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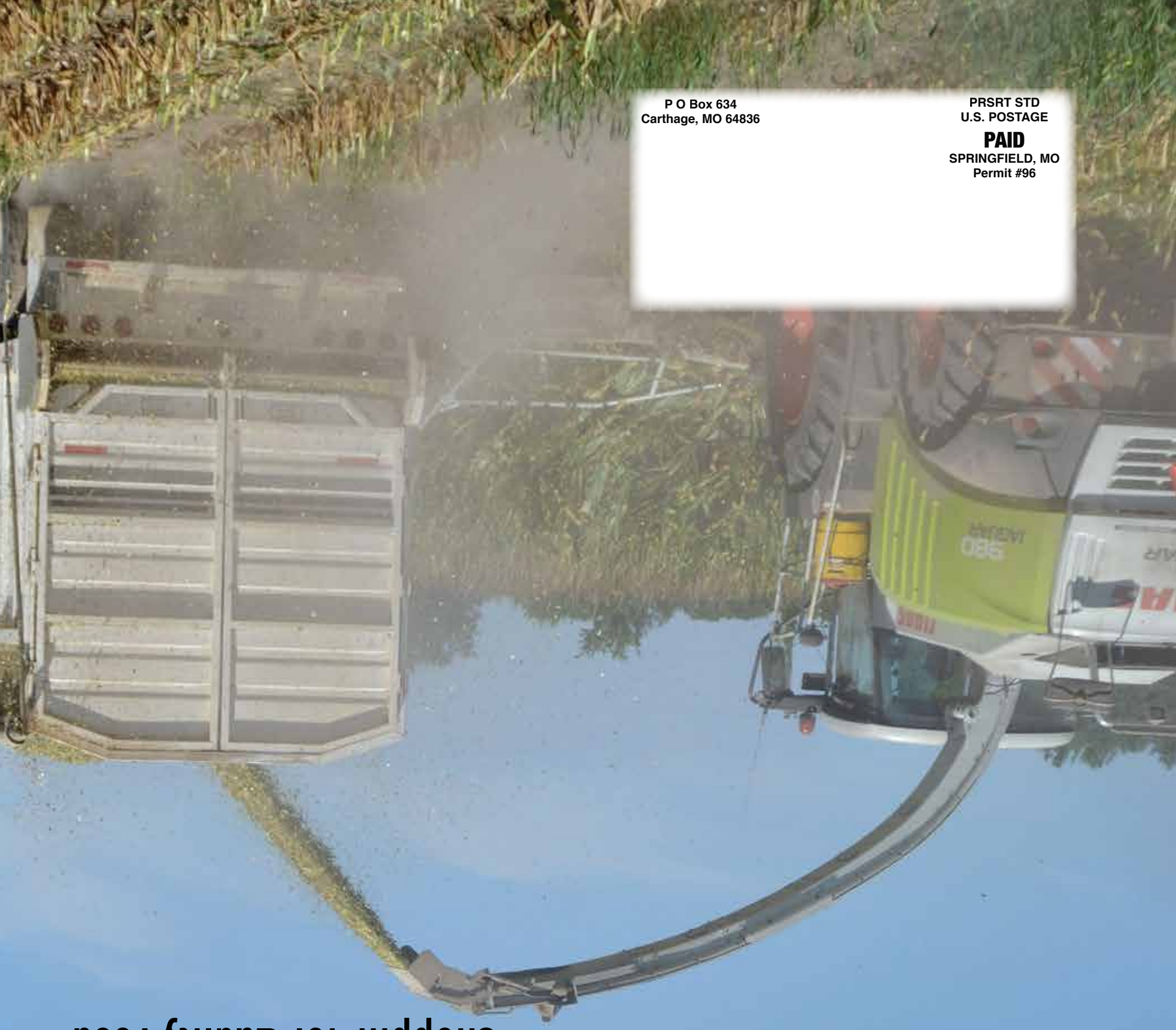

Cattlemens News

Joplin Regional Stockyards

September 2014

Volume 18 | Issue 2

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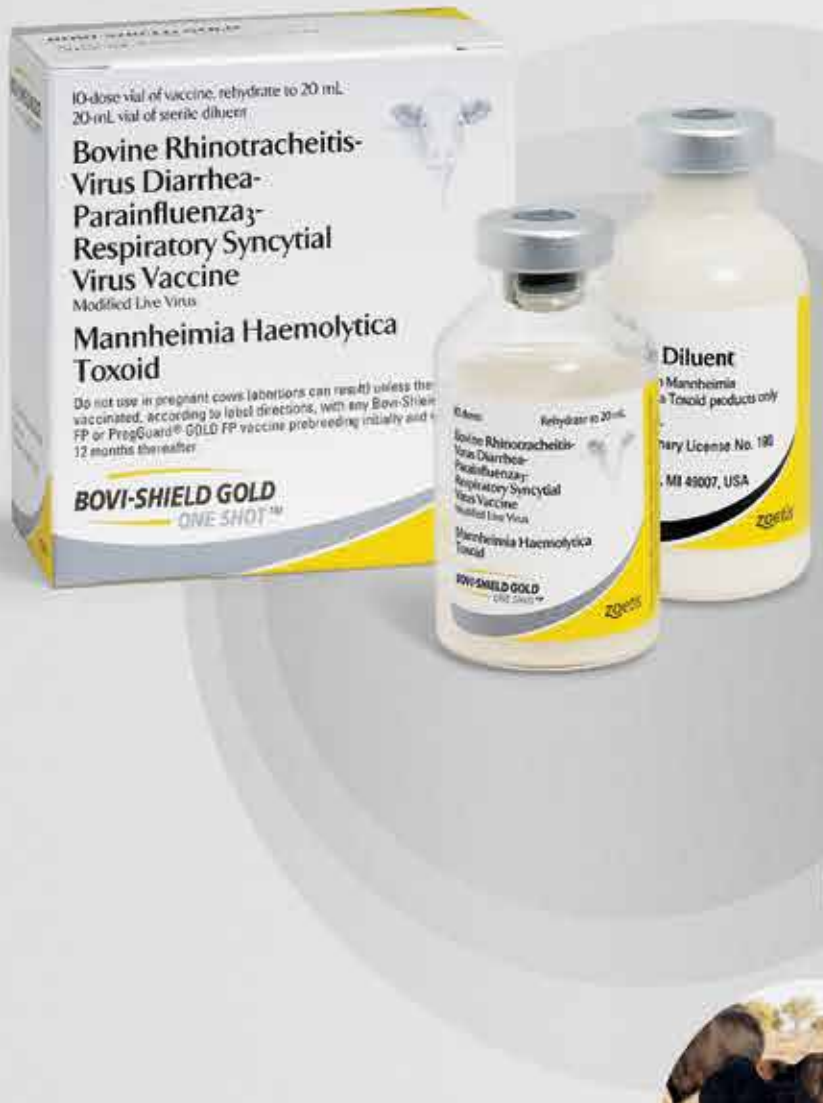

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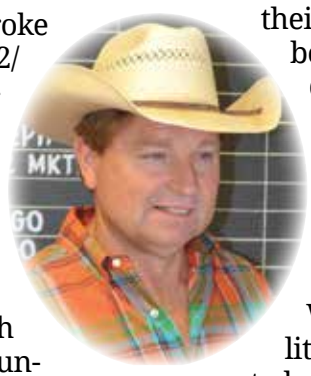
VIEW FROM THE BLOCK



Fed cattle prices broke about $10 to $12/cwt, and feeder cattle futures fell back $10 to $15 per cwt. The market might have just been a little bit overdone. We also had the perfect storm brewing with pork and poultry under considerable production pressure. Prices for those proteins have come a bit lower, adding some pressure to the beef market. I told someone the other day, "If you haven't been to a sale lately, you probably didn't even notice it."

Seasonally, we're going to see some pressure on the cattle that are considered "high risk" because they haven't been weaned and had any vaccinations. Health issues with those cattle tend to be more of a problem as we get into the fall season. The front-end of the weaned, pre-conditioned cattle, as well as the yearlings, are in a position to hold their own. I am expecting a typical fall market. Lightweight calves weighing 300 to 400 lbs that can graze on wheat pasture will hold their value. It still all boils down to supply, demand and health issues as we head into fall.

We've got a special monthly cow sale coming up Sept. 27. We've scheduled it a little later this month to hopefully give us some time for the fall grass to grow and for it to cool off a bit. The replacement cow market has been really good. Bred heifers due to calve this fall have been selling from $2500 to $3300. And, pretty much any kind of a stock cow will sell for about $2000. The salvage value of slaughter cows is really what is holding the replacement market together. That's a really big deal when you are selling stock cows. You can sell one, and it doesn't cost a fortune to replace her. I expect the replacement market to be pretty typical this fall, and we will likely see prices slip some but it should still be good market.

Good luck and God bless.

Jackie

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About the Cover

Corn silage makes quality feed for livestock. Learn how one custom harvester has made it his business for 30 years.
Story on page 26.

—Cover photo by Joann Pipkin

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In Every Issue

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Ad Deadline 2nd Monday of Each Month for Next Month's Issue
Cattlemen's News, PO Box 634, Carthage, MO 64836
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Subcription questions can be answered by calling 417-548-2333

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BEEF IN BRIEF

Long-time KLA CEO Dee Likes Stepping Down

The chief executive officer (CEO) and executive vice president of the Kansas Livestock Association (KLA) is stepping aside after 31 years in the position. Dee Likes will assume the title of KLA Chief Executive Emeritus December 31, 2014, and will remain employed by KLA in an advisory role to work on future initiatives.

Likes joined the KLA staff in 1976 after working as a CattleFax analyst serving Kansas cattle producers. In January 1984, he was named CEO of the 5,500-member trade association.

—Source: Kansas Livestock Association

Beef Exports Continue Record Pace

U.S. beef exports remained strong in June, pushing export values to a record level for the first half of the year, according to USDA statistics and compiled by the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), a contractor to the beef checkoff.

Beef exports were up 5 percent in volume to about 235 million pounds in June and set a new monthly value record of $631.7 million – up 12 percent from June 2013. Export values also set a new record of $3.27 billion for the first six months of 2014, export – up 16 percent from the record set during the same period last year. Export volume for the six-month period reached nearly 1.3 billion pounds, representing an 8 percent increase year-on-year, but trailing the volume record set in 2011.

—Source: MyBeefCheckoff.com

Cattlemen Outline Policy Priorities at Summer Meeting

Members of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association addressed current policy priorities at the 2014 Cattle Industry Summer Conference in Denver recently, passing new resolutions and directives for the 2014 Policy Agenda.

Priority issues include the EPA's proposed waters of the United States rule, tax reform and ongoing international trade issues.

In the Property Rights and Environmental Management committee, members passed a resolution to lead the development of a beef sustainability program, inclusive of the beef value chain and stakeholders, that addresses the continued advancement in areas such as economic viability, production efficiencies, animal care and handling, environmental conservation, human resources and community support.

The Cattle Marketing and International Trade Policy Committee passed a resolution for NCBA to support changes to Mandatory Price Reporting. Accurate and detailed market information is imperative for sound decision making, and the directive calls for support of changes to ensure the data reflects the market place.

And NCBA's Cattle Health and Well-Being Committee passed policy regarding foreign animal diseases, which could cause a widespread quarantine and possible massive depopulation of the U.S. cattle herd, thus compromising national security and jeopardizing the U.S. beef supply. As such, a resolution was passed to oppose the importation of live cattle, beef, and/or beef products into the U.S. from foreign countries with histories of significant chronic animal diseases and lack of strict animal disease control and eradication measures.

Further, NCBA urges USDA to include U.S. cattle industry stakeholders in any negotiations with foreign countries relating to efforts that might affect the health of the U.S. cattle industry and provide the U.S. cattle industry opportunities to comment on new procedures for developing risk analyses for any foreign country with significant chronic animal disease issues wishing to export live cattle, beef and/or beef products into the U.S.

—Source: NCBA Release

NUTRITION KNOW-HOW

Weaning Management

Post-weaning nutrition affects calf, cow

Story By Justin Sexten for Cattlemen's News

Autumn is quickly approaching, and that signals weaning time. And, it is also the best opportunity to begin a cow nutrition program to improve next spring's colostrum quality, summer's re-breeding rate and autumn's weaning weights. Before we discuss improving next years' calf performance, consider management options for recently weaned calves.

Consider fence-line weaning to assist with bunk-breaking weaned calves. Move the cows in a pasture directly opposite of the calves' feed bunks and water source. The calf's natural desire to return to its dam will bunk-break the calf and minimize fence-line walking. Reduced walking combined with increased time spent eating and lying down will minimize shrink and conserve energy for growth.

When developing weaned calf diets, remember feed intake is lower so nutrient concentration should be increased. Weaning transition supplements should contain 15 percent crude protein with half the protein bypassing the rumen. Use feedstuffs with different amino acid profiles to ensure the calf's amino acid requirement is met. For example, use soybean meal and distillers grains as protein supplements.

Prior to weaning, a balanced amino acid supply was provided by milk bypassing the rumen. Including an ionophore in the weaning diet can increase bypass protein in addition to controlling coccidiosis. If calves are not fed and managed to gain more than 2.5 pounds per day, then microbial protein should provide adequate amino acids regardless of the feed source.

Current corn prices make the grain a cost-effective energy source for both weaned calves and cows. When feeding corn to cattle on a forage-based diet, restrict inclusion rates to 0.5 percent of body weight or less to ensure forage digestion is not negatively affected by starch. Corn can be fed in whole form to cows and calves to reduce processing cost while slowing the rate of rumen fermentation.

The goal of a successful weaning program is to get calves eating 2 percent of body weight. At this point, calves begin gaining weight. Ideally, calves are given the first round of vaccines while nursing the cow at two months of age or three weeks prior to weaning. Early vaccination minimizes stress around weaning while allowing booster vaccination near the time of weaning stress.

Castration and de-horning are management practices producers should perform as early in the calf's life as feasible. After working a group of weaned bull calves with horns, you are quickly reminded why early timing is important. As calves get older, the recovery time increases resulting in extended periods of poor performance and greater risk for death loss.

After weaning, cows are ready to recover body condition in preparation for the next calf. The first 60 days after weaning is when cows are most efficient at converting forage into condition due to compensatory gain. At weaning, sort cows into management groups to al-

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WEANING MANAGEMENT
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low younger and thin cows the best forage; cows with adequate condition can graze corn stalks or other lower quality forages. If alternative forages are not available, then supplement thin cows with concentrates to increase energy intake.

Supplementation and/or forage management programs should result in young cows at a body condition score of 6 and mature cows at a body condition score of 5. Cows calving with adequate condition will produce better quality colostrum and are more likely to re-breed during a controlled breeding season.

Fetal programming research suggests cows with adequate nutrition during gestation will raise heavier, healthier calves at weaning. In addition, cows with adequate nutrition produce heifer calves that are younger at puberty and steer calves that achieve greater quality grade at the end of the finishing period.

With record high cattle prices, abundant forage supplies and declining feed prices, producers should continually evaluate opportunities to improve cow nutrition. A herd nutrition program begins with an objective forage quality evaluation, so before beginning a supplementation program test stored forages to determine correct supplement needs.

Excessive supplementation is a waste of feed resources while failing to meet cow requirements increases production risk due to open cows and lighter weaning weights. The high cost of retaining and developing replacement heifers further emphasizes the need to focus forage and feed resources toward ensuring cows have the best opportunity to re-breed.

Waiting until after calving to increase the nutritional plane results in greater milk production and minimal reproductive rate improvement, whereas providing adequate nutrition during the last trimester is the best return on feed and forage investment.

In order to evaluate the "returns" to a supplement program, condition score cows at weaning and again at calving. These condition scores will indicate if cows gained adequate condition during the last trimester to meet desired condition targets. A calving condition score is the best indicator of future reproductive success. Cows calving at an ideal condition score are more likely to re-breed than those calving at lower condition scores and gaining condition during lactation.

Nutrition after weaning influences the weaned calf and the gestating cow. Weaned calf supplementation programs provide an immediate return to management, and as a result, receive considerable attention. Producers must realize gestating cow nutrition deserves equal focus as management impacts the calf she is currently carrying in addition to her ability to carry future calves.

—Justin Sexten is University of Missouri state extension specialist, beef nutrition. Contact him at sextenj@missouri.edu.

NEWS TO USE

Missouri Passes Right to Farm

Story From Our Staff

The passage on Aug. 5 of Amendment 1, known as the Farming Rights Amendment, is a huge step forward for family farms and ranches all across Missouri, according to Missouri Cattlemen's Association President Jim McCann.

McCann said the amendment not only gives today's farmers and ranchers a 'green light' to farm, but also helps protect tomorrow's generation.

Missouri's agriculture industry generates more than $12 billion and accounts for thousands of jobs within the state, McCann noted.

—Adapted from a Missouri Cattlemen's Association Release.

HEALTH WATCH

Getting Ready for Next Year

Little details count in cow care

Story By Dr. Dave Rethorst for Cattlemen's News

I am fairly sure that some of you are thinking, "This guy is nuts, we don't even have this year's calves weaned and he is talking about next year already." The truth of the matter is that we can affect the health of next year's calf crop and next year's breed back of the cows by the way we handle the cows this fall.

The first step is this process is to get the calves weaned in early fall. Weaning in early to mid-September greatly reduces the protein and energy requirements of the cow simply because she isn't milking. With this nutritional drain off of the cow, it is not uncommon to improve 1 to 1 ½ body condition scores grazing nothing but dry grass. These fat stores reduce the feed required to get the cow through winter. Plus, she will be in better condition after calving next year and, therefore, breed back sooner. A good rule of thumb to remember here is that for each cycle earlier we can get a cow to breed back improves weaning weight by approximately 42 pounds. Using today's prices of 550-pound steers at $2.70 per pound, that figures out to $113.40 per calf just for weaning a little earlier and getting the cow in better shape. Earlier breed back also improves the likelihood that the cow will continue to breed back early, thus increasing profits year after year. Having the cows in better shape also improves colostrum quality. We tend to think about colostrum having antibodies that are necessary for the calf. While this is true, the colostrum also contains a good amount of fat, which serves as an energy source for the newborn calf and helps prevent chilling.

Another advantage of weaning in September is that weight

gain on a weaned calf is a much more efficient use of feed than is trying to feed condition back onto a cow because she had a calf nursing her until November. Many calves that are still on the cow until November gain very little weight after September on. So by weaning earlier, we can keep the calf gaining and do it very efficiently.

