

Identifying and Marketing Cull Cows

One of the largest costs of a cow calf operation is maintaining the cows. It is important to have cows in your operation that are efficient and productive in converting feedstuffs into pounds of weaned calf. It is also important to evaluate cows regularly to determine if they are efficient. This culling criteria should include things such as; maintenance of pregnancy, pounds of calf produced at weaning time, maintenance of body condition score during lactation, pounds of weaned calf as a percentage of body weight and age. This is the time of the year to look at culling criteria, identify cows that do not meet the criteria and determine how to cull those cows. By identifying and culling these cows, feed resources are being used to maintain more efficient cows which should improve the profit potential of your cattle operation.

Once cull cows are identified, marketing them to have proper profit potential involves understanding various information. First, it is important to understand the classification of cull cows which is mostly based on body condition. Breakers are cows that are very fleshy, have a high dressing percentage, and have a body condition score of 7 or above.

Boners or boning utility cows are the moderately conditioned cows that range in body condition score from 5.5 to 7. The cows that fall below a body condition score of 5.5 will fall into either leans or lights. The leans will have a lower dressing percentage and bruise easier during transportation than the heavier conditioned classes of cows. The lights will be thin cows that are smaller body size usually resulting in smaller carcass weights. Since the leans and lights potentially will bruise easier during transportation which reduces carcass value, have a lower dressing percentage, and lower carcass weights, they are the lower price per pound animals compared to the bigger, heavier conditioned breaker and boner cows.

When marketing cull cows, it is important to watch price differential between cull cow classes. Ideally cull cows should be marketed in the Breaker or Boner class. It is usually not cost effective to take a cow from the boner class to the breaker class. If resources are available and it is cost effective, cows in the lean class should be feed up to the boner class. Feeding cows from lean class to boner class will probably take approximately 50 to 70 days and should increase the returns on selling cull cows.

Marketing cull cows can have a significant financial impact on the cattle operation. Selecting inefficient cows and marketing them correctly should improve the overall performance of the herd and improve the finances of the entire operation.

Source: *Patrick Davis, Livestock Specialist*

There's an App for that!

University of Nebraska has developed an app for beef producers to manage herds more conveniently. NUBeef-BCS is available in Google play (Android) and Apple App Store (iPhones/iPad). For more info: beef.unl.edu/cattleproduction/nubeef-bcs-app



Fall and Winter Lawn Maintenance

Just because you're counting down the days until you can put away the lawn mower doesn't mean it's time to forget about taking care of your lawn. Here are a few things that you can do this fall to make sure that your lawn is healthier next spring:

1. **Test Your Soil** – When was the last time you tested your soil? If you can't remember, it's been too long. The soil in your lawn should be tested every three to four years. A soil test will tell you the pH of your soil, or whether it's "sweet" or "sour". It will also tell you the levels of phosphorus, potassium, and other nutrients. A soil test will also indicate the amount of lime, phosphate, or potash you should apply if your soil is deficient in these areas. Fall is a great time to test your soil.
2. **Fertilize Your Lawn** – When does the grass in your lawn need fertilizer? When it is growing, of course. When is your lawn growing? In the spring, summer, and early fall, of course. But did you know that your lawn is growing in the late fall and early winter as well? The majority of growth during this period is below ground instead of above ground. Grasses spend the fall developing their root systems. Testing your soil and applying needed fertilizer in the fall will insure good root development and a healthier lawn the following spring.
3. **Aerify Your Lawn** – Most lawns develop a layer of thatch, or undecomposed roots and stems, when they are mowed on a regular basis, especially if grass clippings are not bagged. This thatch layer can restrict the movement of water, nutrients, and air into the root-zone of your lawn. Excessive residue can also harbor diseases, insects, and other pests that may damage your lawn. Your lawn should be dethatched on a regular basis. Fall is a great time to do this and should be done with a dethatching machine or power rake, both of which are often available for rent.
4. **Control Weeds** – During October, November, and December, many broadleaf weeds begin to pop up in lawns throughout Missouri. These weeds, such as chickweed and henbit, are known as winter annuals. Winter annuals complete their lifecycle by early spring so you may never notice them while you're mowing your lawn. This does not mean you should ignore them. Winter annuals compete with your lawn for nutrients, sunlight, and water during that critical period when grasses are developing their root systems. Winter annuals should be treated with a postemergence broadleaf herbicide such as 2,4-D or dicamba during the fall.
5. **Get Ready For Next Year** – Sharpen the blades on your lawnmower. Grasses cut with a sharper blade will be healthier and more disease-resistant than grasses cut with a dull blade. During late winter, you should begin to think about crabgrass control. Many of us only notice crabgrass when it really starts to grow in May or June. Controlling crabgrass at this point can be difficult. Crabgrass is more effectively controlled with a preemergence herbicide applied prior to April 15th.

