

Keep Productive Cows in the Herd

Cattle producers are faced with a feed shortage heading into winter. Fall pastures are short and hay supply is limited. Producers are looking for ways to survive and remain in the cattle business. One survival method is to reduce the demand for the limited feed supply.

Culling cows from the herd is method to alleviate the stress on the pasture and the demand for the limited, high-priced hay. Culling also provides an opportunity for a producer to improve the efficiency of their cow herd, however producers need to make careful decisions to preserve the genetic progress of their herd.



The first cut will be to eliminate the open cows. Pregnancy check cows early and expect to have a greater percentage open than previous years due to the extreme heat. Some early pregnancy reports are 10-40%. An open cow is a pasture ornament than will not provide any returns for at least 18 months, by the time she becomes bred and weans a calf.

Late calving cows are another criteria to examine when deciding on which cows stay in the herd. Later calving cows tend to have lighter calves at weaning and a greater chance of being open the subsequent breeding season.

The final cut to your cow herd roster should be based on age, disposition and individual performance. If a cow is old does not necessarily mean to cull her. If the cow is still raising marketable calves and has good teeth and is in good condition; consider keeping her. Cows that have poor dispositions and are hard to handle, this is the time to get rid of them. Cows that have bad feet, udders or eyes should be candidates for culling.

Cull cows that are most likely to produce poor quality calves with light or below average weaning weights. The only way to determine if your cows are producing quality calves is to have records and performance data. If a cow consistently ranks in the bottom third or fourth of the herd, she may be a candidate for culling.

During these tough times that producers are experiencing, conserve valuable feed resources by not investing them in non-pregnant or non-productive cows. Identify these cows early and remove them to conserve your limited feed resources.

Look at this as an opportunity to keep the productive cows that will vastly improve the productivity of your cowherd in the future. Matching your cowherd and genetics to your management and environment will help maximize your efficiency, longevity and productivity.

Source: *David Hoffman, Livestock Specialist*

It is Not Just the Field Location!

Buying a house is one of the most important decisions a young couple faces. Location is important but consideration must be given to the soundness of the construction, the foundation and of course all of the features it possesses. So why don't we consider the farms we rent and sometimes buy?

The lands potential to grow crops can vary from "shack to mansion." It is easy to tell if you have deep soil bottomland or shallow sandy hilltop.

How often do we consider the fertility level of the land?

Does it need lime and if so how much?

Has the ground been "mined" to the point it will cost a small fortune to build it up to a good level?

A soil test will tell you.

With fertilizer prices climbing, your profit potential can vary greatly on what the soil needs in lime and fertilizer. I compared a poor field to a better field for clover/grass hay and for corn. The pH salt of the first test was 5.0, the phosphorous level was 5 lbs and potassium was 130 lbs per acre. You may say, "Well mine is better than that", but these kinds of levels come across my desk often. The better field has a pH salt of 6.5, a phosphorous level of 45 lbs and 250 lbs of potassium per acre.

If you want to grow 3 tons of clover/grass mix hay, the difference between the two for phosphate and potash fertilizer was \$52.50 per acre pre year and lime costs was \$32 per acre. The fertilizer cost would be every year for eight years to build up the soil to a good level, or \$682. Add that to the one-time lime cost, it would be \$715 difference between the two fields. If the good field also had a good stand of clover and the other does not, you would have to add in nitrogen costs until you got clover established, adding about \$45. The lime and fertilizer difference between the two fields would be about \$760 over eight years. Because the pH and P and K were so low to start, you would probably also reduce the yields, maybe up to 4 to 8 tons over the eight years. At \$80 per ton of hay, that would be another \$320 to \$640 over the eight years. That means you are looking at over a thousand dollars difference between the two fields.

Assuming you wanted to grow 180 bushel corn, the fertilizer difference is \$47 per acre per year and lime cost was a \$32 per acre difference. With eight years of the increased fertilizer and the lime would be \$431. When you include a yield difference of maybe 200 to 400 bushels over eight years at \$3.50 per bushel corn, resulting in \$700 to \$1400 less income on the poor field. That plus the fertilizer and lime difference would be about \$1500 over the eight years.

Therefore, the question comes down to a dollar difference.

Are these two fields worth the same price to purchase or rent? From the property owner's perspective, it becomes important to have a renter who takes care of the land and not just think about \$10 per acre more rent. In the long term, you want a renter who is maintaining the value of the land.



Source: *Pat Miller, Agronomy Specialist*

Farm Tax Changes

In December of 2017 the U.S. Congress passed, and the President signed into law major tax changes – the biggest changes in thirty years.

Every taxpayer will be impacted by these changes.

Ag Business Specialist with University of Missouri Extension can help answer questions about these changes affecting farmers/ranchers and families.

Agriculture Leases

Fall is generally a time when farmers and ranchers begin thinking about next year's business decisions. During the fall, farmland and pasture leases are typically agreed to for the following year. We generally field several questions on this topic so a discussion on some resources to help with the decision making process is in order.