Once the cows get into the last trimester of pregnancy, we need to make sure they are receiving adequate nutrition, especially protein. Even though the cows might appear to be in good condition (5 ½+ BCS), they cannot meet their protein requirements eating dry grass due to the rapid fetal growth that occurs at this time. Work done by the University of Nebraska several years ago shows that steer calves from protein-supplemented cows perform better through the finishing phase, including carcass quality grade, than do steers from non-protein supplemented cows. The heifer calves from protein-supplemented cows had a yearling pregnancy rate of nearly 90 percent, while the heifers from non-protein supplemented cows had an approximate pregnancy rate of 50 percent.

While we are talking about fetal nutrition, we also need to consider trace mineral (copper, zinc, selenium and manganese) supplementation. We have traditionally thought that if we were going to "cheat" a cow on trace minerals, we could do it in late pregnancy. Recent research has shown quite the opposite to be true. Late pregnancy is the one time we do NOT want to short a pregnant cow on trace minerals. During late pregnancy, the cow "dumps" trace minerals to the fetus in large quantities. This is necessary in order for the calf's immune system to function properly the first 60 days of life. If we short a late-pregnancy cow on trace minerals, not only will the calf's immune system not function

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Cooper Martin Crowned High School Champion Roper

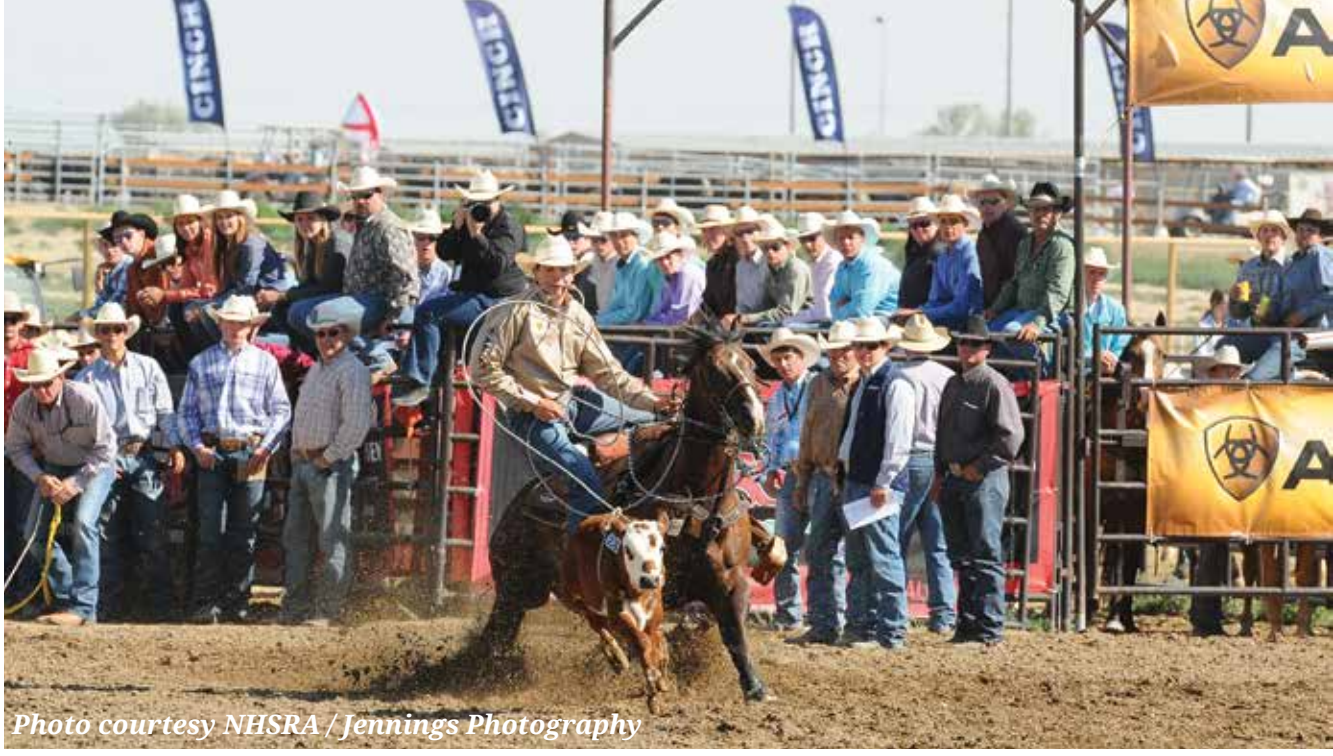

Photo courtesy NHSRA / Jennings Photography

Cooper Martin (right), Alma, Kansas, was recently crowned the National High School Rodeo Association Champion Calf Roper. Competition took place in Rock Springs, Wyoming, where Martin won the first round with a time of 8.78. He took fifth in the second round with a time of 8.79 and was third in the short round with an 8.55. His total on three head, 26.12 seconds, won the average and earned him the championship title.

Martin also qualified as a header in the team roping with partner Ricky Yaussi of Udall, Kansas. The duo ended up 11th in the average.

He is the son of Chris and Candi Martin.

NEXT YEAR
CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

properly, but also breed-back will be suboptimal since these same trace minerals are necessary for reproductive function. The take-home here is to be sure to feed adequate trace minerals, especially during late pregnancy and lactation so that the calf's immune system will function as intended, and the cow will breed back on time.

As you can see, cattle health and performance is all about how the cattle are cared for from conception to consumption. If cows are mismanaged, it can affect not only the cow and the nursing calf, but also the calf that is in-utero. If what is true in humans is also true in cattle, the effect will also be seen in the offspring of that in-utero calf.

Many times it is not about a new, magic vaccine or a new, more powerful antibiotic. Rather, it is about how we manage the basic animal husbandry practices within a herd. If we do the little things right year in and year out, we build momentum in the improvement of calf health and reproductive performance.

The maximum potential for a calf is the day it is conceived. Suboptimal management can only reduce the potential of that calf to grow and thrive, and once that potential is lost due to mismanagement, it can't be recovered. We can keep many of these calves alive with more vaccine and more antibiotic, but they do not perform up to their genetic potential. The flip side of that coin is that the calf delivered by an optimally managed cow requires less vaccine, less antibiotic, is easier to raise and performs to its genetic potential.

—Dr. David Rethorst is director of outreach for the Beef Cattle Institute at Kansas State University.

NEXT GENERATION

Listening Means Learning

Continue family farm's success by learning together

Story By Darren Frye for Cattlemen's News

Are you proud of your family farming operation? Are you confident and excited about how your farm has developed – and where you're headed in the future? Successful operations should be proud of what they have accomplished. Many farm families feel that way, and I think they have every reason to.

Today, you might be leading a very successful farming operation. Or you're part of the next generation, looking at what's been built by generations before you, thinking, 'I hope I can continue the success that my family has built through the years.'

Either way, as your farm becomes more successful and there's more going on in your operation, you might find yourself starting to wonder how you will keep everything on track. You built your operation on hard work, good instincts and solid decision-making. You worked hard to get everything in place so your operation would grow.

One way to respond is to get a plan in place that helps you continue leading your farm toward more success – toward your definition of what success for your farm looks like.

Here's what one farm family did. They have a very successful, growing operation. Past generations worked very hard to make it what it is today – and the two generations currently on the farm are no exception.

The farm family decided to have a meeting to get on the same page with each other about the future of their operation – and to set up plans for how they will reach the future they desire.

They worked for two days with a farm business coach to get their plan in place. They talked about what they want their operation to be like in the future – and the steps they need to take to get it there.

At the end of the two days, the older generation said they were more confident in the operation's upcoming transition in the next couple of years. They believed that the plan provided a way for the farm to continue being successful in the future.

As you think about the future of your farming operation, here's another thing to consider: What if you never learned anything new during your farming careers? What would your operation be like? It would be pretty stagnant, wouldn't it?

When you're open to taking advantage of learning opportunities, they can be life-changing. Learning from different thinking and different perspectives can help you out when you need it the most, like when you feel stuck in a problem.

Something a presenter says can change your thinking in a small way – or a major way – that impacts the direction of your operation. And as you work to solve the toughest problems in your farming operation, you can use thoughts and skills you've learned as you tackle new problems you might never have had before.

Skills you pick up from speakers find quick application as you lead your operation – as you're having an important discussion with an employee or working on a business plan for your farm – helping you achieve better results.

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EPA, Corps Expand Regulatory Authority of Clean Water Act

80,000 additional stream miles added in Missouri

Story From Our Staff

States could be facing upwards of 100,000 added regulated stream miles as a result of the "Waters of the United States" rule proposed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). While the agencies continue to claim their proposal does not expand the scope of the Clean Water Act, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), Missouri Cattlemen's Association and Missouri Farm Bureau showcased new interactive maps Aug. 14 at the Missouri State Fair in Sedalia, Mo., that illustrate how the proposal will impact property owners throughout the country.

"The maps highlight just how far the proposed rule would expand federal jurisdiction over waters across the country," said Ashley McDonald, NCBA environmental counsel. "In Missouri alone, nearly 80,000 additional stream miles will be under the regulatory authority of EPA and the Corps. Logic and common sense tells us that the surrounding land will also be regulated more than ever before."

The proposal goes as far to include ditches in the definition of a tributary. McDonald said any activity near a jurisdictional ditch will now require a federal permit and as a result, many farmers and ranchers will need to acquire permits for routine land use activities.

"Instead of providing the clarity that so many people have asked for, the agencies have instead proposed a rule that muddies the water even further through their clever use of ambiguous and vague terminology," McDonald said. "Their actions have only created more questions for farmers and ranchers. The agency's proposed rule adds more layers of government bureaucracy and red tape and amounts to nothing more than a pervasive invasion of private property rights."

NCBA is working with a multi-industry coalition to ensure private property rights are protected. If this proposed rule is not withdrawn, according to McDonald, family farmers and ranchers will find themselves at the "mercy of the regulatory whims of the federal government."

—Source: Release from National Cattlemen's Beef Association

LISTENING MEANS LEARNING
FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Here are some questions to ask when evaluating potential learning opportunities:

- Will I gain skills I need to lead and manage my operation right now?
- Are the topics important to the future of my farming operation?
- Will the speakers challenge my thinking and help me consider challenges on my farm in different ways?

If you limit yourself and the possibilities on your farm to what you've seen on your own farm or your neighbor's, you're missing out on what could be possible. When you choose to participate in learning opportunities, you get the chance to soak in new ideas to take back and put into motion on your farm.

—Darren Frye is President and CEO of Water Street Solutions, a farm consulting firm that helps farmers with the challenges they face in growing and improving their farms – including the challenge of transitioning the farming operation to the next generation. Contact Darren at waterstreet@waterstreet.org or call (866) 249-2528.

NEWS TO USE

Missouri Wheat Numbers Good

Harvest down 15 percent from 2013

Story From Our Staff

Wheat yields at Missouri tests sites were good, according to the 2014 Missouri wheat variety crop performance report.

Bill Wiebold, University of Missouri Extension specialist, said tests plots from southwestern and southeastern Missouri showed the highest yields.

Variety tests help farmers pick what seeds to plant this fall. Results of the 2014 tests are available at *varietytesting.missouri.edu*. Printed copies are available from county extension offices or by calling 573-882-2307.

The tests include new varieties and popular older varieties at nine locations, including three MU research farms and six farmer-owned fields. Varieties are grown on plots of one acre or smaller and harvested with specially designed small combines. "We test the best," Wiebold said.

Top performers vary from year to year, reflecting changing environment, weather and planting date. One variety may do well in one part of the state but not another because of Missouri's diverse topography.

A review of several years of data shows consistent performers, Wiebold said. Yield is important but other factors to consider include stand, hardiness, drought tolerance, and insect and disease resistance.

In Hughesville, Adrian and Lamar in southwestern Missouri, yield leader AgriMaxx 444 produced a mean average of 78.5 bushels per acre. The grand mean — the average yield among all varieties — was 70.7 bushels per acre.

In southeastern Missouri, plots in Chaffee, Charleston and Portageville showed two MFA varieties as the top producers with 77.0 and 75.6 bushels per acre. The grand mean was 67.8 bushels per acre.

Trenton, Novelty and Columbia in the northern region had the lowest yields. The grand mean was 63.2 bushels per acre. AgriMax444 took the top spot there with 71.2 bushels per acre.

USDA Crop Report showed Missouri winter wheat harvest down 15 percent from the previous year. Harvested area in 2014 was 850,000 acres. Winter wheat yield was 55 bushels per acre.

—Source: University of Missouri Cooperative Media Group

'Markets Don't Go Up Forever'

CattleFax: "Perfect Storm" Points to Rosy Picture for Cattle Industry

Story From Our Staff

The cattle industry is transitioning from the liquidation phase to the expansion phase in terms of cattle numbers, according to Kevin Good, senior market analyst for CattleFax. When combined with a very robust domestic and global demand for beef, it helps point to a rosy picture for the industry. Good made the remarks during a general session of the 2014 Cattle Industry Summer Conferences in Denver Aug. 1.

"It's one for the ages," Good said, referring to the cattle market. "It's been a tremendous change from a year ago."

Good said the industry is accelerating the rate of expansion, and "it's a great opportunity to take advantage of the trend." However, while the fundamentals are "friendly," he said, "the market will have a correction." And that correction could be soon. "Something needs to give," he said. "You have to be prepared for that ceiling," he told the hundreds of cattle producers in attendance.

Good said a "perfect storm" was in place for the industry in terms of profitability. There's a tighter animal supply in general, with the PED Virus in the pork industry and hatchability and genetic issues in the poultry industry keeping pork and chicken supplies in check. With all animal protein supplies stable and prices increasing, beef is not that far out of line, he said.

Good said calves in 2014 are averaging $2.40 cwt. while feeder cattle are $2 and fed cattle $1.50. He said CattleFax expects prices should be stronger again on average in 2015, but larger supplies of beef by 2016 and larger total meat supplies will limit prices by then.

Lowering corn prices are giving the industry some relief. They are the lowest since 2010, and are expected to average in the $4 per bushel range, and possibly in the upper $3s, for the year. Production in 2014 is expected to be in the 14 billion bushel range, he said. Range conditions are the third best they have been in the past 20 years, Good said. El Nino has been moderately strong, and is also providing relief for much of the country devastated by drought. However, he said the industry is still in the midst of a 20-year drought, so producers should still be cautious about conditions for 2015, 16 and 17.

Exports are increasing, and will continue to be a key component of producer profitability, according to Good. The China market (including Taiwan and Hong Kong) has become the top importer of beef in the world and will continue to be a critical export market for beef-producing countries in the future. Good said about 17-18 percent of a beef animal's value is exported in beef, variety meats and hides, and producers should recognize the importance of this income source.

"We are living in extraordinary times," Good said. "And prices are going to be continually strong over the next couple of years." Still, he urged producers in the audience to exercise caution. "It's easy to be optimistic today," he said. "But markets don't go up forever."

—Source: National Cattlemen's Beef Association Release

HELPING HANDS

Drought Compensation Available for Livestock Producers

Program retroactive to Oct. 2011

Story By Mark Cadle for Cattlemen's News

—Cattlemen's News File Photo

Did you own livestock in 2012? What a year that was! Pastures and ponds dried up. Hay was a hot commodity and in some cases, hard to find. Things might have looked pretty bleak at the time. Fast forward to the passage of the 2014 Farm Bill with legislation authorizing the Livestock Forage Disaster Assistance Program (LFP).

The Farm Bill provided retroactive authority to cover grazing losses back to Oct. 1, 2011. If you owned livestock during this time, you might be eligible for payment through the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA). Sign-up for LFP began in April, and I encourage livestock producers who have not applied to contact their local FSA county office as soon as possible.

Drought compensation payments are equal to 60 percent of the monthly feed cost for up to five months. FSA calculates LFP payments based on head of eligible livestock owned or leased at the time of the drought or by the carrying capacity of the grazing land.

Eligible livestock include beef and dairy cattle, alpacas, buffalo, beefalo, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats, llamas, poultry, reindeer, sheep and swine that would have been grazing during the drought. The livestock must have been maintained for commercial use as part of the farming operation. For example, excluded uses include animals used for recreational purposes such as show animals, pets or pleasure riding or roping. If you sold, or otherwise disposed of your livestock because of the drought, you might still qualify for a payment.

Applying for the program is fairly simple. FSA will have you certify the number of acres and types of forage and the number of head of livestock you owned or leased in 2012. In some counties, a qualifying drought event also happened in 2011 and 2013. Your local office will be able to tell you how many months will be used in your payment calculation.

In Missouri, we have processed more than 31,000 applications to date. If you have not already applied or set an appointment, contact your local FSA office for additional information. A listing of USDA Service Centers can be found at *www.fsa.usda.gov* and click on "Contact Us".

—Source: Mark Cadle is state executive director, Missouri Farm Service Agency.

MANAGEMENT MATTERS

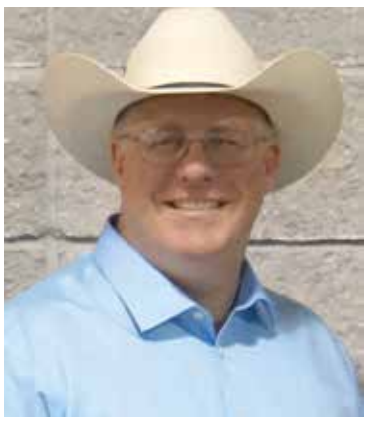
Maximize Dollars Per Acre

Take this high time as a chance to improve the cowherd

Story By Rebecca Mettler for Cattlemen's News

Improving profit through genetics is in his "wheelhouse."

Lee Leachman ought to know how the two are intertwined. He's spent 27 years in the seedstock business as owner and CEO of Leachman Cattle of Colorado. His operation provides Angus, Red Angus, Charolais and composite breeds for cattle producers on a national and international level.



Lee Leachman

Leachman spoke Aug. 5 to attendees of the Fall Cattlemen's Seminar in Springfield, Missouri, sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc., and Dow AgroSciences.

"We are in a fun time in the business," Leachman said. "We are in a time when we are making more money that ever. What better time is there to invest in the profitability of your cowherd than today."

Leachman understands there are many variables pertaining to profitability in a cattle operation. As a self-described numbers guy, Leachman is quick to study cattle performance and the contributing factors.

He urges producers to ask themselves three questions when bringing genetics back to their herd, whether in the form of a cow, bull or unit of semen.

1) How much does it eat?