With the late freezes, heavy rains, and droughts we have experienced the last few years, maintaining a healthy lawn can sometimes be difficult. If you will follow the above steps, your lawn may not always be completely healthy, but you can rest assured that you have given it the best possible opportunity.

Source: *Travis Harper, Agronomy Specialist*

Chrysanthemum is the Flower of November

The chrysanthemum was first cultivated in China as a flowering herb and is described in writings as early as the 15th Century B.C.

In fact, their pottery depicted the chrysanthemum much as we know it today*.

Fun Fact

A study by NASA found that chrysanthemum plants helped reduce indoor air pollution**.

**Taken from National Chrysanthemum Society, USA website: mums.org*

***BC Wolverton, WL Douglas, K Bounds (July 1989). A study of interior landscape plants for indoor air pollution abatement (Report). NASA-TM-108061.*

Drafting a Successful Livestock Sire Lease

More and more today producers are electing to lease a sire for their cattle herds, sheep flocks, or horse herd. There are many reasons why livestock producers may choose to lease a sire. Oftentimes, these transactions are done “on a handshake”; however memorializing the terms of the lease can protect both parties, help articulate a clear agreement, and provide a roadmap for resolving disputes to preserve a business relationship. This article illuminates a few relevant points that should be considered in a sire lease.

Identification

- a. The Sire(s):* The lease should be clear on which sire(s) are subject to the lease. If the sire is registered with a breed association, it is recommended to include the breed registration number and a copy of the registration as an addendum. Producers should consider putting the approximate weight and body condition score of the animal at the time of the agreement; in some cases, the owner will include a photograph of the sire to illustrate his condition on or around the date of delivery.
- b. The Dams:* In most cases, sire leases should be clear on which females the sire will be bred to. In some instances, a detailed list of the dams, their Identification numbers, dates of birth and breed may be attached as an addendum in the lease. This may be important for multiple reasons: (1) to show that the sire will not be overworked, (2) to demonstrate that the sire will or will not be used on first-time dams, or (3) the sire will not be bred to unapproved dams owned by the breeder or third parties.
- c. Sire Use Location(s):* The sire lease should be clear where the animal will be housed. Will the animal be on pasture on the breeder’s property? Will the animal transfer among three different properties owned or rented by the breeder.

Delivery: How is the sire being transported from the owner’s property to the breeder’s property? Who is the paying for the expense of the transportation and bearing any risk of loss, injury or illness of the animal during the delivery time? Are there penalties for late delivery? It is also recommended that both parties agree to comply with the transportation laws for the truck and trailer and any animal welfare laws that apply to the transportation of livestock, including the “Twenty-Eight Hour Law”.

Payment Terms & Term Length: Sire leases should have unambiguous payment terms along with term length and procedures for extending lease length. What is the rate, timing of payment, payment method(s) and instructions, and penalty for late payment (including interest). Some sire leases require a security deposit for \$X to help insure the delivery of a healthy animal at the end of the term.

Option to Purchase: Will the breeder have an option to purchase the sire at the end of the lease or is this a “rent-to-own” contract for a sire?

