. The cost to attend will be $15 per person or $25 per couple, and that will include workshop materials and a meal. Feeding costs are one of, if not the biggest input costs in any cattle operation and doing so efficiently and cost effectively can make a big impact on your bottom line.

The workshop will focus on using a ration balancer Microsoft Excel spreadsheet program that was developed by Oklahoma State University, so if you have a laptop with Microsoft Excel on it, I’m asking that you bring it. I do have access to a limited number of laptops that we can use, but those will be available on a first come first serve basis for participants.

The program also has the ability to figure in the value of your own hay. So, if you wish participate and calculate for your own hay in the workshop, I’d recommend getting a hay sample done within the next week. Contact me if you would like assistance in pulling any hay samples. Routine analysis on hay samples is $18 plus postage.

To register, you’ll need to come by the Fulton County Extension Office at 118 W. Locust St. in Salem to sign up and pay your fee by October 10th. We’re in the same building as the revenue office. For any questions, give me a call at 870-895-3301 (office) or 870-750-0848 (cell).

“BEef iQ” COURSES AND FIELD DAYS (FULTON, BAXTER, AND MARION COUNTIES)

Fulton, Baxter, and Marion County Extension Offices are considering offering the Beef IQ course that has been very popular around the state. In the past, the program was offered only in central locations around the state, but we wanted to be able to make it a little easier on producers that don’t live so close to those “central” locations.

The program will focus on 6 broad areas of beef management:

1.) economics and ranch planning
2.) herd health and well-being
3.) nutrition
4.) genetics
5.) reproduction
6.) pasture and forages.

The Beef IQ program is treated almost like a college course without the homework and tests! It is made up of 18 hours of classroom/educational meetings and 8 hours of field day work that will be more hands-on. That will be broken down into 6 three hour classroom type meetings and 2 four hour field/hands-on activities. Of the 6 classroom meetings, two will be held in each county. So, that’ll be two in Salem, two in Mtn. Home, and two in Marion County (either Yellville or Flippin). They’ll likely be in the evening. Education will be presented by the county agents and Extension Animal Science specialists in their respective areas of expertise. The program will likely start around this November and run through until the fall of 2014, depending on what we work out.

The cost to participate is $75. With that, you’ll be registered for all meetings and field days and have access to all of the information on the Arkansas Beef IQ website (presentations, how-to videos, computer program decision aids, and lots of reading material). If you don’t have internet access, for an additional $50 you can purchase a USB (thumb) drive that contains the same information as the website. This program is available to 4-H youth as well, but they must also have an adult accompany them. In order to “graduate” from the Beef IQ program, you must attend at least 4 of the 6 classroom meetings and at least 1 field day. Dates and locations will be determined once it is confirmed that we are for sure going to have it. You’ll have plenty of advance notice.

If you are interested, please return the enclosed application form. We’ve got 15 slots available for each county, and I'll enroll producers on a first come, first serve basis. You won’t pay your fee until a later date, once we know for sure that we’ve got enough farmers signed up. The application doesn’t bind or commit you to
anything, but please be pretty certain that you want to participate before turning it in. It just lets me know that you’re interested. Give me a call if you’ve got any questions at 870-895-3301.

Cut this out and return to Fulton Co. Extension Office, P.O. Box 308, Salem, AR 72576

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**Fulton, Baxter, and Marion Beef IQ Application**

Name __________________________

Location _________________________

Phone ___________________________

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**WEANING PRACTICES CAN AFFECT CALF HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE**

Dr. Jeremy Powell, Extension Veterinarian

Fall is upon us, and it’s time to begin marketing your spring-born calves. In doing so, remember that how you manage these calves at weaning can improve their opportunity for better overall health throughout the rest of their life. A calf’s health can be affected by stress factors such as weaning, a naïve immune system, and poor nutrition. A preconditioning program can minimize a calf’s likelihood of disease, and thereby improve post-weaning gain, improve carcass value and most importantly improve the lifelong welfare of the animal.

Many research reports exist indicating a benefit in selling price for calves that were vaccinated, weaned, and held on the ranch for 45 days prior to shipment. A recent University of Arkansas survey¹ of calves sold in AR auction markets indicated that preconditioned calves captured an average price premium of $5.00/cwt compared to calves that had not been preconditioned. These preconditioned calves are more desirable to calf buyers due to their potential for improved health and increased gain performance.