2) How well does it reproduce?

3) How much does it weigh?

Leachman cites those three as the driving forces in profit of an operation and affect the potential for cows to make money.

"Because at the end of the day it's all about how much that calf weighs," he explained. "What's that output worth, times that reproduction, less that cost."

Moderating Cow Size

"As an industry, we focused on increasing output over the last 30 years. We've tried to make cattle grow faster, sooner and brag about how much our calves weigh," Leachman said.

Once Expected Progeny Differences (EPD)s were widely available and accepted, they were used to select for increase output, he said. But as the industry continued to put selection pressure on growth traits, the results came with a hidden cost.

Heifers that grew faster and bigger turned into cows that eventually weighed more and milked heavier. Leachman also pointed out that if cows weigh more, by nature, they are going to eat more.

He estimates that the average cowherd today, if sired by an average Angus bull born in 2005, has a yearling weight (YW) EPD of 67. But as he said, that number does not give you bragging rights. Today, it's not uncommon to have bulls with 100 to 115 for YW.

"How big are the cows that made these 100 to 110 pounders? They are big," Leachman noted. "Watch those cows weigh over 1700 pounds. That's the genetic trend that's going on in these breeds as we select for more and more size."

Since bigger cows eat more, producers are forced to run fewer cows on their acreage. Those heavier cows also will wean a smaller percentage of their body weight.

"This is bad news," Leachman said. "It's the kind of sleeper message behind that 100 pound YW EPD."

"If you are too big, that's OK," Leachman said. "The market is great. Use that opportunity to invest and back that herd up a little bit."

Measuring Intake, Efficiency

Take two bulls, weaned on the same day, fed the same ration and weighing the same 70 days after entering the feedlot. Which one was more efficient?

"You can't tell. That's the first lesson," Leachman reasoned. "You can't tell unless you measure."

Leachman believes that intake is essential. To date, he has measured intake on 12,000 head and has an Intake EPD calculated on his cattle.

"At the end of the day if you were to build a profitable cowherd, you would be best to buy daughters out of a low-intake bull compared to the high-intake bulls," Leachman said.

He went on to explain that the daughters of the low-intake bulls are going to be more profitable than the daughters of the high-intake bulls.

At 40 percent heritability, feed intake is one of the most heritable measured traits. The trait drives how much cattle eat every day of their lives, Leachman said.

Keeping Them in the Herd

Fertility and longevity are two major factors in profitability. However, those two traits are lowly heritable so it's hard to improve them with EPDs. Hybrid vigor, the result of a crossbreeding system, has a big effect.

Over the course of her lifetime, a crossbred cow will wean 23 percent more pounds per cow exposed compared to a straight-bred cow. Eight percent of the increase comes from an increased weaning weight. The other 15 percent of the increase is due to longevity and reproduction, according to Leachman.

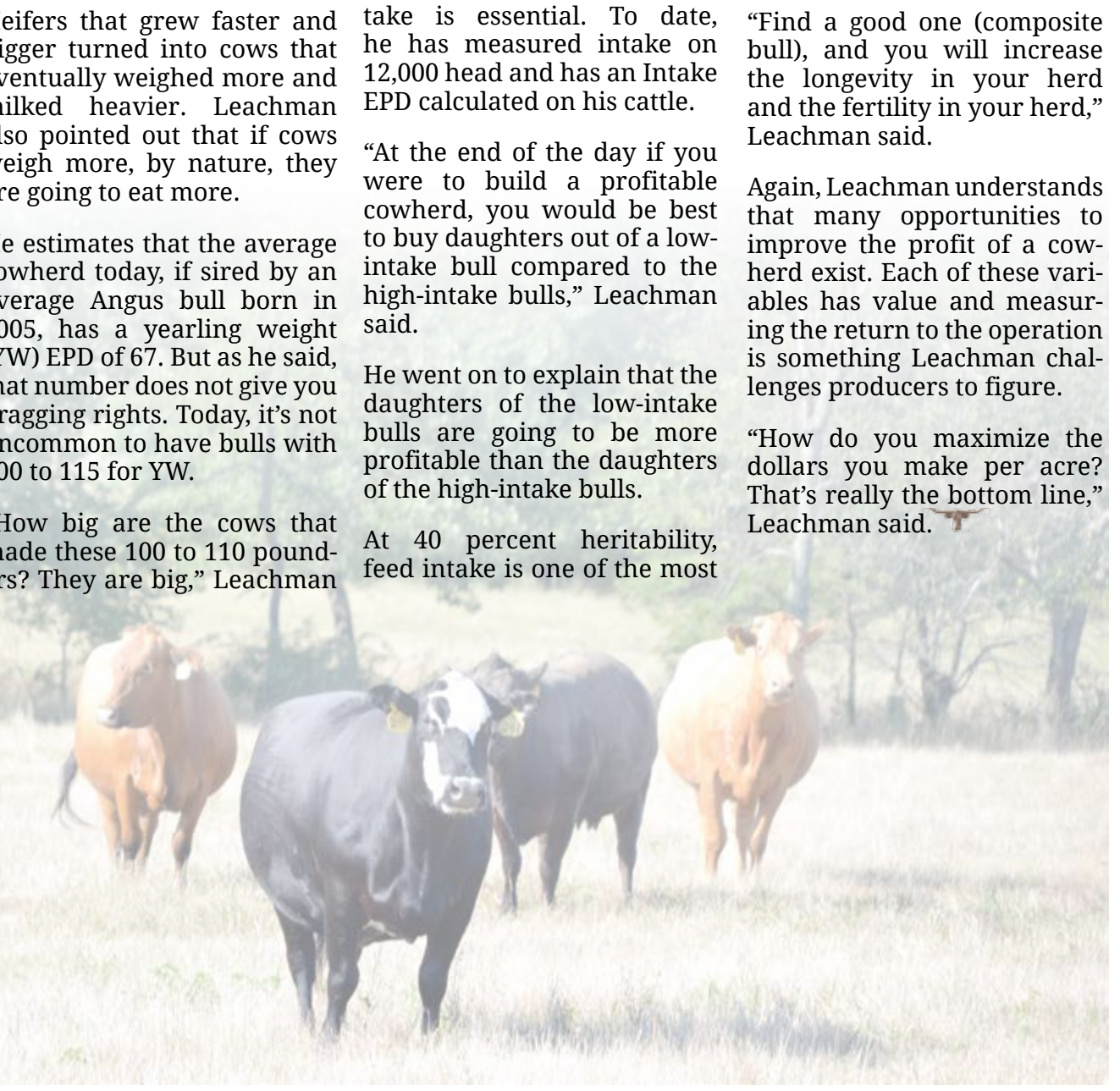
"That's a big factor," Leachman said. "Try to have a planned crossbreeding system."

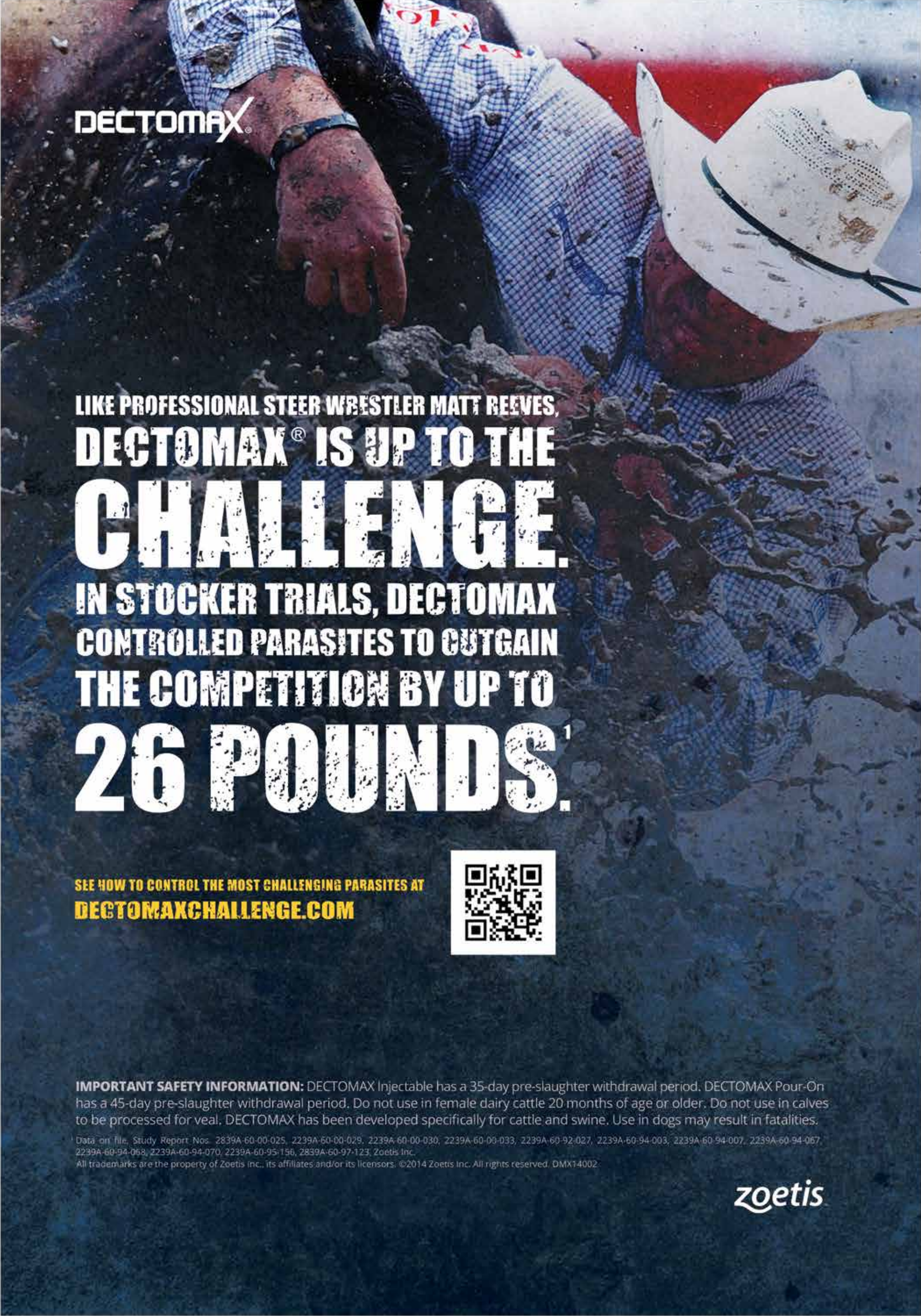
Keeping a planned crossbreeding system and uniformity within the herd has become easier with the development and availability of quality composite or hybrid breeds.

"Find a good one (composite bull), and you will increase the longevity in your herd and the fertility in your herd," Leachman said.

Again, Leachman understands that many opportunities to improve the profit of a cowherd exist. Each of these variables has value and measuring the return to the operation is something Leachman challenges producers to figure.

"How do you maximize the dollars you make per acre? That's really the bottom line," Leachman said.





IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION: DECTOMAX Injectable has a 35-day pre-slaughter withdrawal period. DECTOMAX Pour-On has a 45-day pre-slaughter withdrawal period. Do not use in female dairy cattle 20 months of age or older. Do not use in calves to be processed for veal. DECTOMAX has been developed specifically for cattle and swine. Use in dogs may result in fatalities.

[1] Data on file. Study Report Nos. 2839A-60-00-025, 2239A-60-00-029, 2239A-60-00-030, 2239A-60-00-033, 2239A-60-92-027, 2239A-60-94-003, 2239A-60-94-007, 2239A-60-94-067, 2239A-60-94-068, 2239A-60-94-070, 2239A-60-95-156, 2839A-60-97-123, Zoetis Inc.

zoetis

TRENDING NOW

Drones Face Regulatory Hurdles

Unmanned aerial vehicles advance agriculture

Story By Corey Moffet

Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), more commonly referred to as drones in a majority of media outlets, have played an important role in U.S. military operations. These sophisticated flying machines have proven their utility in this arena, albeit at a huge price. Now the UAV industry is looking to expand into the civilian world, and the agricultural sector is expected to play a large role in this expansion.

Currently, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is determining how unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) might be safely integrated into the national airspace system. The FAA uses the acronym "UAS" to include the UAV and all the associated support equipment, such as control stations, data links, telemetry, communications and navigation equipment. Often the image that comes to mind when thinking about UAVs or drones is something like the iconic Predator with its nearly 60-foot wingspan and a loaded weight of more than one ton. This type of UAV will occupy the same airspace routinely used by general and commercial aviation.

The challenge the FAA has in figuring out how to safely integrate these large UAVs into the national airspace is not trivial. However, agriculture can benefit from UAVs much smaller than the Predator. A system with a takeoff weight less than 55 pounds is classified as a small UAS by the FAA, and the agency has made it a priority to propose new rules governing their use. These UAVs are more of the scale and type that are legally flown now at elevations of 400 feet above ground level and lower by hobbyists for recreational purposes. Many of these UAVs can be easily disassembled and transported in a case the size of a large briefcase.

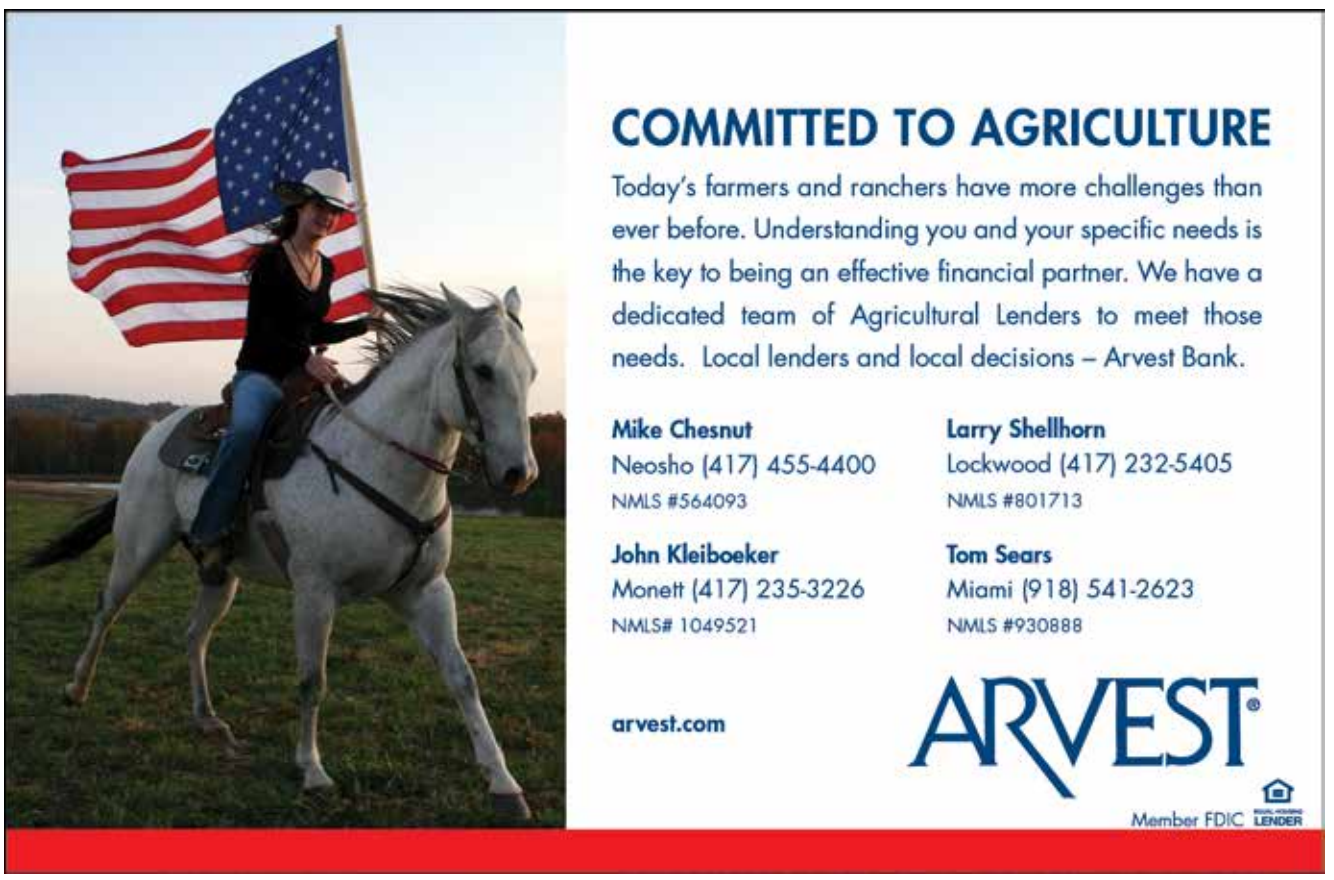
Like other classes of aircraft, small UAVs can be fixed wing or rotary wing. The fixed-wing aircraft tend to be more stable and require less power to stay aloft than the rotary-wing craft, but they are also less agile. Many UAVs use an autopilot system to sense their position and altitude, and make necessary corrections to stay upright and on path. Once this type of UAV is airborne, the operator has little or nothing to do with the flight. Flight plans are typically designed using software on a laptop computer, and the flight path is communicated over a data link to the UAV.

When the flight is complete, the UAV returns to a spot the operator has designated for safe landing. Some rotary-wing aircraft can return to the very same spot where they began flight. Initially, UAVs will be useful for agriculture because of their ability to deploy meaningful sensors, making it easy for users to observe resources from a vantage point not previously feasible.

In some ways, UAV technology is positioned where personal computer technology was in the late 1970s. Computers at that time were large and very expensive, but they had proven useful in government and business. The personal computer was mainly of interest to hobbyists and produced few real-world benefits. Many believed the personal computer would remain a curiosity of this small group of enthusiasts. At that time, it would have been hard to believe that one day many families would own multiple computers or even imagine the now ubiquitous smartphones and tablets. The high cost and difficulty of using a personal computer in the 1970s were big adoption hurdles.

For the UAV today, the hurdles are regulations, cost and the lack of simple tools that can use sensor data to help producers make decisions. In crops such as corn and soybean, a number of tools are already available, and the development of similar tools for rangelands and forage crops will follow. If UAVs follow a similar path as the PC, low cost and useful tools will come - perhaps in ways we can't even imagine now.

—Source: This article is reprinted with permission from the Samuel L. Roberts Noble Foundation for Agriculture.