Care of the Sire: Parties to a sire lease should consider language concerning the health of the animal. Are there certain nutritional programs or management techniques that should be followed? Is there a penalty if the animal is returned malnourished or experienced significant weight loss? Is there a certain veterinarian that the breeder should utilize? It is suggested that the breeder be required to call the bull owner immediately if a medical issue occurs.

Warranty/Guarantee: Is either party making a warranty or guarantee? Perhaps the sire owner wants to give a warranty that the animal is of a certain breed and free of genetic birth defects. Most breed associations have posted online the genetic testing status of registered sires, which can be included as an addendum to the leases, illustrating that the animal is pedigree-free, tested-free or assumed-free of genetic birth defects. If a warranty to the sire’s fertility is made, then the bull owner should supply a veterinarian approved and signed “Breeding Soundness Evaluation” as proof that the animal is a “Satisfactory Potential Breeder”. On the other hand, the breeder may guarantee the dams are healthy. Warranties on health and fertility are common if the payment terms are directly related to confirmed pregnancies. Conversely, the sire owner may want to specifically state that he does not warrant that the semen is fit for a particular purpose or that the sire’s semen will result in the production of progeny or that the progeny will result in congenital birth defects.

Termination: Under what circumstances can either party terminate the sire lease? For example, many sire leases allow for the termination of the lease if either party materially breaches the contract. Furthermore, there could be a clause saying that either party could terminate the lease giving the other party X days of written notice.

A Few Other Provisions: If the sire owner and the breeder are in different states, it is paramount that the contract should say what the choice of law is (e.g. Missouri, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Texas). Is there an exclusivity between the parties? Can the agreement be modified in writing? How will the parties handle “Acts of God” (e.g. tornadoes, flood, fire)? Can the sire be subleased?

As you can see, there is no “one-size fits all” sire lease that is suitable for every transaction. That’s why it is dangerous for livestock producers to pull forms off the internet, fill in a few blanks, and hope that it’s “good enough.” Sire leases should be tailored for the unique needs of your operation and the circumstances surrounding a particular transaction. It benefits livestock producers to sit down with an outside party to help craft a lease either from scratch or modify an online form. Livestock producers can help keep legal costs down by using this check list to create a written lease and working through the issues with the other party before a problem arises.

Source: *Nathaniel Cahill, Agricultural Business Specialist*



Prevented plant acreage will most likely mean high weed pressure in 2016.

Benjamin Franklin once said, “By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.” I think that statement is appropriate for where we are with weed management right now in Missouri—if we don’t plan accordingly, the problems experienced this year could lead to even greater problems next year. This year more than 1.5 million acres of cropland were never planted as a result of the continually wet conditions experienced from April through July. Most of this acreage was left fallow without any sort of weed management program and these fields grew up into a weedy mess. These weeds have matured and produced viable seed that, in most cases, have already been deposited back into the soil seedbank. The primary weed I have seen in most of these fields is waterhemp, which produces about 300,000 to 500,000 seed per plant. I have also seen plenty of fields infested with marestalk (a.k.a. horseweed, *Conyza canadensis*), ragweed species, and grasses like giant foxtail and fall panicum—all of which are also capable of high seed production. In short, the number of weed seed sitting in the soil seedbank waiting to germinate and wreak havoc next year may be unlike anything we’ve ever experienced before. And as Mr. Franklin put it, we must have a plan or we might suffer the consequences.

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So where do you start? How can you be ready to tackle the potential problems that exist in your fields right now? In this article, I suggest a stepwise approach for selecting your soybean herbicide program for the 2016 season. But remember that herbicides shouldn’t be the only component of your weed management program – we have to think beyond herbicides for weed management, and this includes cultural control methods like narrow row spacings, optimum planting populations, crop rotation, cover crops, and tillage where appropriate. These cultural control practices need to be combined with an effective herbicide program to achieve the best weed control possible.

For the rest of these article visit: <http://ipm.missouri.edu/IPCM/2015/9/Are-you-ready-for-the-weeds>