The University of Arkansas conducted recent research that compared how different weaning practices can affect calf health and performance after they are shipped to a stocker cattle research facility. The
Fulton County Cooperative Extension Service
118 West Locust/PO Box 308 • Salem, AR 72576
(870) 895-3301 • www.uaex.edu/fulton

study compared 2 groups of calves that had undergone different management practices before being shipped to the research facility near Fayetteville. The study utilized 236 steer calves that underwent preconditioning on their farm-of-origin before shipment. Calves originated from Arkansas ranches and were weaned, vaccinated, and held on the ranch for 45 days before shipping. Furthermore, 292 calves (210 bulls and 82 steers) were also purchased from multiple Arkansas auction barns and shipped to Fayetteville to be compared with the ranch-sourced calves. These calves had an unknown history of vaccination and weaning status.

The effects of preconditioning management were analyzed to determine if there were any differences in calf morbidity (illness), health costs and weight gain performance during the 42-day receiving period. The data displayed in Table 1 indicates that market origin calves exhibited considerably higher morbidity rates and poorer gain performance compared to the pre-conditioned calves.

Undeniably, weaning can be a stressful period for a calf which subsequently can affect health and performance. This study has indicated that a higher morbidity rate and higher health costs can be expected in calves purchased and shipped without any preceding preconditioning. However, by weaning calves on the ranch for 45 days, improved health and performance can be expected after they are shipped. These preconditioning management practices are not only an opportunity for producers to maximize the price they receive for their calves, but also in the best interest of the future welfare of the cattle.

Fenceline weaning can also help reduce weaning stress. Fenceline weaning allows calves to remain in sight of and in close proximity to their mothers followed by gradual increases in separation distance by moving electrified wires or tapes further from each side. This technique can also allow high-quality pastures to be used as weaning facilities in place of dusty drylots. A recent research study conducted at the University of Arkansas Livestock and Forestry Research Station near Batesville compared calves that were weaned either by abrupt separation or by fenceline weaning. The average daily gain during the 14 day weaning period tended (P <
To help cattle producers weigh the costs and returns of retained ownership, price data from the USDA Livestock Market News Portal and nearby feeder cattle futures prices for the period of January 2010 through December 2012 were recently analyzed. The monthly price by weight group for medium and large #1 steers sold in Arkansas as well as the average basis (difference between Arkansas price and nearby feeder cattle futures) was calculated.

The feeder calf price chart here illustrates the monthly variation in price and how that month-to-month change decreased as weight class increased. Lightweight cattle tended to have the greatest seasonal

**2010 TO 2012 ARKANSAS FEEDER STEER PRICES AND FEEDER FUTURES BASIS**

Dr. Shane Gadberry, Extension Beef Nutrition Specialist

Fall weaning is just around the corner. Fewer cows in the herd, larger hay supply, and news of potentially lower corn prices may be just the right combination to convince oneself to retain ownership of this year’s calf crop.

The feeder calf price chart here illustrates the monthly variation in price and how that month-to-month change decreased as weight class increased. Lightweight cattle tended to have the greatest seasonal

0.10) to be greater for fenceline weaned calves compared with traditionally weaned calves (2.55 and 1.6 lb/day, respectively).

When you gather your calves to sell this fall, consider the opportunity of adding in a little extra management by providing them a preconditioning program. Not only does it give you the chance to benefit from a higher price, but it is the right thing to do to improve the long-term health of your calves. For more information about beef cattle production management, visit your county Extension office.

variability in price. Most calves in Arkansas are born in spring, marketed in the fall at weaning, and sold through a local auction one calf at a time. The supply of heavy feeders are smaller than the lightweight supply, so cattle producers that retain ownership and plan to market calves locally need to make sure that their target market weights fit the weight criteria for the buyers. The chart below also illustrates prices are generally lowest August through October, as supplies increase with fall weaning. The price trend observed from 2010 to 2012 follows the historical trend but on a more recent price scale.

The stronger spring prices suggest that if calves can be wintered economically, retaining ownership of fall weaned calves could increase return. A first glance of the chart might lead someone to believe marketing lightweight calves the following spring is the way to go because these calves received the highest price. However, if one calculated the additional value of marketing at a heavier weight (but at a lesser price), it becomes evident that there was more total value in marketing the heavier calf. However, cost of gain must also be considered.