TRENDING NOW

Proposed Rule Could Enhance Tracking of Ground Beef Sources

K-State meat scientist outlines how it could affect beef producers, packers, consumers

Story By Katie Allen

A recently proposed rule by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) would require grocery stores and supermarkets to keep more documentation on ground beef sources, which could assist in more timely traceability of a particular beef source that may have caused a foodborne illness.

The proposed rule would require retailers to keep records of all the sources of ground beef that they grind in-store, said Travis O'Quinn, assistant professor in the Department of Animal Sciences and Industry at Kansas State University.

Traditionally, he said, retailers combine beef purchased specifically for grinding with beef products that might have hit the end of their shelf-life in a whole muscle cut form, such as roasts and steaks, to create the ground beef products consumers see on shelves. This limits traceability to a specific source of potentially contaminated meat if a foodborne illness outbreak were to occur.

"Currently, there aren't regulations that require those retailers to track what products, the amounts and the sources of those products that go into their store's ground product. The proposed rule would change that," O'Quinn said.

With the rule in place, consumers could potentially know about a ground beef product contaminated with E. coli, for example, more rapidly and hopefully before the product is consumed in the home, he said.

For retailers, the rule would require extra record keeping on products all the way through the grinding process, but O'Quinn said this extra work could save the retailers time down the road if they needed to help public health officials trace a contaminated product.

The rule does not affect the beef ground and packaged prior to the retail level, as these pre-packaged, case-ready products are already sourced, he said. It is intended specifically for meat ground in-store.

"Because of the added record keeping, we may see more case-ready products coming directly from the packers and producers to the retail store, already in a shelf-ready state as opposed to grinding at the retail level," O'Quinn said.

"This is just a proposal right now, so there is a 60-day time period where it will be open for comments, suggestions, thoughts and concerns," he added. "The USDA will review those comments before it goes into effect."

For more information about the proposed rule and to view or submit comments, visit the USDA FSIS website at *www.fsis.usda.gov.*

—Source: Katie Allen is with Kansas State University Research and Extension News.

MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Feedlot Focus: Cattle Temperament

Researchers examine how temperament of cattle could affect their immune function, carcass merit

Story By Katie Allen

As a new load of weaned calves enters the feedlot, workers prepare to process the calves. Processing would likely include vaccinating these calves to prevent respiratory disease and treating them for parasites, among other regular processing procedures. Many handlers would agree that the calves with more docile, or calm, temperaments are easier and safer to process.

Cattle producers of all types—from the cow-calf, stocker and feedlot sectors—historically have selected for and preferred to manage calmer animals not only because they are safer for handlers to be around, but they also seem to gain weight faster and have fewer health issues.

Recent research involving many universities, including Kansas State, examined the genetics of bovine temperament and how it relates to two important aspects of production: immune function, specifically animals' susceptibility to bovine respiratory disease (BRD), and carcass merit. It found, as previous research has also indicated, that temperament is a moderately heritable trait producers can select for in their herds.

Bob Weaber, beef breeding and genetics specialist for K-State Research and Extension and one of the researchers on the project, said this study showed that animals with a more favorable temperament gained better on feed compared to more excitable animals. Because of this, they were more mature overall at harvest and seemed to have carcass fat, which is desirable to an extent for better quality grades. But, at extreme levels, the extra fat is undesirable for both quality and yield grades.

Temperament and its relation to the disease component of the study was a little harder for the researchers to separate, he said, and yielded some somewhat surprising findings.

About the study

Weaber worked with many other researchers on the project that was led by Mark Enns, professor of animal sciences at Colorado State University. They collected data in 2007 and 2008 as part of a large study to look at the genetics of feedlot cattle health.

"It was an involved project in that it took a lot of human hands to pull off," Weaber said. "We processed data on more than 2,500 head of steers fed in southeast Colorado during those two years."

It took the researchers about five days to process the cattle upon arrival at the feedlot, he said. Ultrasound information helped the researchers determine the animals' body composition, both when they were placed on feed and at subsequent processing about 80 days into the feeding period. The researchers also collected temperament data at these times and monitored the animals closely for disease, specifically BRD, at all times.

The researchers measured temperament in two ways: chute score and exit velocity. The chute score scale defined by the Beef Improvement Federation ranges from 1 to 6, where calmer animals are at the lower end and the most aggravated cattle, the ones Weaber said "test every weld on the squeeze chute," are at the higher end.

"In this case, most of the animals scored 2, 3 and 4, which is typical of beef cattle categorization in the United States," he said.

Exit velocity was calculated based on the time it took an animal to cover a defined distance of 6 feet, after it was released from the chute.

Additionally, a blood sample from each animal was taken during processing to examine concentrations of cortisol and interleukin-8 (IL-8). High levels of cortisol indicate stress in cattle, while high levels of IL-8 show a more active or functional immune system, Weaber said.

Health: Surprising Results

At first thought, producers might desire low levels of cor-

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

CATTLE TEMPERAMENT FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

tisol and high levels of IL-8 in their cattle, Weaber said, as these cattle would likely be calmer and have stronger immune responses. However, this study found that concentrations of IL-8 had a positive relationship with animals classified with BRD, while concentrations of cortisol had a strong negative genetic relationship with BRD—an interesting and unexpected finding of this study.

Weaber said he understands this finding to mean that a strong immune response could cost an animal a lot of energy. Animals with strong immune responses, and higher levels of IL-8, might generate fevers and have other negative responses that could affect performance.

"Animals that get sick, manage the disease in a more moderate way and tolerate the infection, versus have a large immune response, actually perform better," Weaber said. "These animals don't spend as much energy fighting the disease. They do it sufficiently, obviously, and survive the incidence of BRD."

The results of this particular project helped stem a larger U.S. Department of Agriculture project examining the genetics and genomics associated with BRD, he said. In this study, researchers are doing a series of inoculations on animals to make sure each one is exposed to BRD disease pathogens and then monitoring how they respond to it.

Another surprising finding of the research that challenged interpretation, Weaber said, was the second chute score observation on the animals that occurred 80 days into the feeding period, as it related to BRD incidence. The researchers found that animals of higher chute score, the ones with less desirable temperament, had a substantially lower incidence of BRD.

Observational data from past studies, he said, has shown that animals respond differently to handling over time. Some animals acclimate to human handling when they have positive experiences and become easier to handle.

"I wonder if the animals that had BRD early in the feeding period, which is when most of them did, were handled more and had lower chute scores the second time around," he said. "That might create that inverse relationship we observed in the data."

Carcass Merit Expected

The researchers found that animals with genetics to be more temperamental, based on chute scores, typically had genetic merit for slightly heavier carcass weights, slightly larger ribeye areas, numerically lower, more favorable yield grades, but slightly worse marbling scores compared to calmer cattle. Those were all relatively weak relationships though, Weaber said.

Stronger relationships, he said, existed between carcass merit and concentrations of cortisol and IL-8 in the blood. These results were somewhat different than the relationships observed between carcass merit and temperament scores.

"We found animals that had genetic merit for elevated cortisol upon arrival at the feedyard were associated with genetic merit for lighter carcass weights at the end of the feeding period—an indicator they weren't expected to perform quite as well," Weaber said. "They also were genetically associated with slightly lower marbling scores and smaller ribeye areas."

IL-8 concentration from a genetics standpoint, he said, was positively associated with hot carcass weight and marbling score, meaning those cattle with higher immune response had the genetic potential to be heavier and fatter. IL-8 concentration did not have a relationship with ribeye area and had a slight positive genetic association with yield grade, meaning it related to less desirable, higher yield grades.

"All of this suggests that more excitable cattle will weigh and gain less throughout the finishing phase than their calmer peers," Weaber said.

Information you can use

Weaber recommends that cattle producers practice

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

Here, Not There

How to put lime or fertilizer exactly where it's needed

Story By Rebecca Mettler for Cattlemen's News

Intensive grid soil sampling and precise fertilizer or lime application is a common tool for row crop farmers. Now this technology is becoming more popular for use by cattle producers looking to exact their nutrient application for hay fields and pastures.

"The main goal is make your grass more efficient," said Travis Watson, MFA Precision sales manager for Southwest Missouri. "(You get) more efficiency by putting that product where it needs to be not just flat-rating it."

Watson and Eric Preston, MFA Precision sales manager based in Southeast Kansas, explained the Precision Advantage and NUTRI-TRACK System to attendees of a MFA Inc. and Pennington Seed informational meeting held Aug. 14 at Joplin Regional Stockyards.

A flat-rate application can put too much fertilizer or lime in one spot and not enough in another spot according to Watson.

"We put on the exact amount of lime that is needed. More than likely you're not going to need two tons per acre," Watson said. "You might need two tons per acre over here, but only 500 pounds over there."

Intensive grid soil sampling is more accurate than the traditional soil sampling protocol most commonly used in agriculture. The sampling pinpoints the nutrient differences within acreage. It is the first step in the NUTRI-TRACK System.

Grid soil sampling splits the designated acreage into 2½-acre grids. Roughly eight to 10 samples are pulled from each 2½-acre grid and tested separately.

"That's how we get the data that we are going to put together to make the maps and a book," Watson said.

The results are then run through the Precision Advantage computer system and saved for future reference. Results are logged, and maps are created for the customer. The four-year program provides producers with one intensive soil sample test, record keeping, field maps and as many nutrient recommendations as needed.

The pair understands that not every client can place his or her entire farm into the program. It's common for producers to test one quarter of their farm one year and so on for the next few years.

Preston said that he has two types of clients—ones that bring their best field into the system and others who want information on their worst field.

Often, the "best field" clients will come back to him saying that the testing did nothing for them.

"Right, you gave me something that has nothing wrong to begin with," Preston said. "I want to see your worst possible field."

Both Watson and Preston recommended cattlemen start by signing up their hay fields with the program.

"That's where you will see your biggest return," Preston said.

Not only is the system advantageous for higher hay and pasture yields, but it also has the possibility to save producers money on lime application.

"We are showing 85 percent of the time we can save you money," Watson said. "You can pay for this program with the money you have saved."

In liming situations, the program saved participants in Southwest Missouri an average of $20.64 an acre over the cost of lime application. This savings is due to the pH variance within the same field and the ability to apply only what's needed.

The variation in soil pH can be drastic and can change rapidly. Preston describes a location that hadn't been farmed in 20 years but still had a huge swing in pH.

"There was not even five acres between that high spot where the pH was at seven to five.," Preston said. "That's why we go on that 2 ½-acre grids—so we don't miss that variability."

The timing of intensive grid soil sampling is important. It is recommended to test hay fields after hay season is over and before fertilization.

"Make sure you get a hold of us before you do some spreading," Watson said. "That's going to throw the numbers off."

Watson also recommends fall application of phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) because it takes three to four months for the nutrients to break down into a form easily absorbed by the roots. Plus, there is not as much of a rush in the fall for fertilizer applications compared to spring.

In order for sampling to be consistent, Preston hopes that producers will do their soil sampling during the same time of the year.

"If we sample this year in October, in four years I want to do it in October," Preston said. "I don't want to do it in April. There are things going on in the soil (microbial activity) that skew those numbers."

The program also offers flexibility. They recognize that producers' production goals and plans change.

"We can do about just anything you want as far as adjusting the rates to what your operation does," Preston said.

MANAGEMENT MATTERS

How to Feed from the Stem, Not the Bale Ring

Extend the grazing season with stockpiled fescue

Story By Beth Walker for Cattlemen's News

As I have outlined in previous articles, my animals at home are employees. Each has a specific job, and if one fails, it gets fired. Feeding those four-legged employees is how I pay them.

Grazing my animals 365 days a year is the least expensive way I have to feed them. We all have a love/hate relationship with fescue, but stockpiled fescue should be when you love it the most. In fact, grazing fescue in the late fall/winter is the best time to graze the cool season grass. The optimal way to keep animals grazing for as long as possible is to stockpile fescue pastures. Stockpiling is simply the accumulation of forage, in this case fescue, so it can be used during the dormant season.

On average, fescue will continue to grow until about October 15. Pastures should be grazed down to about 3 to 4 inches in height before giving that pasture at least 60 to 75 days rest. Granted, less rest will provide a higher quality pasture. However, more rest will give you greater volume of forage. After you have grazed your selected pasture, fertilize with a good nitrogen-based fertilizer, unless you have a good stand of legumes mixed in with your pasture or your soil tests indicate no need to fertilize. Results from studies suggest that for every pound of nitrogen added to a pasture, 20 lbs of forage grew. If a good late summer, early fall shower hits, then your pasture should be set for stockpiling.

When compared to fescue hay baled in the spring, the endophyte in stockpiled fescue will be at a lesser concentration. Another advantage of strip-grazing fescue includes a more nutritious feed source than fescue hay. Dollar for dollar, stockpiling is cheaper than baling hay and you might just be feeding a better, higher-quality feed. Fall-growing fescue maintains its quality (protein/TDN) until well into the winter months. In fact, stockpiled fescue often will be of greater quality than spring-baled fescue hay. During the fall, sugars in fescue will be at their highest levels, and the digestible dry matter percent is better in the fall, than in the spring or summer months. Again, stockpiled fescue will be able to maintain nutritional advantage well into winter. Another benefit of stockpiling fescue is that it has a dense sod base so it can better withstand trampling than other forages.

So if all the cards fall right, stockpiled fescue can yield from 2,000 – 8,000 lbs per acre and again have a maximum protein content between 16 and 18 percent remaining above 10 percent through the winter. Energy levels in the stockpiled fescue should also be adequate for most animals. In order to best utilize stockpiled fescue, strip grazing is recommended. If strip grazing, cows will consume about 30 to 35 pounds for grass per day. If you allow them free access to the stockpiled forage, they might consume, or waste, as much as 55 lbs per day. If you add up the additional wasted feed, you are leaving money on the table.

Again, keep your animals off the stockpiled pasture until you are ready to graze during the dormant months. Depending upon your location and management style, stockpiling fescue can give you an additional 45 to 60 days of grazing.

—Beth Walker is associate professor of agriculture at Missouri State University.

Where Does the Cattle Feeder Hang His Hat?

An optimistic future if U.S. focuses on quality beef

Story By Rebecca Mettler for Cattlemen's News

Step back. Take a few minutes to view the cattle industry through the cattle feeder's lens.

If you are a cow/calf producer, that's what the nation's fifth largest cattle feeder would like you to do.

Speaking Aug. 5 at the Fall Cattlemen's Seminar in Springfield, Missouri, Beef Marketing Group (BMG) CEO John Butler told producers he has an optimistic view of the future for the U.S. beef industry as long as it focuses on one thing—providing a high quality product for domestic and export markets.

"If we focus on a differentiated product based on the strongest attribute that our product has, that being taste, flavor and juiciness, I think we are going to be in good shape and will continue to be in the foreseeable future," Butler said.

John Butler
Beef Marketing Group

In the past, BMG, a cooperation of 19 feedyards in Kansas and Nebraska sold a number of cattle on the live market. But, as cattle became worth more and packers sent economic signals for quality within their grid, cattle feeders changed their behavior.

"I'm here to say that commodity is not going out the door, but my company, is going to focus on quality," Butler said.

There is a huge market for U.S. high-quality beef. Butler said it's as clear as the nose on our face that we cannot compete with nations like Brazil and Argentina in a grassfed beef system, based on the worth of U.S. land and water.

"On the other hand, we have the reputation of producing high-quality beef, and no one else can do that," Butler said. "They can't do it as effectively and with the reputation we have."

Butler points out that the U.S. is not only receiving the economic signals pushing towards quality domestically, but also from export markets.

"Exports accounted for $307 a head that will reach cow/calf in 2013," Butler said. "I don't know anything else that adds $307 when you really are just selling them a high-quality product."

Living up to the Quality Target

Butler sees improvements in genetics as the biggest opportunity for the advancement of quality beef. He is excited to see tools that can predict feeder cattle performance. Those tools ultimately help him better understand the raw product arriving at his and other feedyards.

He also believes that the increased demand for quality cattle should influence the decisions at the cow/calf level.

Butler and other cattle feeders are willing to pay a premium for cattle with a known health history. He wants to receive as much documented and verified information as possible. He is also willing to be a part of a discount strategy if the calves aren't represented correctly.

"We are going to need a specified product," Butler said. "We need to have tighter specifications on the feeder cattle that we are going to buy."

Butler notes that the consumer will likely be calling the shots when it comes to information and verification. He understands this because he spends a third of his time speaking with the end user, both in retail and food service.

"We are into this group of millenials," Butler said. "They have smartphones, they can look up things while they are at the meat case and find out information. We better be ready for that."

Another important, possibly prohibitive, factor is the consumers' negative stance on technology.

"The consumer is saying no more technology," Butler said. "But if we don't use technology, the cost is going to go up, so we have to do a better job educating."

This entails educating the consumer about technologies such as implants and beta agonists and the role those play in cattle production. They are easy and safe to use and produce a safe, wholesome product. Consumers also need to know that they will be the benefactors of that technology because they are getting a better product at a good value, according to Butler.

These and other improvements are what Butler sees as the future for the U.S. beef industry.

"The most feasible strategy, in my opinion, is to produce high-quality beef for domestic consumption and export," Butler said. "And, import lean, low-cost beef for grinding."

The bottom line is quality is where Butler and BMG will hang their hats.

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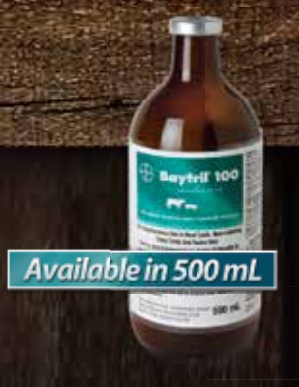

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MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Equal Billing

Split calving seasons help cattleman diversify

Story and Photo By Joann Pipkin, Editor

The talk at the coffee shop wouldn't be uncommon. The battle of spring vs. fall calving seasons often generates much discussion—each lending value to the bantering cattlemen.

Both options, though, have found a place on Robert Bullis' operation. Bullis, who leases his 245-head commercial cowherd from Top Notch Farms near Carthage, Missouri, manages both spring and fall-calving seasons. And the reason why is simple. Diversity.

"I can market calves twice a year this way," Bullis explained.

Bullis runs about 195 head of the cows as spring calvers, while only 45 are held in the fall program despite some definite advantages to calving then.

"The weather seems to be better, and there's better grass in the early fall," Bullis noted. "The marketability of the calves the following spring is usually favorable."

Fall-calving cows need to carry more flesh than spring calvers, he said, because a harsh winter will be harder on those cows. Thus, they require more hay.

