

## Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

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### **REDBOOK TIME**

I have the popular, shirt-pocket size beef cattle field data book available in Extension centers in southwest Missouri. The price is \$6 unless we have to mail it, then we charge \$8. There's a wealth of space for you to keep all sorts of herd records. It can handle over 400 calving entries. The real purpose of it is for field entries that are backed up by more complete record systems, either computer or notebook style. Check with my office in Mt. Vernon or your nearest Extension livestock specialist about their Redbook supply. They have been used as stocking stuffers.

### **YOU'RE INVITED**

Mark your calendar for December 3, 8 am. That's the Beef Cattle Open House and Timed AI Demonstration at the University of Missouri's Southwest Research Center, Mt. Vernon. The center is on State Road H at exit 44 off of I-44. Follow it about 2 miles southwest to the Center. If you're coming from the west, exit at 38, the Stotts City exit, and follow the south outer road east.

Faculty from campus, Drs. Jordan Thomas and Jared Decker will present topics on estrus synchronization and artificial insemination, EPDs and genomic testing. I'll review the Show-Me-Select Heifer Replacement Program and David Cope of the SW Center will outline the plan for the beef herd at the Center.

At 10:30 am we'll adjourn to the corral north of the interstate where the Center's heifers will be inseminated using sex-sorted semen. The heifers have been synchronized using the 14-day CIDR protocol. Advance registration is not required and there is no charge.

### **BULL SALE REVIEW**

The Southwest Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement Association held the 92<sup>nd</sup> All-Breed Bull Sale in Springfield on October 29<sup>th</sup>. The 35 Angus bulls averaged \$3140. Two Polled Herefords each sold for \$2000. The 37 bulls averaged \$3078. There were 3 bulls that did not sell.

The historic records comparing the price per head of 450 lb., high-quality feeder steers to the average price paid for bulls at this sale show an average ratio of 4:1. The sale on the 29<sup>th</sup> had a ratio of 3.9:1 which was very close to the longtime average. In fact, the last three sales each averaged 3.9. This formula has been kept since the first sale in 1973. The range varies from 2.8:1 in 1979 to 5.6:1 in 1996. In October 1996 feeder prices were in a real slump with steer calves averaging \$59.62 at the time of our bull sale.

In October, 2014 and March, 2015 when 450 lb. feeder steers were bringing \$1300 to \$1400 the ratio varied from 3.3 to 3.8 to 1.

### **FEEDOUT WEIGHIN**

The weighin and evaluation of the 139 head of steers on November 6 was a most educational event. The steers were consigned by 15 different owners and following the evaluation by USDA graders and order buyers the steers headed to Iowa and will be finished next April and May. At that time complete carcass data will be gathered and the overall steer results will be revealed.

The 139 steers averaged 639 lbs. The market reporters placed an average price of \$151.73 on them. There were extremes with weight and price. Weight-wise the variation was from 436 to 860 lbs. As for price the spread was \$138 to \$169 per hundred weight. The age spread went from late December to early April. There was also a good bit of spread in fleshiness (body condition score) from a 4 (thin) up to 7 (fleshy). Breed diversity was evident with lots of Angus and Angus crosses. There also were Charolais, Balancers, Beefmasters, Red Angus, Simmental and Brangus crosses.

Joining the steers in Iowa at the Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity were 52 head from northeast Missouri and around 70 head from Eminence. If you really want to learn what type of feeder calves you're raising, I encourage you to send a representative sample to a future feedout. It could be an

eye-opening experience. Our next feedout will be for fall-born calves that are on the ground now. We'll send them to Iowa June 4, 2019.

### **BULL SOUNDNESS CLINICS**

During October, Extension, Zoetis and five veterinary clinics cooperated to give cow-calf raisers a bargain for checking their bulls for breeding readiness. There were 221 bulls examined. The passage rate was 92.3%. That's slightly better than the average passage rate of 90% that goes back to 2005.

Seven of the failed bulls were due to a below 70% normal sperm count. Other problems found were: penile warts or injuries; hair rings on penis; testicle size; prepuce injury. Some bulls may have had more than one problem which resulted in them failing or being deferred.

As with the steer feedout, we had numerous breeds represented with 41% being Angus. There were 13% Red Angus, 10% Sim Angus, 8% Gelbvieh and 6% Balancer.

Here are ranges in traits evaluated at the clinics: Age 10 months to 7 years; weight 796 lbs. to 2432 lbs.; body condition 4 to 7; soundness 2 to 7; scrotal circumference 28 to 48 centimeters and % normal sperm 38 to 96%.

### **HOW OLD IS TOO OLD?**

I'm asked often about when to get rid of a bull due to age? Bull breeding soundness clinics help you decide if you keep the results sheet from exam to exam. Really having your bulls checked once or twice a year helps extend the years of service for your bull investment.

Over the years of monitoring bulls through the clinics we have few bulls examined that are over 7 years. This fall there were 29 (13%) of bulls that were 5 or more years old and none were over 7. I believe the oldest bull that came regularly to the clinics was a 10 year old on his last visit.

Bulls, if cared for, should be useful up to the 5-7 year range. Many are culled because of other than soundness issues like: daughter retention in the herd; got too big; was hard on fences; was hard to handle; I wanted a better bull. Some of you may remember several year ago I mentioned that Dr. Dave Patterson and others at MU reported the average number of calves sired by bulls was much less than most folks think. I don't remember the exact number but I believe it was 50 calves or fewer per bull.

Yes, there are exceptions but review your records if you have positive sire identification of your calves. Bulls that

sire over 100 calves in their careers probably are exceptions rather than the rule.

### **FEED WHOLE SOYBEANS?**

Yes, you can feed whole soybeans or damaged beans from frost or drought. An excellent paper done by Oklahoma State may be accessed at ANSI 3030. A few items to remember include: whole beans should be limited to around 0.3 percent of the animal's body weight; 500 lb. steers should not receive more than 1.5 lbs. of whole soybeans per day; do not feed whole beans to calves less than 4 months of age or weighing less than 300 lbs.; do not feed to non-ruminants; do not feed to cattle being fed urea; adult cows should not receive more than 4 or 5 lbs. of whole beans depending on weight.

### **LEASING BULLS**

For years I've told small, beef cow-calf owners they have a challenge finding bulls economically. We know if you only have 25 or fewer cows you'll have trouble finding a quality bull for less than \$2000-\$2500. Even if you use artificial insemination you'll probably still need a cleanup bull. Usually you end up with nothing more than a cow freshener. He may get your cows bred but what will his calves look like and will he string them out over a long calving season. This gives you a marketing problem as we strive for uniformity in size, color, frame and muscle.

Last summer at our national extension conference the Tennessee Farm Bureau visited about their program that helps small herd participants lease high quality bulls. They keep an inventory of 90 bulls, mostly Angus, some Charolais, SimAngus, Hereford and Balancers. The lease price for their members who qualify is one-third of the purchase price of the bull for 365 days. After the first year if the renter wants to buy the bull they pay the remaining two-thirds of the purchase price.

The program is not intended to make Farm Bureau money. The goal is to break even, help improve feeder calf quality and increase participant's profit. We have folks in this area who lease bulls and if strict health and breeding soundness tests are followed, I can see merit in it. I appreciate the Tennessee effort as they only lease bulls that should enhance the genetics in the herds they're put in.

Leased bulls should have some respectable genetic qualities regarding his EPD's. I'd hope they might even have several of their EPDs that place them above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile. Involve a veterinarian in checking the bulls when they go out and come back.