Most know of someone who had cattle stolen, but never reported them. Everyone is urged to report thefts.

The use of cameras, both real and fake, was encouraged. In Greene county it appears the use of trail cameras has helped some.

Of course, questions arose about a cattle producer’s right to protect their property. Law enforcement pointed out that you could use a gun only if you personally are threatened. Their short reply was, “a cow isn’t worth a human life.”

During my comments I stressed the merits of freeze or hot-iron branding. It can be inexpensive and may be cheaper than insurance for theft. In addition branding can help in your marketing strategies if you have right kind of cattle. Branding helps establish reputations cattle.

Several people have asked about using microchips which are placed under the skin or even in the animal’s muscle. I’ve checked this out and they are considering an adulterant where food animals are concerned. Missouri’s brand registration costs $35 initially and $20 every fifth year to maintain it. A two-character brand is required and the cost of an electric iron, is between $100 and $125. Freeze brands are beautiful on dark haired cattle if you take time and learn the technique. I see purebred breeders using freeze brands more than commercial cow herd owners or a back grounder.

In closing, I encourage you to think of the effort to deter cattle theft as one of TEAMWORK. Remember, there are significant rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons who steal cattle. The Missouri Cattlemen’s Association and Missouri Farm Bureau each have a $5000 reward. Individuals have put up private rewards and more could be on the way.

WANTED BRUSHY PASTURE
Kevin Bradley, University of Missouri Extension specialist in weed and brush control is looking for one-half to three quarters of an acre that has buck brush, thorny locust or persimmon sprouts on it. Let me or Tim Schnakenberg know if you’d like to help Kevin on this small plot research project.
EXCESSIVE PROTEIN EFFORTS
Research has shown that beef females grazing pastures that contain high levels of protein have lower pregnancy rates than those on diets around 15 percent protein. Since you’ve had good luck getting several forages interseeded last fall, I would be interested in how the fall breeding season went. Some of the forages would certainly qualify as high protein. Turnip tops for instance carry a book-value of 18% on protein. Wheat and other cereal grains run in the 20% plus level. Even lush fescue pasture is in the 15% or better range.

If you do an early preg check please let me know how successful the breeding season was. I’ve already been involved in a couple of Show-Me-Select early preg checks with nothing unusual showing up.

CHECK WEIGHT & QUALITY OF HAY
An extension agent in Kentucky conducted a nice demonstration last summer. I read about it in the Progressive Forage Grower and it vividly shows why you need objective measures when you buy or sell hay.

He used 30 beef and hay producers from his county in central Kentucky. They measured, weighed and probed bales in each lot. They divided the hay into grass (likely a lot of fescue), grass-legume mix and alfalfa.

Here’s the data for size and weights on the grass hay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bale Size</th>
<th>Bale Weight (lbs)</th>
<th>Avg. Wt. (lbs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4’ x 5’</td>
<td>601 - 1129</td>
<td>863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5’ x 5’</td>
<td>785 – 1450</td>
<td>1045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5’ x 6’</td>
<td>1449 – 1550</td>
<td>1505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The stats for nutrient values are below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hay Type</th>
<th>Protein Range%</th>
<th>Protein Avg %</th>
<th>TDN Range%</th>
<th>TDN Avg %</th>
<th>RFV Range</th>
<th>RFV Avg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grass</td>
<td>4.9-15.4</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>37.0-57.0</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>70.8-114.0</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass/Legume</td>
<td>8.8-19.8</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>47.6-65.5</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>71.2-160.4</td>
<td>107.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alfalfa</td>
<td>19.8-24.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>57.0-58.0</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>100.0-125.0</td>
<td>116.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I asked why the alfalfa was so low on quality. Apparently, the sample number was small and must have been mature when harvested. Our alfalfa usually runs in the low to mid-60s on TDN and 150 to 190 on RFV (Relative Feed Value)

RFV may not be familiar to some of you. To get RFV you must request a neutral detergent fiber value which costs $4.50 extra. RFV combines the two fiber values, acid detergent fiber which estimates nutrient digestibility and neutral detergent fiber which helps estimate animal intake. Protein is not considered in the RFV numbers.

Some folks respect RFV so much they price their hay based on a dollar and cent value per RFV point. For instance, if alfalfa hay is scarce you might price it at $1.25 per RFV point. If the RFV was 200, do the math ($1.25 x 200 = $250 per ton). Grass hays would be valued at less per point.

HAY OR HAYLAGE?
There’s more interest in wrapping big bales now as most have found that cattle love haylage, clean it up better than dry hay, seem to gain better and it speeds up curing time. It works well in April and early May when rain may threaten. The suggested moisture level for hay is 45% to 60%, give or take a few percentage points. Moisture meters help zero in on the optimum moisture level.

Other secrets to high quality haylage is to mow when it’s ready for optimum yield, protein and energy. Don’t let your hay get too mature. Wrap it immediately. Maximize bale density to exclude oxygen. Don’t skimp on numbers of wraps. Iowa State found that as layers of plastic increased, up to six layers, cattle palatability improved. Fewer layers increased temperature and allowed continued respiration.

The Iowa folks suggested storing the bales on the end rather than on their side. The magnitude of the cattle consumption mentioned above was greater for dairy than beef cattle. A final comment from state forage specialist, Rob Kallenbach was that tall fescue made into baleage preserves more ergovaline than will dry hay.

Whether dry or haylage, be geared up to make some stored forage in April or early May. In 2012 we were able to get a lot of grass hay up before May 10. Too bad you had to feed it in July and August.

EMBRYONIC LOSS
Kansas State Extension veterinarian, Bob Larson wrote recently about early pregnancy losses. He said estimates are that 30% of early embryos from a fertile mating are lost by day 14 of pregnancy. The early loss is considered unavoidable and is due to the genetic complexity of mammals that halts the development of imperfect embryos. Between day 14 and day 42 there can be additional losses due to the embryo or the early placenta.

Bob says the embryo is considered a fetus after day 42. Based on this, if you preg check before 42 days you may think your veterinarian missed the call when they might have been on-target.