Thus, Bullis prefers to calve the majority of his cows in the spring, citing it's easier on the cows to do so. For him, spring calving begins in February and lasts until April. "When calving season is just about over, the grass is starting to green-up and the calves hit that grass and start growing," Bullis said.

While maintaining two calving seasons, Bullis is adamant about consistent management between the two.

His cows are grained very little with feed given about once a week only to assist with handling at weaning time.

Pastures are sowed in primarily MaxQ fescue or are home to native grass, and Bullis strives for a 30-day rotation. "I try to keep fresh grass with the cows all the time," he explained.

Other mixed grasses and bermuda also make up Bullis' forage program. Cows are supplemented year-round with protein tubs and salt mix.

"You've got to feed cows quality hay," Bullis emphasized. "If you do that, you can kind of slide them on grain. The tubs (I feed) are 16 percent protein. That helps the cows milk a lot better, too."

Body condition of the cow means everything to Bullis. "You've got to treat your cows right," he said. "Vaccinate. De-worm. And, I like to wean the calves at 600-700 pounds. I like to rest the momma cow. That cow needs three months rest, if not more. Get her body condition back, rest that udder."

Bulls are turned in with the cows for 63 days in both spring and fall programs. "That is religion," Bullis said.

At about 3.5 months after breeding, cows are checked for pregnancy. Bullis has found the tail-bleeding method to be less evasive, especially on older cows.

That narrow calving window has helped Bullis achieve greater uniformity in both the spring and fall-born calves at market time. At weaning, he said his steer calves weigh 650 to 700 pounds with their heifer mates at 600-650 pounds—all without creep feed.

Bullis is also consistent in managing both sets of calves at weaning, entering them in a wean-vac program through Joplin Regional Stockyards.

Spring-born calves are weaned around the first of October, pre-conditioning them for about 60 days before marketing in late November, early December. Fall-born calves are weaned in May and preconditioned, as well, prior to marketing.

Calves are given their first round of immunizations and de-wormed while still nursing the cow. Then, about 2.5 weeks later, he'll wean the calves and deliver the second round of immunizations.

"Then, the calves are on their way," Bullis said. "Calves are healthier and really do better when preconditioned."

And, that's something buyers appreciate, Bullis noted. "Buyers want those cattle weaned first. They want them weaned so that when they buy them in November and December, they are ready for the winter."

Bullis said non-preconditioned cattle often see discounts of $10 per hundred, even $15 or $16 per hundred at times.

"You can afford to wean that calf for an extra $150 per head," he explained. "It pays in the long run. It goes in your pocket."

The bottom line for Robert Bullis, when it comes to calving seasons, is that dividing his herd into both spring and fall calving programs helps diversify his operation and spread out his risk. For him, that means pay day comes twice.

Spring vs. Fall Calving

What's your best option?

Story By Rebecca Lewis for Cattlemen's News

Yes, there are trade-offs between fall and spring calving seasons. University of Missouri Extension Regional Livestock Specialist Patrick Davis says you should pick the option that best fits your operation.

Weigh Nutrition Requirements

The availability of forage and/or supplementation should be evaluated before choosing between a fall and spring calving cowherd.

"In the fall, you are taking those cows through peak lactation on dormant grass unless you have good stockpiled fescue," Davis said.

Fall calving cows should begin the calving season with a body condition score (BCS) of 6, according to Davis. This gives the cows a little extra, so she has more condition to lose before becoming too thin during the winter months.

Winter can be rough on fall calving cows. They must not only raise a growing calf, but also breed back. Reproductive performance is dependent on body condition at the time of breeding. Davis suggested keeping cows at a BCS 5 during the breeding season.

Breeding season for spring calving cows can be tricky, too. Summer heat stress along with fescue toxicosis will negatively influence pregnancy rates.

However, the timing of peak lactation and forage availability with spring calving cows is just the opposite.

"They will be in peak lactation when pastures are green and growing. Use a good mix of forage varieties to give them adequate energy and protein for optimum performance," Davis said.

The Right Decision for You

Choosing fall or spring calving also has a lot to do with personal preference.

Time commitments, independent of the cattle operation, can take producers away from the calving pastures. If producers have a row crop operation, they will tend to adjust the spring calving season to free up time for planting. Furthermore, they will adjust the fall calving season to free up time for harvest.

Davis knows that many cattle producers have both a spring and fall calving season, whether that strategy was an intended one or not.

"A lot do have both. Sometimes it's a product of cattle not conceiving in the fall calving season and being rolled over to the spring calving season or vice versa," Davis noted.

Others will have two calving seasons to spread out the income and labor. Producers will get two paychecks a year instead of just one.

The decision is made — now to choose the calving window.

Farmers will always have Mother Nature to battle. Picking the right time for calving is critical.

Davis recommended a fall calving herd to calve in late September to late October or early November. Cooler, more favorable weather is likely during that time of the year.

He cited problems might occur when calving in the late summer months of late August or early September.

"If we have a lot of heat and fescue toxicity issues, sometimes those cows will calve early," Davis said. "It might be in such a way that the calf does not develop correctly leading to mortality or it puts stress on the calf which could follow that calf in decreased performance down the road."

Picking an optimal time to calve in the spring is also important.

"Some people like to calve from January to mid-February," Davis explained. "To me, that's not a good idea."

Davis doesn't advise calving from January to mid-February unless producers have a calving barn or calving pastures with trees or brush for cover and plans to watch the cattle closely. Instead, he suggests a 60-day calving window from mid-February to mid-April.

Crushing Out the Quality

Custom silage harvester shares how corn silage makes top-notch feed

Story and Photos By Joann Pipkin, Editor

Timing is everything. That's what 30 years as a custom silage harvester has taught Eric Kramer.

Cattlemen's News caught up with Kramer recently as he harvested corn silage for a farmer near LaRussell, Missouri.

"You have a small window to get the corn harvested for silage," Kramer explained. "You have to be timely. Breakdown is a serious matter."

Armed with 10-row headers, two choppers can tackle about 500 acres in a couple of days — barring no setbacks.

Based in southwest Kansas, Kramer said the choppers are equipped with either two engines or one, V-12. Both produce around 880 horsepower.

"When I started, the chopper was about 290 horsepower, and we would put about 400 horsepower engines in them," he explained. "Now, we are up to 880 horsepower and the machines are more reliable than they used to be. They are also quite efficient."

Kramer chops "pretty much anything green," he said, including corn, sorghum, triticale and alfalfa. The veteran custom harvests from Kansas to Florida to Georgia, Texas and Missouri. He spends from March to October on the road every year.

In addition to custom silage chopping for small, independent farmers, Kramer also chops for large dairies in some locations. While he staffed two machines in southwest Missouri, Kramer runs six machines total. At any given time, between 20 and 30 trucks and five choppers might be running at once.

Making Quality Feed

According to Kramer, corn silage, especially makes excellent livestock feed. "Corn provides good energy. We have kernel processors that allow the corn to be crushed. This allows us to chop the corn a little bit drier."

And, that is good news for feedlots as they can get more energy out of the corn crop and yields better utilization.

Kramer reported corn all across the U.S. has been good quality this year. Timely rains have grown the crop into a healthy one all the way through, he said.

Lack of moisture late in the growing season didn't seem to impact the silage crop, Kramer said. "We were able to chop while the crop was still green. It made good ears, good kernels."

As the corn is harvested, it travels through a roller mill that grinds the kernels, which requires a lot of horsepower. "We lose about a third of our production just running the mill," Kramer noted.

"It does a nice job, really makes super feed," Kramer said adding, the roller mill utilizes the corn much better than traditional methods.

Under good, running conditions Kramer said the chopper fills a truck in four to five minutes, with each one holding 28 to 30 tons of silage.

Making quality feed begins by determining the moisture content of the corn.

"We try to always get the moisture between 62 and 68 percent," Kramer stated. "It's always important to crush the kernels well with the kernel processor. It takes a lot of horsepower to do that, but it allows us to do the best job possible."

Harvest schedule is adjusted once moisture samples are taken. "That helps treat everybody more fairly," Kramer said.

Eric Kramer

Once the desired moisture content has arrived, Kramer said establishing the proper chop length for the animal consuming the silage comes next.

Younger cattle prefer a finer chop, Kramer explained, while dairy cattle desire a longer chop, at least 0.75 of an inch in length, which helps stimulate the rumen in the cow.

Kramer noted the "school of hard knocks" helped teach him the tricks of the trade when it comes to custom harvesting silage.

The Kansan also said he likes working with the same farmers year to year. He's made friends all across the U.S.

"I like machines and horsepower," Kramer said of his job as a custom silage harvester. "They are high-maintenance machines, but I just enjoy all of it."

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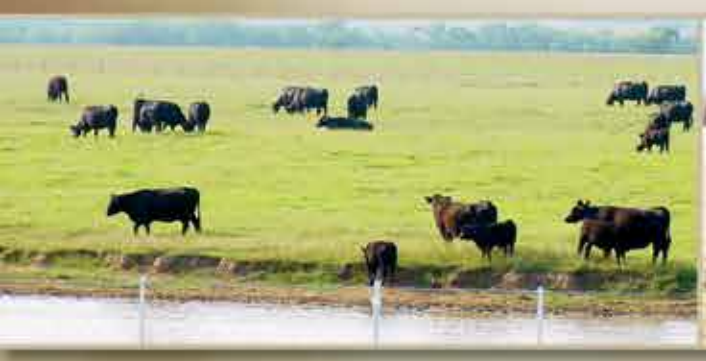
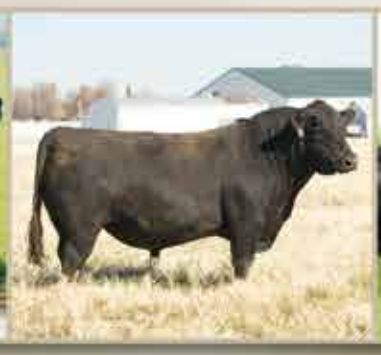
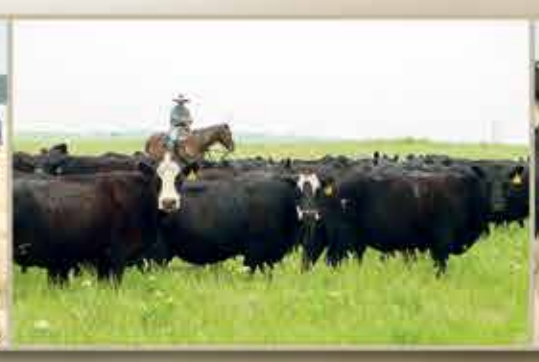
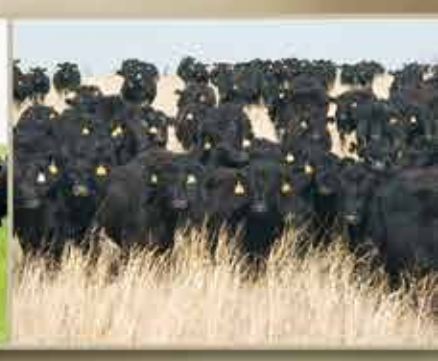

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EPDs Benefit Terminal Production Systems

Selecting for multiple traits helps meet marketing goals

By Robert Wells

Surprisingly, I still find that many producers do not use expected progeny differences (EPDs) as a primary selection tool for their bull. Many select their next herd bull based only on physical appearance or a perceived ability to perform, or low birth weight. In other words, does he have a well-balanced body with plenty of muscling, yet look like he will be easy on calving? Several purebred breeders have said that the only question most of their customers have is, "Is the bull calving ease?" These buyers typically complain that EPDs are confusing to use or that they don't work. With some basic knowledge, however, utilizing EPDs can be easy and beneficial to all cattle operations.

Typically, when a producer reports that EPDs don't work, it is usually because they selected a bull with the wrong expectations for a particular EPD. The first thing one must determine is in which direction, higher or lower, a particular trait is desired.

The following is a brief list of some EPD traits and the typical target direction for terminal production systems. Each breed association has numerous other EPDs they measure. The inclusion or exclusion of traits does not necessarily imply significance of a particular trait. However, the following list is common among most breeds and is important to consider in a terminal production system. A terminal production system does not retain and develop replacement heifers, and typically sells off the ranch to the next segment of the industry or retains ownership through the feeding phase.

Performance EPD Traits

Calving Ease, Calving Ease Direct (CE, CED): A high CE score will indicate less potential for dystocia or calving problems. This trait takes into account both calf birth weight and calving score data, which ranges from one to four. The higher the value, the better. Use this EPD instead of just the birth weight EPD since it takes into account other factors such as frame size of the calf and relative difficulty of the calving process.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Birth Weight (BW): Lower numbers are more desirable. Birth weight EPD is an indicator trait in pounds of calving ease in heifers. The differences between two bull BW EPDs is the average expectation of difference in pounds of calf weight. The genetic relationship between birth weight and calving ease is high (0.76); however, it is not perfect. This is the reason CE is a better indicator for calving ease than birth weight.

Weaning Weight (WW): Typically for most terminal production systems, a higher value is more desirable. A production system developing and retaining its own replacements would typically want to moderate this trait. This indicator is measured in pounds and is an indication of the sire's ability to pass on weaning growth to his offspring.

Yearling Weight (YW): Typically for most terminal production systems, a higher value is more desirable. However, a production system developing and retaining its own replacements would typically want to moderate this trait. This indicator is measured in pounds and is an indication of the sire's ability to pass on growth between weaning and a year of age to his offspring.

Carcass EPD Traits

Marbling (Marb): This is the difference between marbling scores of progeny for one sire compared to another. Typically, a higher Marb EPD value is more desirable in a terminal production system.

Fat Thickness (Fat, BF): This is the measure, in inches, of the 12th rib external fat difference from one sire compared to another. Typically, a moderate value is better, depending on the breed of choice.

Ribeye Area (RE): This trait is measured in square inches and is the difference in ribeye area of a sire's offspring relative to another sire of the same breed. Smaller-framed breeds would benefit from larger values, while larger continental breeds will want to moderate this trait but remain above breed average.

EPD values are not directly comparable across breeds. However, EPD adjustments across breeds can be made to compare a particular bull in one breed to another bull in a different breed.

Remember, single trait selection is dangerous and can have unintended consequences. Furthermore, recognize that selection for extremes in a specific direction for any trait can change mature cow size or production efficiency over time. Select multiple traits that have economic significance for your operation, and develop a plan to use them to meet market goals of the ranch.

—Source: This article reprinted with permission from the Samuel L. Roberts Noble Foundation for Agriculture. Visit the Noble Foundation on the web at www.noble.org.

CATTLE TEMPERAMENT FROM PAGE 19

low-stress animal handling through Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training. Being gentle and moving animals slowly pays dividends both in the learned behavior of the animals and the subsequent elevation levels of cortisol and stressors that impact an animal's immune function.

"The more things we can do right in handling of cattle above and beyond what their genetic predisposition may be certainly helps," he said.

More information is available in the 2014 Cattlemen's Day publication, available online through the K-State Research and Extension Bookstore. BQA training can be completed online at Animal Care Training.

—Katie Allen is with K-State Research and Extension News.

TRENDING NOW

ROI Study Shows $11.20 Return on Checkoff Dollar

Overall beef checkoff return on investment outlined

Story From Our Staff

In the most comprehensive study ever rendered about the Return on Investment (ROI) of beef checkoff assessments, Dr. Harry Kaiser of Cornell University concludes that each dollar invested in the Beef Checkoff Program between 2006 and 2013 returned about $11.20 to the beef industry.

"The news for beef checkoff investors couldn't be better," said Kaiser, the Gellert Family professor of applied economics and management at Cornell and director of the Cornell Commodity Promotion Research Program, who shared study results at the 2014 Cattle Industry Summer Conference.

"It is clear to me that activities funded through the Beef Board budget have a substantial impact on beef demand in the U.S. and in foreign markets. The return on producers' and importers investments into this program is vastly greater than the cost of the program."

Commissioned through the checkoff's Joint Evaluation Committee, this new ROI study could be a useful tool for producers who make decisions about how to invest checkoff dollars.

"This really tells us that we're on the right track with how we plan our checkoff programs," said cattleman Ted Greidanus of California, who chairs the checkoff's Evaluation Committee. "We are accountable to beef producers and importers who fund the work we do with checkoff dollars, so we wanted to know how much difference we were really making in the marketplace, good or bad — and I must say that I am quite pleased at how good the news really is."

Some additional key findings in Kaiser's benefits-cost analysis include:

Had there not been any CBB-funded marketing between 2006 and 2013, total domestic beef demand would have totaled 15.7 billion pounds – or 11.3 percent less than it was with the checkoff programs in place. Holding the effects of all other demand drivers constant, the activities funded by the CBB resulted in an increase in beef demand of 2.1 billion pounds per year.

Had the national Beef Checkoff Program not invested in foreign-market development between 2006 and 2013, foreign demand for U.S. beef would have been 6.4 percent lower.

The statistical results indicate that all eight CBB demand-enhancing activities — generic beef advertising; channels marketing; industry information; new-product development; public relations; nutrition research; beef-safety research and product-enhancement research — have a positive and statistically significant impact on increasing per capita beef demand.

At the bottom line, the increase in beef demand due to CBB-funded marketing efforts resulted in higher prices for beef producers and importers, which means higher net revenue than they would have experienced without those checkoff programs.

Given the budget challenges of the checkoff in recent years, the Cattlemen's Beef Board commissioned the all-encompassing study to provide a more thorough evaluation possible of checkoff activities than it traditionally has. As a result, this new study presents a more complete and accurate picture of checkoff returns and provides a new benchmark.

"Let me caution against trying to compare the results of this study with the 2009 study, which reported a return of $5.55 on each checkoff dollar," Dr. Kaiser said. "This time around, the Beef Board asked for a more comprehensive study than ever before, so I evaluated all commercial beef disappearance, including retail, foodservice, and international data over eight years, whereas the 2009 study looked solely at domestic retail data for a five-year period.

"Furthermore," Dr. Kaiser continued, "my study analyzed individual categories of nine marketing categories separately, and then brought the categories together to identify an overall beef checkoff return on investment. In 2009, the Beef Board commissioned a study analyzing only the checkoff as a whole."

Greidanus said he is quite confident in the study results.

"As chairman of the Evaluation Committee, I know that Dr. Kaiser's research methods are well-respected, so we are very confident about the analysis and very pleased with the results," Greidanus said. "And this tells us that the benefits of all CBB programs are 11.2 times more valuable than their costs. As a cattleman who pays into the program, it's invigorating to know that my investment is making a difference."