The table below shows the calculated change in value for 4 different fall and spring market weights based on the 2010 – 2012 price chart.

| Change in Market Value and Associated Breakeven Cost per Day and per Pound Weight Gain Based on 2010-2012 Arkansas Medium and Large #1 Steer Price by Month |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Fall Market Weight              | 450 lb          | 550 lb          | 650 lb          | 750 lb          |
| 450 lb                          | $95             | $169            | $245            | $298            |
|                                | $0.63/d         | $1.69/lb        | $1.23/lb        | $0.99/lb        |
| 550 lb                          | $99             | $175            | $175            | $228            |
|                                | $0.66/d         | $1.75/lb        | $1.17/lb        | $1.14/lb        |
| 650 lb                          | $98             | $175            | $151            | $151            |
|                                | $0.65/d         | $1.65/lb        | $1.51/lb        | $1.51/lb        |
| 750 lb                          | $45             | $228            | $151            | $151            |
|                                | $0.30/d         | $1.52/lb        | $1.01/d         | $1.01/d         |

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture and County Governments Cooperating. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.
Based on average seasonal price differences, holding calves over with little to no gain would potentially increase value up to $100 but the cost incurred during the retained ownership period would need to stay below $0.66/day. Hay cost alone can be over $0.55/day. Cattle producers that have hay to spare with no way of protecting it from weathering should factor this into the decision as well, as wasted hay is often overlooked economic loss.

Based on the 3-year average, adding weight by grazing cool-season forages or feeding a balanced ration could have added $50 to $200 in market value per calf. The breakeven per pound of weight gained reported in the table was based on October verses March price (approximately 150 days) and 100 to 300 pounds of weight gain. Before jumping to conclusions about the benefits of a greater breakeven associated with less weight gain, readers must be reminded that unless cattle are being limit fed a high concentrate diet, achieving 100 pounds of weight gain over 150 days may require more feed per pound of gain than achieving 300 pounds of weight gain over the same 150 days. A low quality diet that produces 0.6 lb/d weight gain may require 23 pounds of feed to produce 1 pound of body weight; whereas, a moderately-high quality diet that produces 2 lb/d weight gain may require 8 pounds of feed to produce 1 pound of body weight. When calculating a retained ownership decision, once the potential value of gain has been estimated, this estimate must be weighed against the potential cost of diets that produce slow or rapid weight gain.

As a final note, historical data is valuable for determining how different scenarios would have historically played-out, “on-average”. Feeder futures data is valuable to look at how the scenario might play-out in the upcoming market. One challenge with using feeder futures is understanding the difference between local price and futures price, especially when market weight differs from the futures 650 to 849 pound steers’ contract specification. The difference between auction price at a specified location and futures price is called basis. Just like historical trends for seasonal differences can be used for making decisions, historical basis can help gauge what cattle might sell for at a specified location based upon the historical basis for various weight groups. The following chart illustrates the average basis for 4 weight groups from 2010 through 2012.

The September 5th Arkansas livestock market news report quoted 750 lb steers at 142.5/cwt and nearby feeder futures at 157/cwt, so the basis was -14.5/cwt. The chart illustrates the past 3 year’s average basis at this weight
equaled -18/cwt. For 450 lb steers the basis was 19.5/cwt, substantially greater than the previous 3 year average. One challenge to using basis with light cattle would be changes in demand for new crop cattle with changing economic and climatic conditions verses the demand for feedlot ready cattle. To put the use of basis into perspective, one might consider that October feeder futures are $2/cwt higher than September; therefore, 450 lb steers might bring $179 which is $2/cwt greater than the September price. The 3-year average difference between the September and October basis would suggest that 450 lb calves in October could be $4/cwt greater. March futures were at $158/cwt, the historical basis for 650 lbs steers in March was close to $0; therefore, one might expect 650 lb steers to sell locally for $158 next March. For additional risk assessment, increasing and decreasing basis for March would help indicate how sensitive returns to retained ownership would be as price adjusted for basis varied.

For information about feeding, vaccinating, and other practices to benefit the well-being of calves retained on the farm this fall for later marketing, visit your local county Extension office.

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