From the Agents Desk…..

Control Thistles Now Before It’s Too Late!

Every year thistles are a problem for lots of producers. Many times we don’t think about them until we start to see those little pink flowers. If you had a thistle problem last year, it is getting a little late to spray them, but you still have time.

The key to effective thistle control is spraying while the thistles are in the rosette stage of growth (before the flower stalk appears). Biennial thistles in Arkansas are readily controlled with a properly timed application of 2,4-D amine at 1.5 qt/A. Fall applications from late October through November will enhance a thistle control program. Grazon P+D, GrazonNext HL and dicamba + 2,4-D also provide excellent control of thistles at 1 qt/A.

Thistle in the Rosette Stage

Brucellosis Vaccination Schedule

It's time for spring brucellosis vaccinations of heifers. Heifers 4 – 12 months of age need to be vaccinated. Vaccination dates have not been set yet. However, vaccination dates will probably be set for late April. If you would like to be put on the vaccination schedule, you must call the Extension Office at 867-2311 no later than April 11, 2014. Once you have called and signed-up your heifers, a schedule will be mailed out a week before the scheduled date.

In order for the Livestock and Poultry Commission technicians to vaccinate the heifers, all producers must have proper handling facilities available and the producer MUST be at the location of the vaccination.

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Montgomery County Ag Update

April 2014
Construction of a Tire Drag to Aid Forage Establishment

Broadcast seeding is a popular forage planting method, but adequate seed-to-soil contact in pasture sod can be problematic. This can be remedied by scarifying the sod with a harrow or field drag. Many producers either do not have a drag, the drag is not easily transported or the drag is too heavy or aggressive for covering small-seeded forages. Homemade tire drags work well to scarify short sod, expose soil and improve stand establishment.

Tire drags have many advantages. They make use of salvaged tires, they are inexpensive, and the tires flex over or around rocks, stumps, trees, etc. Our tire drag is constructed with salvaged 10- to 14-ply road grader tires; however, the drag can be sized to match the tractor or ATV to be used to pull the drag. 3

The tires are cut in half vertically down the middle of the tread to make a “cut side” and a “slick side.”

This makes the drag more versatile for variable field conditions. The “cut” side is more aggressive for heavy sod conditions and the “smooth” side can be used to smooth and firm tilled seedbeds or in thin sod pastures.

A heavy ply rating is needed so the cut tires hold shape and do not fold up when in use. The cut tires are laid out in a six-tire pyramid formation with one tire in the front, two tires in the middle and three tires on the end. The drag width using road grader tires in this formation is approximately 13 feet. Only use bias-ply tires. Steel-belted tires should be avoided because sharp wires protrude and can cause injury.

Drill a ½” hole through the tire tread and insert an eye bolt, leaving the “eye” on the outside of the tire. A thin piece of metal, approximately 2” x 4”, is used on the inside of the tire as a washer to prevent the eye bolt from pulling through the tire. (Con’t on next page)
Large snap-rings are used to connect the tires. Snap-ring connectors allow each tire to flex independently and follow the ground contour. Snap-rings also allow the drag to be assembled or disassembled as needed. A piece of pipe, used for a pull bar, is then placed horizontally between the tires and the machine that will pull the drag. Chains are welded to the pull bar, and snap-rings are used to connect the chains to the eye bolts of the tires. The first and second rows of tires are attached to the pull bar to keep the drag in line when turning. Chains are welded to the front side of the pull bar for connecting the drag to the tractor or ATV. A portable tire drag is a durable, economical and effective tool for preparing pasture sod for broadcast seeding small-seeded forages.

Snap-ring connectors allow the drag to be assembled or disassembled as needed.

Make Pre-Breeding Vaccines a Priority

A healthy cow is essential for reproductive success. The earlier a cow can become pregnant during the breeding season, the earlier she will calve the following year, and an earlier calving date usually corresponds with a more valuable calf at weaning. Vaccinating the whole herd this time of year will not only protect the cows against reproductive diseases prior to the breeding season but will also provide protection to the springborn calves against potential disease risks. Selecting the correct vaccines is a critical element in developing a herd health program.

Although herd health needs may vary among operations, there are a few standard vaccines that will protect against reproductive loss and poor efficiency in a cow herd that should be included for most herds. For cows and bulls, vaccinate with:

- 4 or 5 way viral vaccine (IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV)
- Leptospirosis
- Vibriosis
- 7 way clostridial (Blackleg)

Another focus for the vaccination program should be to limit overall calf illness. Some operations should give consideration to the case history of diseases in the herd. If your herd has encountered problems with pinkeye, calf scours or respiratory pneumonia in the past, there are vaccines for these problems that will help limit future outbreaks. However, the standard annual vaccines recommended for calves should include:

- 4 or 5 way viral vaccine (IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV)
- 7 way clostridial (Blackleg)

If you plan to vaccinate replacement heifers, then consider:

- Brucellosis (Bang’s) vaccine between 4 and 12 months of age
- 4 or 5 way viral vaccine (IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV)
- Leptospirosis
- Vibriosis
- 7 way clostridial (Blackleg)

Your vaccination program should be viewed as an important part of an effective health management plan that would also include proper nutrition, parasite control and a simple biosecurity plan for your operation. The objective is to maintain a high level of herd immunity to minimize disease outbreak and improve profitability for the operation. Since vaccine needs vary from herd to herd, consider visiting with your herd veterinarian to get input regarding vaccine selection for your operation.

One concern that some producers may question: Is the cost of implementing a vaccine program justified? You should consider that avoiding a potential health disaster in your cattle operation easily validates the cost. Keep in mind the motto: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." In other words, the expense of a disease outbreak will far exceed the cost of disease prevention.
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