Kaiser, who has performed similar analyses for other checkoff programs, said the results should be encouraging to the country's beef producers and importers.

—Source: MyBeefCheckoff.com

Genetics + Management = Profitability

Producer panel discusses profitability optimization through genetics and management

Story By Kasey Brown

The beef industry is not an industry known for simplicity. However, producers want simplicity wherever possible, says a panel addressing profitability at the 2014 Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) Annual Meeting and Research Symposium in Lincoln, Nebraska, this summer.

To improve profitability, the producer panel emphasized reproductive traits, longevity and soundness and easy-to-use selection indexes that work for their environment.

Moderated by Tom Field, director of the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program and the Paul Engler Chair of Agribusiness Entrepreneurship at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, the panel comprised Donnell Brown, R.A. Brown Ranch, Throckmorton, Texas; Lorna Marshall, Marshall Cattle Co., Burlington, Colorado; and J.D. Radakovich, Hoodoo Ranch, Cody, Wyoming.

Brown said management changes are easier to quantify than genetic changes. His family has been using selection indexes for 20 years on their operation.

"It is easier to sell what people want to buy than it is to try selling what you want to raise," he said. "It is our duty to help customers get what they need to more efficiently, effectively and profitably produce beef using their available resources."

Marshall emphasized that large commercial ranches expect her family's seedstock operation to take care of logistics and to provide low-risk, no-surprise genetics. Simplicity, risk management and avoiding mistakes are key for large herds, she said, while genetics is relatively low on the list of priorities for large commercial producers.

The industry has done a mediocre job of helping producers objectively select for type traits that affect longevity, Marshall said. However, artificial insemination (AI) is an under-used technology that adds value to the industry.

Radakovich added, "I'm not that interested in sexy technology — just give me a simple, disciplined approach."

Land managers have an inherent obligation to maintain or enhance choices for future generations, he said. Optimization of production systems provides flexibility to respond to changing markets and environments, and he emphasized simplicity.

To improve profitability, the producer panel emphasized reproductive traits, longevity and soundness and easy-to-use selection indexes that work for their environment. Brown did grant that many simple tools are already available, like the American Angus Association's Optimal Milk Module, but breeders don't always use them.

To that point, Radakovich emphasized that he worries about genetic maintenance instead of large improvement, "Do I justify making the cows a little more right when they aren't wrong to begin with?"

Marshall added that seedstock producers must be conscious of what commercial customers want — functional bulls with solid genetics.

Brown challenged seedstock breeders to change emphasis from being genetic providers to solution suppliers instead.

— Kasey Brown is associate editor of the Angus Journal®. This article is reprinted with permission from www.BIFconference.com, the Angus Journal's online coverage site of the 2014 Beef Improvement Federation Research Symposium and Annual Meeting.

TRENDING NOW

Getting Her Feet Wet

Aspiring vet student gets a dose of Southwest Missouri's cattle industry

Story By Rebecca Mettler for Cattlemen's News

Determination, passion and an upbeat attitude aptly describe Kelsey Arellano. Those attributes will serve her well in her second year at the University of Florida's College of Veterinary Medicine and in her future career as a large animal practitioner.

Arellano, of Montverde, Florida, was given the opportunity to immerse herself in Southwest Missouri's animal agriculture as a participant in the Zoetis Bovine Externship program in July 2014. Her externship placement was with the Animal Clinic of Monett in Monett, Missouri, with owners Ted Dahlstrom, DVM, and Carol Dahlstrom, DVM.

"I'm very grateful for the opportunity," Arellano said. "Every morning when I wake up I tell myself to be positive, there's a lot of people that would love to be in my position."

As an extern, Arellano was able to do extensive hands-on work compared to a more traditional internship or shadowing experience. During her four weeks at the clinic, she would arrive at the office in the morning and look at the schedule for large animal calls.

"It's what I like to do, go on calls," Arellano said.

Though she had learned about various treatments in the classroom, getting to see the application of the treatment was advantageous.

"With every treatment I was soaking it all in—the application of treatment," Arellano said.

Arellano was placed with the Dahlstrom's because she had requested not only a large beef cattle population, but also wanted dairy cattle experience. The clinic filled those requests and then some.

While she hadn't expected to be put in a clinic with such an extensive small animal practice, Arellano said as much as she didn't want it, she needed small animal experience and learned a lot.

"I learned more than I could even retain in a day. At night, I would reflect on what I learned and try to commit it to long-term memory," Arellano said.

She added that, as a student, she could only learn so much sitting behind a desk. To see things firsthand was very important.

Observing the business aspects of a clinic was part of her externship, too. Arellano was able to see a multi-vet clinic work together to take care of its large client base.

Working at the Animal Clinic of Monett afforded Arellano the opportunity to travel to the Joplin Regional Stockyards (JRS) with Dr. Ted Dahlstrom, JRS senior veterinarian.

Arellano said she was initially taken aback by the size and scale of JRS but enjoyed working in the fast-paced environment. She was able to assist with vaccinations, pregnancy verification and ear-notching calves for BVD testing.

"I had a good time while working in a different element compared to being in the clinic," she noted.

University of Florida veterinary student Kelsey Arellano recently completed an externship with Animal Clinic, Monett, Missouri. Arellano was a participant in the Zoetis Bovine Externship Program where she gained hands-on experience in large animal medicine. —*Submitted photo.*

Within the University of Florida College of Veterinary Medicine, Arellano is in the minority when it comes to her interest in large animal medicine. Only five of the 115 students in her class consider working with cattle. With horses, that number jumps up to 10.

"I think that it's worse in Florida, there's not as many students that come from farm families or who fall into agriculture," Arellano explained when speaking about the lack of interest in large animal medicine.

She also recognizes that although Florida has a large number of cattle, Univeristy of Florida isn't the place for out-of-state students to flock for large animal study. She would expect that schools in the central United States to better fall into that category.

Arellano places herself in the group of someone who "fell into agriculture." Not originally from a farm background, Arellano began showing cattle in high school with her neighbor. Her passion for food animals has continued to grow and develop through her undergraduate career and her first year of vet school.

Along with her duties as a student, Arellano is serving as president of the Food Animal Club for the coming year and is a member of the American Association of Bovine Practitioners.

She is also working on a beef cattle research project back in Florida. The study aims to determine if organic or inorganically sourced mineral supplementation has a different effect on cows and calves when given during the third trimester of pregnancy. Luckily, Arellano was able to schedule the externship between data collection times.

The Future

The experience with the Dahlstrom's has opened her eyes to new possibilities, Arellano said.

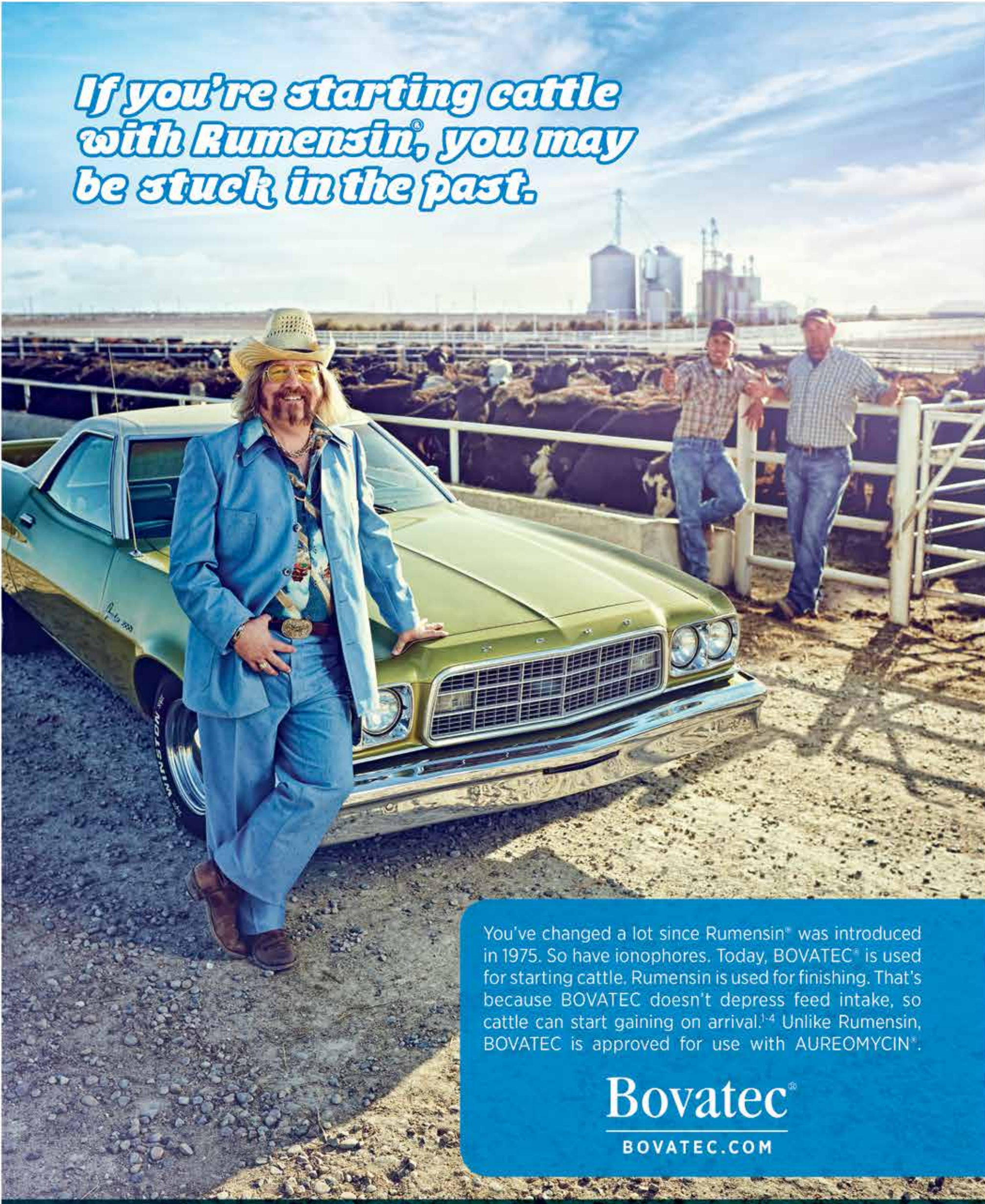
"My family is in Florida, so I thought I would always stay in Florida, but I honestly do like it here," Arellano said.

Arellano holds tight to her goals and knows what type of veterinarian she wants to be.

"Like anybody in vet school, I want to be a great doctor," Arellano said. "To be progressive, ahead of challenges, to be able to educate people and to get all the experience in the world."

She said that clients appreciate it when their vet troubleshoots a problem before it happens instead of being reactive to the problem or situation. That approach takes producer education on herd health and veterinarians knowing the details of their clients' operations.

"If I keep a good attitude, people will appreciate me for what I have to offer," Arellano said. "I have no doubt that I will make a fine living as a woman food animal practitioner."



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[1] Zoetis Trial MC013-07-AULA13 (Colorado study). [2] Zoetis Trial MC014-07-AULA13 (South Dakota study). [3] Zoetis Trial MC014-07-AULA13 (Oklahoma study). [4] Zoetis Trial MC017-07-AULA13 (New Mexico study).

zoetis

Finding the Value

Preconditioning programs pay dividends, even in today's high market

Story By Rebecca Mettler for Cattlemen's News

With high calf prices, it might be tempting for beef producers to load their calves up and hit the salebarn the first chance they get. But, making a spur-of-the-moment decision without a marketing strategy can cause producers to lose out on the potential for extra value.

According to Gant Mourer, beef value enhancement specialist with the Oklahoma State University Extension, producers must think about what marketing avenue they want and plan accordingly.

Mourer knows a few producers who market organic and natural beef at farmers markets, but that scenario isn't the norm for the four state's beef industry. The bulk of the spring- born calves from eastern Oklahoma, southwest Missouri, and northwest Arkansas end up in western Oklahoma on wheat pastures.

"That's the biggest market for those lightweight spring calves," Mourer said.

But, producers need to get one thing straight long before they even begin planning their fall marketing strategies.

"First of all, when we talk about weaning health, quality comes first no matter how you market those calves," Mourer said. "Whoever is going to purchase the calf from you is wanting to purchase a quality product."

Producers who are skilled, enjoy starting and growing calves, and who are willing to accept some risk have many more possible marketing options besides selling straight off the cow.

Certified value-added and other preconditioning programs such as Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (OQBN) or Joplin Regional Stockyards (JRS) value-added programs are very powerful marketing tools in the eyes of Mourer.

Oklahoma has seen a $9/cwt premium for preconditioned calves over non-weaned calves weighing 650 pounds. Last year, the record was set at a high of $22/cwt premium for calves weighing 400 pounds.

Lighter weight calves are seen as a higher risk investment. Buyers see the preconditioning program certification as an insurance policy of sorts and are willing to pay more for calves, Mourer said.

Not only do VAC-45 programs offer a premium above the market prices compared to freshly weaned calves, but also there's currently a tremendous increase in the value of added weight.

"The value of added weight gain is normally 75 cents to 80 cents per pound of gain. Recently, it's been $1.30 to $1.50 depending on the weight class," Mourer said.

It's easy for that money to add up fast. From weight gain alone, there's a net profit of $60 to $70 a head over the preconditioning cost during the 45-day period, according to Mourer. Plus, don't forget about the roughly $50 per head premium garnered from being enrolled in the VAC-45 program itself.

"Another thing I often find is that a lot of people don't think about adding value to calves in a preconditioning program through deworming and implants," said David Lalman, Oklahoma State University Extension beef specialist.

Deworming and implanting calves two to six weeks prior to weaning allows the products time to activate and benefit the calves during the 45-day preconditioning period.

"The implant alone can add anywhere from 15 to 25

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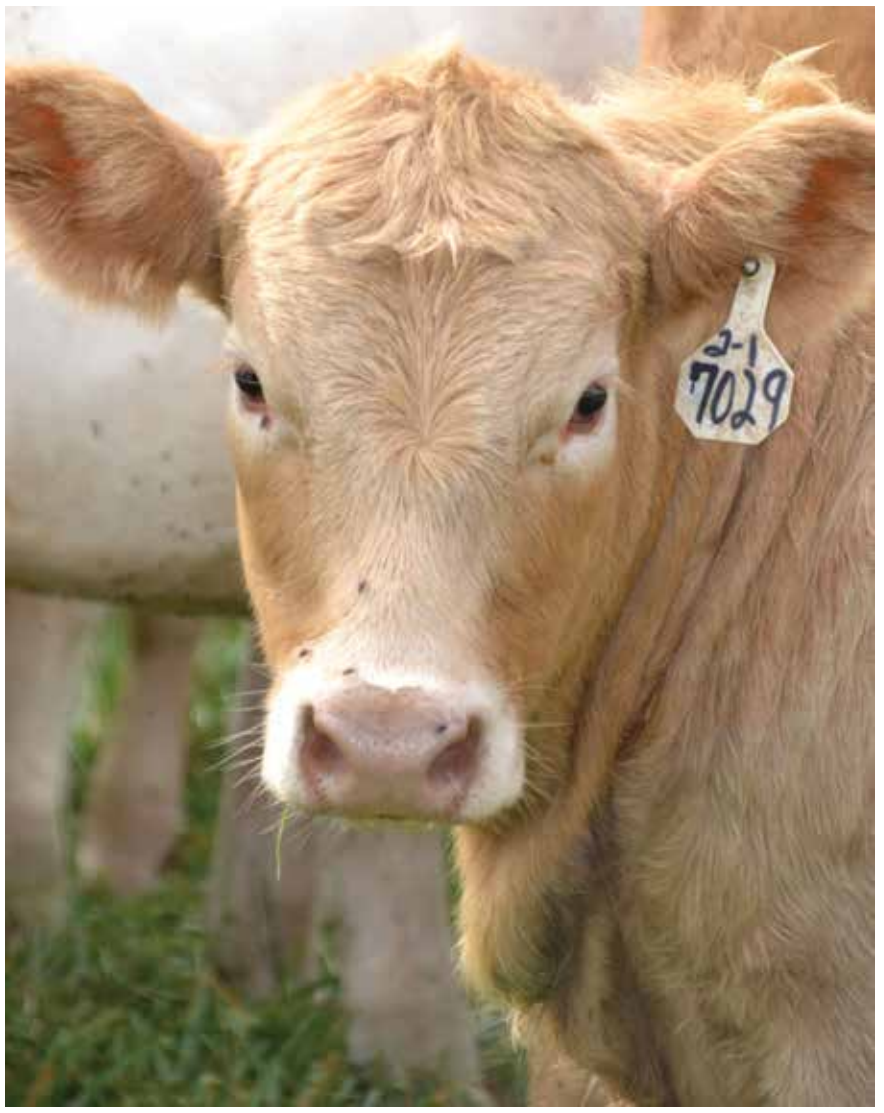

Value added and preconditioning programs can be powerful marketing tools, often bringing added premiums to producers. Management at the ranch level is also key to adding value to feeder calves prior to marketing. Deworming and implanting calves prior to weaning often equates to higher prices on sale day. *—Photo by Joann Pipkin*

Do Your Homework

Marketing information is only a 'click' away

Check out these online resources to help you weigh your marketing options this fall:

Beefextension.com: Profit calculators. Click on either Cow/Calf or Stocker Cattle on the left hand side of the screen under Management Info. Scroll down and click on Calculators to view the various profit calculators available.

Beefbasis.com: A Cattle Basis Risk Analysis Tool (CBRAT) to provide producers with information and analytics to improve marketing decisions influenced by cattle basis risk, according to *beefbasiscs.com*.

—Compiled by Rebecca Mettler

FINDING THE VALUE FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

pounds and only costs $1.50 (per head)," Lalman said. "If you are considering a preconditioning program, those are two things I wouldn't miss out on."

However, before farmers and ranchers rush to enter a preconditioning program, they need to look at their facilities and their experience in preconditioning calves.

Farmers and ranchers need to know themselves well, Lalman said, and have the ability to realistically assess their skills and interests.

"We aren't naive enough to think that everybody should do it, but it's very valuable if you can do it," Mourer said.

For those producers willing to precondition, marketing opportunities are plentiful.

Mourer points out that JRS has a commingling option, which can prove to be a powerful marketing tool for smaller producers.