One of the most common questions is "What does crop or pasture land rent for?" Unfortunately, there is no short answer to this question, other than the standard reply of "It depends."

Pasture leases can be extremely variable, depending on what different parties bring to the table. If the landlord basically provides a place for animals to roam around during the summer, rental rate should be relatively low. The more the landlord provides, such as fertilizer, working facilities, high quality pasture, high quality fencing, multiple water sources, management or labor assistance, etc., the higher the rental rate should be.

Dr. Ray Massey, Extension Professor and agriculture economist at the University of Missouri, recently completed a statewide survey of rental rates. The information is contained in MU Guide G427 entitled "2018 Cash Rental Rates in Missouri". Rental rates for cropland as well as pastureland are reported in this publication.

Dr. Massey has also recently completed the 2018 Missouri Farm Land Values Opinion Survey. Survey respondents included ag lenders, rural appraisers, and farmers.

A third source of information that may be helpful in developing ag leases is the "MU Custom Rate Survey", MU Guide G302. The most recent survey was completed in 2016.

These publications can be accessed on the following MU websites: crops.missouri.edu, beef.missouri.edu, or agebb.missouri.edu.

Once some idea of prices is obtained, the next step is to get the lease written down. AgLease101.org is a website that was developed by the North Central Farm Management Extension Committee and contains information on lease agreements as well as sample lease forms. The North Central Farm Management Extension Committee is comprised of 16 Extension Educators located at universities from the North Central Region of the United States, including the University of Missouri.

The bottom line is that agriculture leases are extremely situation specific. The above resources can help you formulate the lease to the benefit of both parties.

Finally, be sure to get the lease agreement in writing. If you need additional assistance, refer to the above publications or call your local University of Missouri Extension office.

Source: *Gene Schmitz, Livestock Specialist*

November Gardening Calendar

Ornamentals

- **Weeks 1-4:** Continue watering evergreens until the ground freezes. Soils must not be dry when winter arrives.
- **Weeks 1-4:** Now is the ideal time to plant trees and shrubs. Before digging the hole, prepare the site by loosening the soil well beyond the drip line of each plant. Plant trees and shrubs at the depth they grew in the nursery and not deeper. Remove all wires, ropes and non-biodegradable materials from roots before back filling. Apply a 2-3 inch mulch layer, but stay several inches away from the trunk. Keep the soil moist, not wet, to the depth of the roots.
- **Weeks 1-4:** Remove the spent flowers and foliage of perennials after they are damaged by frost.
- **Weeks 1-3:** Newly planted broad-leaf evergreens such as azaleas, boxwood and hollies benefit from a burlap screen for winter wind protection. Set screen stakes in place before the ground freezes.
- **Week 1:** Now is a good time to observe and choose nursery stock based on fall foliage interest.
- **Week 1:** Plant tulips now.
- **Weeks 3-4:** Mums can be cut back to within several inches of the ground once flowering ends. After the ground freezes, apply a 2 to 3 inch layer of loose mulch such as pine needles, straw or leaves.
- **Weeks 3-4:** Mulch flower and bulb beds after the ground freezes, to prevent injury to plants from frost heaving.
- **Weeks 3-4:** Roses should be winterized after a heavy frost. Place a 6 to 10-inch deep layer of mulch over each plant. Top soil works best. Prune sparingly, just enough to shorten overly long canes. Climbers should not be pruned at this time.
- **Weeks 3-4:** Take steps to prevent garden pools from freezing solid in winter. Covering pools with an insulating material or floating a stock tank water heater in the pond will lessen the chance of ice damage.
- **Weeks 3-4:** Covering garden pools with bird netting will prevent leaves from fouling the water. Oxygen depletion from rotting organic matter can cause winter kill of pond fish.



West Central Missouri Show-Me-Select Heifer Sale
Saturday, November 24, 2018

Kingsville Livestock Auction

For those cattle producers interested in purchasing replacement heifers, the West Central Missouri Show-Me-Select Bred Heifer Sale is scheduled for Saturday, November 24, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. at the Kingsville Livestock Auction. The 200 bred heifers have undergone extensive selection and development for sound reproductive performance, have had a strict vaccination program and health protocol administered, and are bred to calving-ease bulls and pregnancy examined with expected calving dates.

Here is an opportunity to buy purchase young replacement females that have gone through a time-tested program with results. Show-Me-Select heifers have fewer problems at calving, breed back quicker and stay in the herd longer. The producers selling Show-Me-Select heifers have developed an outstanding reputation of offering high quality bred females.

For more information on the West Central Missouri Show-Me-Select Bred heifer Sale please visit www.extension.missouri.edu/cass and click on the Show-Me-Select webpage. For more information on the Show-Me-Select Heifer Program, please contact your regional livestock specialist.

