

Beef and Forage Newsletter

Yell County



Winter 2013

Brucellosis Vaccination Clinic

The Yell County Cooperative Extension Service, in cooperation with the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission, will be offering a Brucellosis (Bangs) vaccination clinic November 25th. If you have heifers that are 4 to 12 months old, then take advantage of this opportunity. It is very important to keep vaccinating for Bangs so we do not end up with a problem down the road. Please remember that for safety reasons all heifers should be penned in a working area with a head gate. The owner or his/her representative must be present for us to vaccinate the heifers. To be placed on the schedule, please call the extension office at 479-495-2216

Pesticide Applicator Training

January 10th 2014 9:00 A.M.- Dardanelle Library Conference Room

February 6th 2014 6:00 P.M.- USDA Service Center Conference Room

Admission is \$10 at the door

All persons needing to renew their license should have received a letter from the Arkansas Plant Board. If you are NEW and need a license, you should attend this meeting. This is for private applicator license only.

Cow Cost is Too High to Keep an Open Cow

Dr. Tom Troxel, Professor and Associate Department Head

In many parts of Arkansas, producers experienced plenty of spring and early summer rainfall. Unlike last year, hay is abundant and in many cases producers have more hay than they have cattle. With fall rains the outlook for winter pastures is optimistic and cattle are in much better body condition as compared to 2012.

The 300 Day Grazing demonstration conducted at the Livestock and Forestry Research Station near Batesville finished its fifth year. The average cow cost for the five year period was \$503. Expense items included salt and mineral, veterinarian medicine, growth implants, fly control, sale commission, hauling, pregnancy testing, bull cost, fertility testing bulls, replacement cows, fertilizer, lime, purchased hay, herbicide, and miscellaneous. Overhead items and fuel, oil, labor, and other typical items were not included in the 300 Day Grazing budget. If these items were included, annual cow cost could easily be over \$600.

With high cow cost, it often takes the net returns of 2 to 3 calves to pay for the cost of keeping one open cow. One can easily see keeping an open cow is a luxury most cannot afford. Often times the excuse to keeping a cow that lost a calf was; "it wasn't her fault." Is it worth the net returns of 2 to 3 calves to pay for a cow that lost a calf because "it wasn't her fault?" Is that a sound management decision?

Pregnancy testing and culling open cows is a sound management decision. The first year of the 300 Day Grazing demonstration the 60 day breeding season pregnancy rate was 79%. Due to culling all open cows or cows that did not produce a live calf, the pregnancy rate improved to 97% by year 3 (29/30) and 4 (37/38). In year 5, the worst drought in modern time (2012), the pregnancy rate was 93% (37/40).

According to the 2008 USDA's National Animal Health Monitoring System survey, only 18% of U.S. Cow-calf operations utilize pregnancy testing, yet 82% control internal parasites. Certainly internal parasites reduce the productivity of a cow herd, but so does feeding open cows. So why don't more cattlemen have their cows tested for pregnancy?

Sire Selection: Add Dollars to Your Bottom Line Profit

Bryan Kutz

It won't be long until breeding season for herds that calve in the Fall, and it is never too early to start planning. Improvement of next year's calf crop is dependent upon the breeding decisions you are about to make. Herd sire selection should be a thought provoking and profit driven decision process. Males account for approximately 90% of the gene pool, contributing more to the genetic makeup of a herd in one breeding season than a cow contributes in her lifetime. Selecting genetically superior sires is the fastest approach to herd improvement and ultimately bottom line profitability. Not every bull will fit your production scenario. Resources and goals are different for each cow-calf operation. Nonetheless, sire selection should target an acceptable combination of traits that complement the strengths and weaknesses of the cow herd and match markets. Ask questions that pertain to your particular production situation. What are your target markets? Are you selling all calves at weaning?

If so, what color does that market value the most? Are you planning to background your calves and send them through the feedlot? Are you going to retain any replacement heifers? Are you breeding both heifers and cows? What are your available labor and forage resources? Answers to these questions will aid you in determining the selection efforts you may want to apply towards economically important traits such as growth, carcass traits and possible maternal performance. Feet and leg soundness, libido, disposition, scrotal size, sheath, frame size, composition, breed type and horn presence or absence are also important traits for consideration. While one may apply more pressure on one or two traits, remember to strike a balance among various traits and avoid extremes. Base the type of sire selected on the purpose of your breeding plan.

While I strongly believe in the correct visual appraisal of an animal, the use of genetic selection with expected progeny differences (EPD) can be an extremely valuable tool. EPD's provide predictions of the expected performance of the calves sired by a bull compared to the expected performance of calves sired by another bull. EPD's are the best predictors of the genetic performance of an individual animal, and they are available for a growing number of economically relevant traits. Breeds are different and make available a wide variety of EPD's, however; most breeds have basic EPD's, such as birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight and milk. A large number of breeds have implemented the use of Selection indices. These are based on multiple traits weighted for economic importance, heritability and genetic associations among traits. A selection index may provide a balanced selection approach when selecting for more than one trait at a time.

Beef cattle selection should be based on many factors. The knowledge gathered from your production needs and concerns is invaluable in your sire selection endeavor. The more information used in this process, the fewer surprises you will have for generations to come. It is important to use both performance information and visual appraisal in choosing a sire that suits you and your production goals. They should complement each other. A balanced approach to sire selection focusing on multiple economically important traits can go a long way towards herd genetic improvement.

BE WATCHING!!!

The 2014 River Valley Beef Conference is coming up Feb. 11, 2014, at Morrilton. More information to follow as the date approaches.



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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. Please call 479-495-2216 or 479-229-4441, if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jack Clark

County Extension Agent, Agriculture