"It increases the lot size and uniformity (of the cattle)," Mourer said. "Instead of selling two or three head at a time, they can put them into a large group of cattle. Fifteen head turn into 75- to 100-head truckload lots. It's more of a convenience for buyers, but adds value to smaller producers."

The choice to hold on to spring calves beyond the fall marketing season is a viable option. Putting cheap gain on the calves and selling them in January at around 800 to 900 pounds is popular in this area.

"They can take it wherever they want to," Mourer said. "Basically, it all starts with a VAC-45 program."

The Perfect Storm

Build calf immunity before weaning to maximize profits

Story By Laura Mushrush

Record-setting cattle prices, a projected bumper grain crop on the horizon, moderation in grain prices — for cattle producers, opportunity to fully maximize profits has finally arrived.

"In all the years I've been doing this, I've never seen a more perfect storm brewing for huge profitably," says director of MFA Health Track Operations Mike John. "With the cattle supply shortage combined with the feed-cost situation, I think we've got a real opportunity to add to our bottom line, building equity in our operations without having to invest in anymore overhead."

For cow-calf producers, a simple preconditioning program can yield substantial returns on their investment. While there are multiple programs producers can choose to fit their program, building immunity in a calf before it is weaned is essential. According to John, taking care of booster vaccinations, castrations, dehorning and similar practices while the calf is still on the cow greatly reduces stress inflicted on the calf.

"Giving rounds of vaccinations when calves are still on the cow drastically reduces the stress they're under when you're trying to build their immunity before weaning," John says. "Also, teaching them to eat from a bunk and drink from a water tank is important," John says. "When it's time to wean the calves, it will be an incredibly painless operation since they already know how to eat from a bunk, and they're less likely to get sick."

With 25 years of experience under his belt in preconditioning programs, John has seen a vast array of tactics used in different environments. According to him, producers who take care of all vaccinations prior to weaning on the home ranch before selling the calf bring an optimal calf to the market — typically with a sickness pull rate of around 0.3 percent.

On the other end of the scale, producers who don't start the vaccination process until the day of weaning are choosing the most stressful point in a calf's life to start building its immunity and can expect to see a 5 percent sick rate post weaning.

"Both of those strategies, however, drastically reduce health problems when compared to the normal process of pulling a bunch of naive calves together and trying to keep them healthy when they're weaned," he says. "I've seen 20 to 30 percent pull rates in that scenario and 5 percent death loss," he says. "This is typically people who buy bawling calves from a bunch of different sources and put them together. Those are very costly processes to build a group of feeder cattle."

And while John says there is a market for higher risk calves, livestock marketed under a healthcare program brings cow-calf producers a higher premium — significant enough to make it worth their time.

"You can count on the cost of gain today being 60 cents to 80 cents a pound, which would include the processing costs of the vaccination and deworming of $10 to $15 a head. If a high-efficiency starter feed is used, you can see conversions as low as 3.5 to 4 pounds of feed to 1 pound of gain. These types of feed will be in the 70 cents-per-pound range in today's pricing," he explains. "If you look at a $15-per-hundredweight spread — in other words, a $15 difference in every 100 pounds you add with the 70 cent cost of gain — you can literally be looking at almost $200-per-head net profit on 150-pound gain. This fall, those price spreads will narrow considerably as well."

On top of bringing in great returns on minimum vaccination and processing costs, calves that are put through a preconditioning program prior to weaning and are also weaned 45 days prior to shipping suffer significantly less shrink on sale day.

"If cattle aren't bawling the day they're sold, they'll have a drink of water and be more likely to eat when they go to the auction market," John says. "A preconditioned and weaned calf will have less than half the shrink a bawling calf will. When you're looking at $2.30 to even $3 a pound, every ounce of shrink that you suffer in this market is horrendous."

According to John, cow-calf producers who feel their facilities are inadequate to handle weaning on the home ranch should look for a method that works for their ranch because of the cost benefits involved.

"There are as many different ways as there are operations — from anti-nursing devices to fenceline techniques and everything in between," John says. "Somebody is going to wean those calves, and I think the person who does it and creates their health has the ability to create record-high profit right now."

— Laura Mushrush is assistant editor, Drovers CattleNetwork. Article reprinted with permission.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Out with the Old

Record high cattle prices call for optimal risk, production management

Story By Derrell S. Peel

Record-high cattle prices lead to new questions about risk and production management. Actually, the questions are the same, but the answers might be slightly different. High cattle prices have significantly increased capital requirements for stocker cattle, feeder cattle in feedlots or breeding animals for cow-calf production. The large dollar requirement means that overall financial risk is higher now in the cattle business. Market (price) risk and production risk are both important components of financial risk.

High cattle prices lead naturally to concerns about market price risk. The need for price risk management depends on several factors, including the producer's financial vulnerability and capacity to handle price volatility. Overall market outlook is also an important consideration. Short run market volatility is always a concern and, at current market levels, a modest market correction could mean price changes of $10 to $30/cwt. depending on animal class. However, underlying market fundamentals suggest that prices are likely to generally stay strong or move higher for the next couple of years, and downside market risk as a trend will be generally low. In this environment, minimum price tools, such as Put options or Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) contracts, are likely more preferred to fixed price tools, such as futures hedging or forward contracting. However, adding a call option to a short hedge or forward cash contract will also maintain upside market potential while providing minimum price protection. Price volatility is likely to be short-lived in the current market, and production agility, which provides flexibility in marketing animals, can also be an important means to counter short-term price volatility. At some point, markets will top and market price risk management with more downside risk will take on renewed importance, but that time appears to be many months away at this point.

A relatively bigger concern today than protecting market price is making sure that you have something to sell. Production risk is a big part of financial risk at this time as things like death loss and reduced productivity have significantly larger financial impacts. Though death always causes loss, there is an optimal level of death loss which is not zero because the marginal benefit of reducing (or attempting to reduce) that below a certain point is less that the marginal cost. However, high animal values today suggest that additional measures to reduce death loss (or at least reduce the probability of animal death) are warranted. For example, enhanced use of metaphylactic treatment of animals in some situations or additional labor to detect sick animals and treat more aggressively might be worth the additional cost. Generally, higher animal values suggest that increased marginal expenditures on inputs to ensure animal health and productivity might be economical. Also, animal theft is on the rise because of high animal values and additional expenditures on security measures are warranted. Perhaps additional means of animal identification or security should be used or more frequent checking of animals can reduce the risk of theft or increase the chances of recovering stolen animals. One stolen calf would buy a nice security camera.

Likewise, for the cow-calf herd, additional measures to enhance reproductive productivity are justified by high animal values. For example, additional expenditure to ensure cow body condition at breeding resulting in some increase in

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TRENDING NOW

Missouri's Right to Farm: Analyzing the Aftermath

Will message voters received make matters worse?

Story From Dan Murphy, Drovers CattleNetwork.com

The good news is that Missouri's Right to Farm amendment is now part of the state's constitution. The bad news is that the message voters received might makes things even worse.

Voters in Missouri faced a seemingly straightforward question in the Aug. 5 primary election: Do they support the right to farm?

The answer was a razor-thin approval of Amendment 1, which enshrines that right in the state constitution. However, the debates that were stirred up by the controversial nature of the proposal re-energized anti-GMO activists, handed over yet more ammo to corporate farming haters and widened an already contentious urban-rural divide in a state where agriculture plays a prominent role in the economy.

Certainly, there was no broad-based support for agriculture's right to do anything among residents of the state's two biggest cities, St. Louis and Kansas City. Voters in those metro areas soundly rejected the amendment, and post-election analyses pointed to concerns about foreign-owned companies, like the Chinese conglomerate Shaunghui International, plus lingering aversion to a number of farming practices, notably the cultivation of genetically engineered crops.

On one hand, the coalition backing the amendment, which included a veritable who's who of the state's agricultural industry—the Missouri Farm Bureau, Missouri Cattlemen's Association, Missouri Pork Association, Missouri Dairy Association, Missouri Sheep Producers, Missouri Equine Council, Missouri Corn Growers Association, Missouri Soybeans—has to feel good that language strengthening protections for all of agriculture is now officially part of the state's constitution.

The coalition spent a reported $600,000 just in the last few months prior to the primary, so one would have to consider that money well-spent. Plus, a defeat for the Humane Society of the United States, the biggest backer of the opposition, is always a good thing.

But I question some of the messaging from the pro-agriculture folks, claiming that this amendment was needed to protect producers and farmers from "overzealous environmentalists, animal rights advocates and foodies who want greater regulation of agriculture," according to news reports quoting the Missouri Farm Bureau.

I'm not sure that kind of preaching even resonates with the choir.

A Better Approach

For one thing, a sizeable majority of consumers do care about the environment, many very deeply. We should all care about the environment, especially ranchers and farmers, whose livelihood is totally dependent on "the environment."

In other contexts and on other issues (like animal welfare), the livestock industry has effectively framed the discussion by positioning producers as the ultimate environmentalists. After all, if the people raising animals and growing crops don't take care of the soil, the watersheds or the rangeland, they're damaging themselves and their businesses.

Yes, way too many self-important environmentalists are indeed wild-eyed eco-nuts whose zealotry utterly precludes accommodating the prudent stewardship associated with most of animal agriculture. But being "overzealous" is a crime of excess, not evil intent, and those passions can be reined in with sensible, collaborative policy-

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RIGHT TO FARM
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making backed up by good-faith partnerships between industry, government and environmentalists.

Speaking of which, did you know that the Walton Family Foundation—hardly a group of overzealous environmentalists—has donated more than $71 million to environmental groups such as the Marine Stewardship Council, the National Audubon Society and the Nature Conservancy? And that the goal of that funding, according to a foundation news release, was to "facilitate the formation of a coalition of environmental advocates, small business owners and local governments" to advance watershed restoration and resource protection, among other initiatives?

Here's the problem with hardcore messaging: When the typical urban resident hears the phrase "protection from overzealous environmentalists," their reaction is generally somewhere between "Maybe they have a point" and "Darn right we need to be zealous about the environment."

I defy anyone to find more than a handful of city dwellers who would say, "Right on—a farmer or rancher should be able to do anything they want. It's their land, isn't it?"

I'm exaggerating, but the preceding sentence is pretty much what a number of industry spokespeople have suggested and what many more producers and famers actually believe.

I get it. I understand those sentiments.

But in an election or a PR campaign where the goal is to win hearts and minds, in-your-face hostility is the wrong road to travel.

I'd much prefer the approach articulated by a commenter reacting to a pre-election analysis published on the Governing.com website that detailed Amendment 1's opposing points of view:

"I am a farmer. I will never be first in line to beat the drum for Monsanto. However, for [a previous commenter] to say that GMOs cause cancer is completely off-base and shows the ignorance that is rampant among a staggering number of non-ag people. Monsanto is a necessary evil in this world. By 2050 we will have nine billion people to feed. GMOs will enable us to sustain that amount of life."

Those sentiments are hardcore, too, but that farmer offered a practical argument that I believe goes down a lot smoother with "non-ag people" than raging against "overzealous environmentalists."

Because given the impact having on global ecosystems from just the seven billion people alive right now, overzealous environmentalists are a necessary evil in this world, too.

—Dan Murphy is a food-industry journalist and commentator. Reprinted with permission from DroversCattleNetwork.com

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pregnancy rate and calving percentage might be worth evaluating. Many other examples of adjustments in production that can increase benefits or reduce the risk of losses exist. For example, the value of fertility testing bulls, or stated another way, the cost of not fertility testing bulls is much higher today than with lower calf prices.

A multitude of marginal adjustments in production practices to take advantage of high animal values or reduce the risk of losses or lost opportunities exist. This is not time to operate with old rules of thumb. Economic theory is clear; when the value of the output increases, more use of inputs is consistent with profit maximization. Producers need to evaluate all aspects of production systems to identify ways to tweak their production system to enhance profitability.

— Derrell S. Peel is Oklahoma State University Extension livestock marketing specialist.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Stocker Production 101

A look at current feeder cattle prices and the economics of raising stockers

Story By Derrell S. Peel

The rollback in price between stocker purchase price and feeder sales price, along with overall price level, is the principal determinant of the gross margin, or value of gain, for stocker production. For example, Oklahoma feeder prices recently showed the value of 250 pounds of gain for a 450-pound steer was $1.24/lb. for a steer sold at 700 pounds. An additional 200 pounds to a 900-pound ending weight has an average value of gain of $1.28/lb. for the entire 450 pounds of gain. The value of gain is actually a bit stronger for gains toward the heavy end of feeder weights. A 600-pound beginning weight has a value of gain of $1.37/lb. for 300 pounds of gain up to 900 pounds. These values suggest that stocker producers have considerable flexibility about what weight to buy and how much weight to put on stocker cattle at this time.

The analysis above does not account for the time lag to produce the heavy feeders and how the price might change in the interim. Thus, the question is whether feeder prices will maintain the current relationship through the fall and winter. The value of gain for stocker production is usually closely related to the feedlot cost of gain and any imbalance between them is generally corrected quickly. Such an imbalance exists today with current feedlot cost of gain in the range of $0.80 to 0.85/lb, down from roughly $1.00/lb early in the year. Moreover, with a record corn crop nearly assured, feedlot cost of gain is expected to drop to the low $0.70/lb range this fall and winter. These cost of gain values are well below the current stocker value of gain and suggest that the value of gain will be pressured lower this fall. The current value of gain developed over the summer as feeder prices increased to new record levels. An adjustment to a lower value of gain will occur in one of two ways: either stocker prices rise relative to heavy feeders or feeder prices fall relative to stocker prices; or some combination of both.

More often than not, with feed prices falling, lightweight stocker prices will rise until the value of gain drops to near the level of feedlot cost of gain. This happens because feedlots are willing to feed lighter animals when feed prices are lower. This additional demand for lightweight animals would push stocker prices beyond current record levels. For example, given the current price of $212/cwt for 825-pound steers and $0.85/lb feedlot cost of gain, the price of 575-pound steers would have to be about $267/cwt compared to the current price of $248/cwt to bring the stocker value of gain into balance. At a feedlot cost of gain of $0.70/lb, the implied 575-pound steer price would be even higher, roughly $274/cwt.

Another possibility is that heavy feeder price could fall to bring stocker value of gain in line with feedlot cost of gain. At $0.85/lb feedlot cost of gain, the price of 825-pound steers would need to drop to under $200/cwt to bring stocker value of gain into balance with feedlot cost of gain. Though it is more common to have stocker prices adjust, heavy feeder prices are extremely high at the current time. Heavy feeders placed today have feedlot breakevens of $165/cwt or higher. These breakevens are well above Live Cattle futures levels this fall, and feedlot returns are likely to be negative unless fed cattle prices are able to push significantly higher this fall and winter. That said, the reason heavy feeders are overpriced is because of the extremely limited supply of feeder cattle relative to feed-

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MANAGEMENT MATTERS

Fall Calving Season Approaches

Prepare a "calving kit" before calving begins

Story By Glenn Selk

More and more cattlemen are breeding cattle to calve in the fall. Some producers are planning to "calve out" more replacement heifers than normal to take advantage of high cattle prices. Before the hustle and bustle of the fall calving season, now is a good time to put together the supplies and equipment that will be needed to assist heifers and cows that need help at calving time.

Equipment: Before calving season starts, do a "walk-through" of pens, chutes and calving stalls. Make sure that all are clean dry, strong, safe and functioning correctly. This much easier to do on a sunny afternoon than a dark night when you need them.

Protocol: Before calving season starts, develop a plan of what to do, when to do it, who to call for help (along with phone numbers), and how to know when you need help. Make sure all family members or helpers are familiar with the plan. It might help to write it out and post copies in convenient places. Talk to your local veterinarian about your protocol and incorporate his/her suggestions. Encourage everyone who will be watching and helping cows and heifers this calving season to read Oklahoma State University Extension Circular E-1006, "Calving Time Management for Beef Cows and Heifers".

Lubrication: Many lubricants have been used, and one of the best lubricants is probably the simplest: non-detergent soap and warm water.

Supplies: The stockmen should always have in their medicine chest the following: disposable obstetrical sleeves, non-irritant antiseptic, lubricant, obstetrical chains (60-inch and/or two 30-inch chains), two obstetrical handles, mechanical calf pullers and injectable antibiotics. Don't forget the simple things like a good flashlight and extra batteries and some old towels or a roll of paper towels.

It might be helpful for you to have all these things and other items you might want packed into a 5-gallon bucket to make up a "calving kit" so you can grab everything at once. Place that bucket in a location that can be found and reached by everyone in the operation.

—Glenn Selk is Oklahoma State University emeritus extension animal scientist.

STOCKER 101
FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

lot demand—a situation that is not likely to change this fall.

What does this mean for stocker prospects this fall? Stocker prices typically decrease seasonally in the fall, but the possibility of decent winter grazing prospects combined with the likelihood of cheaper feed driving stronger feedlot demand for lightweight placements might keep stocker prices steady or stronger this fall. Though feeder markets appear once again to have topped recently, there is little reason to expect any significant decrease in feeder demand for any weight of feeder cattle. Feeder cattle supplies will remain extremely tight this fall. Unless or until stocker prices push significantly higher this fall, the relatively high value of gain for stockers could persist for some time with markets unable to correct feeder price relationships as quickly as normal. As long as heavy feeder prices remain at current levels, stockers are relatively underpriced, and the value of gain provides an opportunity for stocker production.

—Source: Derrell S. Peel is Oklahoma State University Extension livestock marketing specialist.

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Should You Sell or Background?

Retained ownership affects feed supplies, carryover

Story By Warren Rusche

So far, 2014 has been one for the record books when it comes to the cattle market. Increased cattle values combined with less expensive feed have dramatically changed the outlook for cow/calf profitability compared to the last few years.

These market place changes should trigger at least an examination of retained ownership plans. After all, the net returns from selling calves at weaning will be some of the highest ever for most herds. The question then becomes whether there is an opportunity to capture additional profits by retaining ownership, or is the best strategy to sell at weaning and take the profits immediately?

Table 1 shows the returns for backgrounding calves from 550 to 750 pounds using a range of values at weaning (or purchase) and at selling. The costs for individual operations will vary depending on feed values and yardage costs, however, for the purpose of this discussion the cost of gain is assumed to be $0.70 per pound.

Table 1. Profit or Loss Backgrounding from 550 to 750 pounds

		Sale Price (750 Pounds), Dollars per Hundred		
		205	**210**	**215**
Calf Price (550 pounds) Dollars per Hundred	**230**	132.50	170.00	207.50
	240	77.50	115.00	152.50
	250	22.50	60.00	97.50
	260	-32.50	5.00	42.50

Based on this analysis, the margin between the initial price and sale prices significantly affects the profit and loss. Risk management, either through price insurance products, futures and options, or cash contracts, needs to be strongly considered when deciding whether or not to retain ownership. Price volatility has increased along with price levels this year. A geopolitical or economic issue halfway around the globe could lead to net losses.

Another often-overlooked factor is how retaining ownership might affect feed supplies and carryover. This year hay and feed supplies are generally adequate going into fall. The same was true in the fall of 2011, but by 2012 feed inventories were critically short for many ranchers due to drought. It is important that producers make sure the potential rewards for retaining ownership justify the additional risk.

It is also important producers don't automatically assume the risk is too great and that calves shouldn't be retained. As shown in Table 1, substantial profits are possible, depending upon the buy-sell margin and the expected costs of gain.

Retaining ownership might pay:

• As a tool to add value to raised feedstuffs, which are otherwise more difficult to market. Feeds such as high-moisture corn or silage are two examples. Feeding to cattle is a way to market those feedstuffs and save drying expense or harvest delays.

• Selling some of the calf crop while retaining the balance. This could be viewed as "not-putting-all-the-eggs-in-one-basket" marketing. One example could be to sell the steers and hold on to the heifers as replacements either for sale or within the herd. Or the heaviest calves could be marketed at weaning with the lighter calves grown on forage.

• Sell premium priced calves and replace with less expensive, "opportunity" cattle. This isn't exactly a retained ownership strategy but can be used as a way to add value to homegrown feeds while capturing premiums for high-quality calves at weaning. Buying calves cheaper could help manage the buy-sell margin risk; however the risks of health or performance issues need to be considered.

—Source: So. Dakota State Univ. Ext.

ON THE CALENDAR

WHAT: 2014 Applied Reproductive Strategies in Beef Cattle

WHEN: Oct. 8-9, 2014

WHERE: Stillwater, Oklahoma

WHY: Sessions will feature an overview of reproductive management; strategies for AI success; the impact of environment and management on cowherd efficiency; economic impact of reproductive technologies; advanced reproductive technologies; fertility in the male; the use of genomics in reproductive management; and development of replacement heifers.

DETAILS: Phone 405-744-6060 or email mrolf@okstate.edu or visit their website at www.appliedreprostrategies.com.

OZARK FALL FARMFEST ADVERTISER INDEX

See these Cattlemen's News Advertisers Oct. 3-5 at the Ozark Fall Farmfest in Springfield, Missouri.

MARKET WATCH

August Video Sales

JRS Sale Day Market Phone: (417) 548-2012
Mondays (Rick Huffman) | Wednesdays (Don Kleiboeker)
Market Information Provided By Tony Hancock
Mo. Department of Agriculture Market News Service
Market News Hotline (573) 522-9244
Sale Day Market Reporter (417) 548-2012

Video Sales from 8/07/14 • Total Video Receipts: 7,400

Feeder Cattle & Calf Auction | August Receipts 15,583 • Last Month 14,764 • Last Year 15,145

Date:	South Central States	Texas, Okla.,	New Mexico, Kansas, Mo.	Offering: 7,400						
8/7/14										
	FEEDER STEERS		MED & LG 1				FEEDER HEIFERS		MED & LG 1-2		
HEAD	WT RANGE	AVG WT	PRICE RANGE	AVG PRICE	DELIVERY	HEAD	WT RANGE	AVG WT	PRICE RANGE	AVG PRICE	DELIVERY
88	600	600	$249.50	$249.50	Current	422	675	675	$214.50-$216.75	$216.37	September
192	785	785	$220.75	$220.75	Current	300	775	775	$208.75	$208.75	September
120	820	820	$216.00-$216.50	$216.25	September	85	580	580	$225.00	$225.00	October
123	820-825	823	$213.00-$217.00	$215.05	October	25	560	560	$214.00	$214.00	October - Split Loads
310	825	825	$215.00	$215.00	November	100	500	500	$232.00	$232.00	December
224	900	900	$208.25	$208.25	December	218	700-730	720	$203.00-$209.50	$205.03	December
	FEEDER STEERS		MED & LG 1-2			360	800	800	$196.00	$196.00	April
HEAD	WT RANGE	AVG WT	PRICE RANGE	AVG PRICE	DELIVERY		Eastern States	All states	east of the Miss.,	La., & Ark.	
80	590	590	$261.00	$261.00	Current		FEEDER STEERS		MED & LG 1		
61	820	820	$212.00	$212.00	Current	HEAD	WT RANGE	AVG WT	PRICE RANGE	AVG PRICE	DELIVERY
56	890	890	$203.75	$203.75	Current	98	500	500	$280.00	$280.00	October
60	580	580	$229.00	$229.00	October - Split Loads	84	600	600	$248.00	$248.00	October
201	750	750	$221.00-$222.00	$221.67	October	69	725	725	$230.00	$230.00	October
355	700	700	$224.00-$229.00	$226.04	November	122	825	825	$219.50	$219.50	October
62	835	835	$213.75	$213.75	November		FEEDER STEERS		MED & LG 1-2		
236	850	850	$208.25-$210.50	$209.36	November	HEAD	WT RANGE	AVG WT	PRICE RANGE	AVG PRICE	DELIVERY
220	900	900	$200.75-$204.25	$203.37	November	72	700	700	$215.00	$215.00	September
144	825	825	$205.50	$205.50	December	120	825	825	$205.50	$205.50	January
480	850	850	$206.00	$206.00	March-April		FEEDER HEIFERS		MED & LG 1		
	FEEDER HEIFERS		MED & LG 1			HEAD	WT RANGE	AVG WT	PRICE RANGE	AVG PRICE	DELIVERY
HEAD	WT RANGE	AVG WT	PRICE RANGE	AVG PRICE	DELIVERY	86	575	575	$239.00	$239.00	October
140	700	700	$213.25	$213.25	September	127	750	750	$211.25	$211.25	October
67	725	725	$211.00	$211.00	October		FEEDER HEIFERS		MED & LG 1-2		
1525	780	780	$204.85	$204.85	November	HEAD	WT RANGE	AVG WT	PRICE RANGE	AVG PRICE	DELIVERY
						65	750	750	$204.50	$204.50	November
						140	700	700	$203.50	$203.50	March
						140	700	700	$205.75	$205.75	April

Tune in to the JRS Market Report

TODAY'S KTTS 94.7 FM COUNTRY'S BEST
Monday 11:38 a.m.
Wednesday 11:38 a.m.

102.9 THE Z
Monday
12:15 p.m.
Wednesday
12:15 p.m.

AM 900 KHOZ
Monday
12:40 p.m.
Wednesday
12:40 p.m.

KRMO AG SOURCE RADIO
M-F 9:55-10:05 a.m.
(during break before AgriTalk)
M/W/F Noon Hour
(during Farming in the Four States)
T/Th Noon Hour (after news block)

KKOW 860 AM
Monday 12:50 p.m. & 4:45 p.m.
Wednesday 12:50 p.m. & 4:45 p.m.

EVENT ROUNDUP

September

12 MU Southwest Center Field Day, Mount Vernon, Mo. PH: 417-466-2148

15 7 p.m. Show-Me-Select Heifer Program Meeting, Lawrence County Extension Center, Mount Vernon, Mo. PH: 417-466-3102

19-20 Annie's Project Anniversary Celebration Event, Lake of the Ozarks, Mo. • PH: 417-326-4916

20 Buford Ranches Angus Female & Bull Sale, near Welch, Okla. • PH: 918-929-3275

20 Seedstock Plus Showcase Sale IX & Annual Customer Appreciation Sale • Kingsville, Mo. • PH: 877-486-1160

23-25 Management Intensive Grazing School, Forsyth, Mo. PH: 417-581-2719, ext.3

27 12-Noon Special Replacement Cow Sale, Joplin Regional Stockyards, Carthage, Mo. • PH: 417-548-2333

30 Salute to Century Farms, Round Barn Event Center, near Ash Grove, Mo. • PH: 417-881-8909

October

1 Bull Breeding Soundness Exam Clinic, Barry County Veterinary Service, Cassville, Mo. • PH: 417-847-2677

3-5 Ozark Fall Farmfest, Ozark Empire Fairgrounds, Springfield, Mo. • PH: 417-833-2660

4 Jacs Ranch Angus Production Sale, Bentonville, Ark. PH: 479-273-3030

7-9 Management Intensive Grazing School, Bois D'Arc, Mo. PH: 417-831-5246, ext.3

8 RA Brown Ranch Annual Bull Sale, Throckmorton, Texas • PH: 940-849-0611

October

8-9 Applied Strategies in Reproduction Conference, Stillwater, Okla. • PH: 405-744-6060

10 Missouri Steer Feedout Consignment deadline PH: 417-466-3102

11 Mark Yazel Cattle Co. Fall Finale, Ratcliff Ranch Sale Facility, Vinita, Okla. • PH: 918-256-5561

14 Bull Breeding Soundness Exam Clinic, Diamond Vet Clinic, Diamond, Mo. • PH: 417-325-4136

15 Bull Breeding Soundness Exam Clinic, Dake Veterinary Clinic, Miller, Mo. • PH:417-452-3301

17 Bull Breeding Soundness Exam Clinic, Countryside Animal Clinic, Aurora, Mo. • PH: 417-678-4011

18 Circle A Ranch Bull & Heifer Sale, Iberia, Mo. PH: 1800-CIRCLEA

18 Seedstock Plus Fall Bull Sale, Joplin Regional Stockyards, Carthage, Mo. • PH: 877-486-1160

18 Ag Celebration with Alumni and Friends, Bond Learning Center, MSU Darr School of Agriculture, Springfield, Mo. PH: 417-836-5628

25 Aschermann Charolais Bull Sale, at the farm, Carthage, Mo. • PH: 417-793-2855

25 Flying H Genetics Bull Sale, Lowry City, Mo. PH: 417-309-0062

November

11 Bowling Ranch Herefords & Red Angus Production Sale, at the ranch, near Newkirk, Okla. • PH: 580-362-5026

21 LeForce Herefords Production Sale, at the ranch, near Pond Creek, Okla. • PH: 832-978-5876

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The Importance of Proper Implanting

The value of implants today

Implants continue to be the most cost-effective and proven technology available to producers for improving feed efficiency and gain in cattle. First approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 1956, implants are used in over 90 percent of feedlot cattle in the U.S. today.[1,2]

It is no surprise this percentage is so high considering the return producers receive. When compared to non-implanted controls, implanted cattle have been shown to increase their average daily gain by 18 percent and improve feed conversion by 9 percent.[3] These improvements, when converted into dollars, result in a total net effect of up to $84/head/year, and with the average cost of a two-implant program at $3.50, this translates into a 24:1 return on a producer's investment.[3*]

Not all implants are created equal

Robert Botts, Ph.D. and Elanco technical consultant, advises that producers should understand that there are differences among implants and implant programs, and those differences can affect marketing strategies, implant defect rates and the producer's bottom line.

"It's important to understand your end goals when selecting an implant program," said Botts. "If your goal is an extremely high quality grade, then an implant with low potency is your best choice to improve grade. Alternately, if you want to improve live or carcass weight, a more aggressive implant program is the way to go."

The rate of implant defects can also be affected by the type of implant chosen. Today, one abscessed implant costs a producer $53/hd, while a missing implant costs $91/hd.[4*] These costs, when spread over the total herd, can quickly eat away at the 24:1 return producers are anticipating. Utilizing implant technologies that aim to reduce implant defects and improve the health of the implant site are one way to boost implant performance and protect upside return.

"There's a lot of money at stake when implanting—about $84/hd[3*]—so I recommend Component® with Tylan® implants because they deliver localized antibacterial protection that improves the health of the implant site and overall performance," said Botts. "This ensures you're maximizing your implant ROI because when there are no implant defects, the implant can provide maximum performance improvements."

Measuring the success of your implant program

Without a proper quality control (QC) program in place, there is no way to determine what type of return producers are receiving from their implant investment. Regular ear checks, as part of a QC program, are essential for verification of implant quality. Ear checks can be used to determine the rate of defects at a feedyard and help producers set goals for maintaining or improving these rates.

"Ear checks can be especially important in feedyards with relatively high employee turnover," said Botts. "They can help you identify if your employees need additional training, because if they are mismanaging an $84 ROI by not applying implants correctly, you have a problem."

Elanco provides free ear check services as part of its Zero Defect Implanting program. While other companies suggest that improper implants are not a problem, Elanco has checked over a million head of cattle over the past 15 years to show producers that abscessed and missing implants can still stand in the way of them maximizing their implant investment.

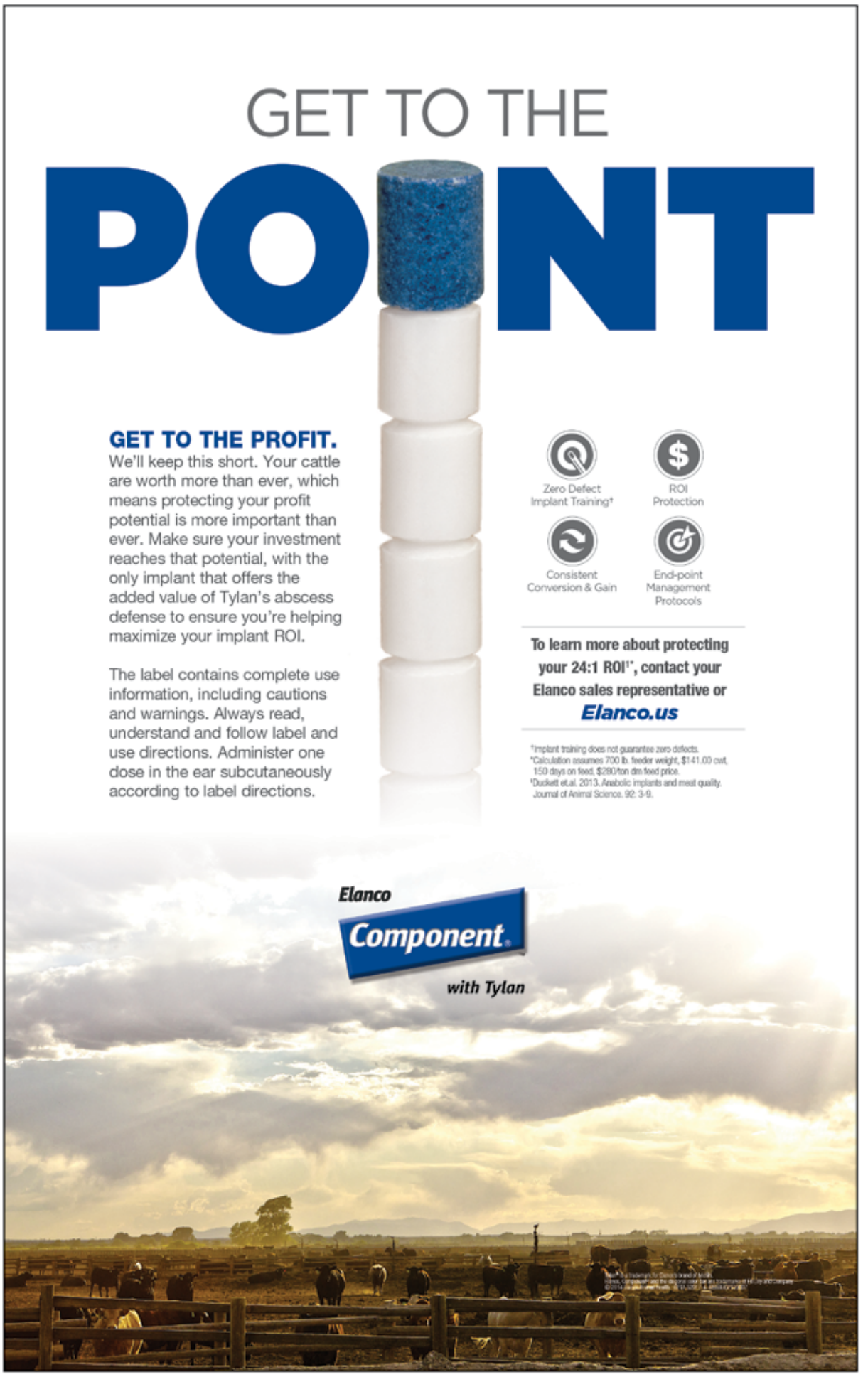
"Even very low defect rates, 2.9 percent for example, can result in major losses for a pen," said Botts. "These animals are worth more than ever before, so it is critical to understand how improper implants can impact the animal and ultimately, your bottom line."

Key takeaways

As a seasoned end-point management expert, Botts not only advises feedyards on how to implement and apply implants, but how to develop an implant protocol that maximizes their returns. Botts' top implant takeaways for producers: "Implants provide a big return relative to other technologies; use them. Implants work virtually 100 percent of the time, unless they are abscessed or missing; apply them correctly. Finally, have a QC program in place to ensure proper application and routine follow-up checks to see if you're maintaining your goals."

*Calculation assumes 700 lb. feeder weight, $141.00 cwt, 150 days on feed, $280/ton DM feed price.

[1]Botts, Robert. 1996. Synovex Plus technical manual.
[2]2013. The use of growth-promoting implants in U.S. feedlots. United States Department of Agriculture. Fort Collins, CO.
[3]Duckett et.al. 2013. Anabolic implants and meat quality. Journal of Animal Science. 92: 3-96.
[4]*Elanco Animal Health Internal Files* 2010; T1EUS090001. Data on file.



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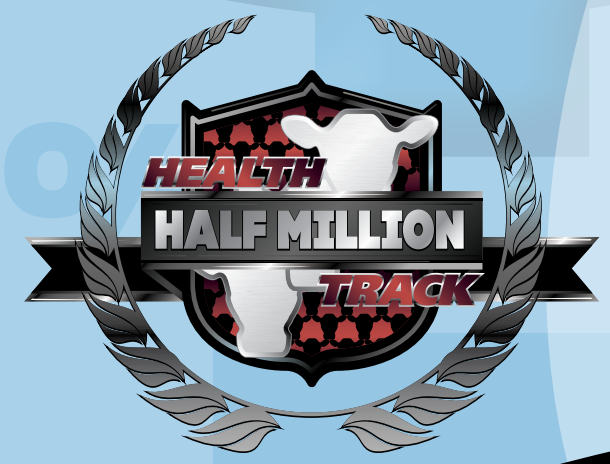

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