MORE EVENTS

University of Missouri Extension is all about providing farmers with updated technology and here’s more opportunities for you to avail yourself of tech items on the shelf that should improve your competitiveness.

The 31st Annual Southwest Missouri Spring Forage conference in Springfield on March 3 will be held at the University Plaza Hotel. Registration begins at 8 am. Presentations begin at 8:45. They cover a wide range of forage-livestock topics through the day.

The keynote speaker is Dr. Kim Stockhouse – Lawson, director of sustainability for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. She serves on the national committee on sustainability which strives to define the term sustainability and how it will affect producers in the future.

You may be a bit short on time for the early registration of February 18 when the fee was $35 per person. On-site registration will be $45 at the door. For more information call 417-831-5246, ext. 3.

Folks in the southern part of our region are invited to the Livestock Forage Conference at Forsyth High School on February 23, 6 to 9 pm. Following the meal, speakers and topics include: Beef Outlook, Dr. Scott Brown, MU Extension; Herd Health, Dr. Gary Spragg, DVM Rogersville; Poultry Litter as Fertilizer, Tim Schankenberg, MU Extension; Pre-register at 417-546-4431 by the 19th to assist in food preparation.

If you’d like to increase your knowledge regarding fescue toxicosis, fescue management and how to renovate “hot” fescue to “cool” or novel endophyte fescue, you need to attend the schools held in Missouri the last of March.

The nearest school for most of you reading this letter is at the University of Missouri Southwest Research Center, Mt. Vernon on March 30 starting at 9 am. Other locations are Wurduck Farm, Cook Station, University of Missouri, Columbia and Forage Systems Research Center, Linneus.

BULL BREEDING SOUNDNESS CLINICS

These BSE Clinics are offered as an enticement to get more of you to load your bulls on a trailer and haul them to a vet clinic near you. Your vet can perform an examination, inside and out and tell you whether your bull(s) will be ready to get over half of your females bred in the first 21 days of the breeding season.

We’ve helped conduct these clinics since 2005 and of the 1,950 bulls examined, around 12% fail to pass the exam. I know these clinics can only handle a small number of the bulls on these four dates. Your veterinarian may even have special clinics at which they can devote a day to especially the 1 and 2 bull herds.

The following four clinics will have an attractive price for the BSE that includes vaccinations, internal and external parasite control. They will be able to perform blood collection for genomic testing and trichomoniasis for an additional charge. I will attend these four clinics and visit with you about bull management, bull buying, EPD’s, breed choices and anything else you’re interested in.

- **March 4** – Barry County Veterinary Services, Cassville 417-847-2677
- **March 11** – Dake Veterinary Clinic, Miller 417-452-3301
- **March 20** – Countryside Animal Clinic, Aurora 417-678-4011
- **March 24** – Animal Clinic of Diamond, Diamond 417-325-4136

Call for a date ASAP as they fill up quickly.

BULL SALES

March is probably the busiest month of the year for bull sales. If you have to buy a bull, I’d be glad to assist in understanding EPD’s and some of the genomic info, indexes, ultrasound and RFI jargon you run into in a sale.
catalog. There’s lots of data in most catalogs or the seller can provide it, if they think it’s in their best interest to do so.

Remember, if you’ve done some record keeping on your herd, especially gain, carcass quality and yield grade you have a good place to start as you rank the bulls you’d feel comfortable bidding on. If you don’t have that data it’s your own fault. Granted, it does take retaining ownership of all or a portion of your calf crop but that’s the way it is.

Without the above data I’d suggest you examine the EPDs of the bulls you’ve used the last 5 or more years. Of course I’m assuming you are keeping daughters of those bulls. What traits have you put into your breeding program? I’ll bet most would say, calving ease or low birth weights.

Well, I’m pretty sure most of your adult cows do not need a calving ease bull every time. You might consider a CEM – (calving ease maternal) bull, that would be sensible if you were exposing him to cows you’d like to retain heifers from for herd replacements.

It’s fun to go back to the last several bulls you’ve bought and see what their percentile ranking within their breed was. That gives you a rough idea of the current genetic makeup of your herd. It’s not perfect, but if you don’t actually feed out some of your calves that may be your best approach.

Genomic testing is more readily accepted and the cost seems favorable depending on the tests you choose. Some are geared towards purebred herds while there are tests for high percentage Angus and a few other breeds you may investigate. The cost runs from the $20’s to $75 per head, depending on which test and which company you deal with. More of the SMS heifers will have genomic data.

Genomic testing is an excellent way to improve the accuracy of your herd’s EPD’s. When selecting bulls, note if the breeder has invested in genomic testing to improve his bull’s EPD accuracy as if he’d had 10 to 25 head of progeny.

As I’ve said before, the greatest progress in genetics is via artificial insemination with high accuracy bulls. Speaking of bulls, our Southwest Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement Association’s spring bull sale is March 30, 7 pm at the Springfield Livestock Marketing Center with 50 head to sell. Catalogs will be out around March 1. Call your livestock specialist or Pam Naylor, sales manager 417-345-8330 for a catalog or go on line at www.swmobcia.com to view the offering.

**SANDHILLS SHUFFLE REVIEW**

Justin Sexten, state extension beef specialist reminded attendees at the Barry County Soils and Crops Conference that one practice that may minimize calf scours better than a vaccination program is as follows:

- Group the springer cows together as most of you do.
- Depending on your numbers, in 7 to 14 days move all the springers to a clean pasture and leave the cows and babies in the old pasture.
- This separation continues until the youngest calves are a month old then they can be commingled. This system seems simple enough but you do need to have several pastures to make it work for you.

**HOW MUCH NOVEL FESCUE?**

It’s been about 15 years since we started promoting novel endophyte fescue. As noted in an earlier item, we’re still encouraging folks to try some on their farms. We realize we’ll never get a 100% conversion to the novels and we probably shouldn’t. However, research shows that you can receive substantial benefit from just converting 25 or 30% of your “hot” fescue to one of the novels. Utilize that part of your forage ahead of the calving season and during the breeding season.

Those two periods in a cow operation are critical from a heat stress standpoint. If you’re a backgrounder it’s to your advantage to increase your novel acreage above the 30% level as you probably want those cattle to always have top quality pasture that supports 1.5 to 2 lbs. a day gain.

The novels are capable of hitting the above gains but experience tells us you’ll likely to see gains of less than one pound per day on the “hot” Kentucky 31 fescue. When that happens you need an alternative forage or increase the supplement you’re providing such as corn, distillers grains or corn gluten feed to support acceptable gains.

**NOVEL ALTERNATIVE**

2014 was perhaps one of the best legume years in the last 20 years. I’d like to think all of that seed produced last year will germinate and 2015 will be nearly as good. Legumes offer some protection from ergovaline from the toxic fescue, so continue to try to get it in your old fescue fields. There’s still time to overseed red and ladino clover this month. Use red if the field will be mainly a hay field. Ladino is the favorite for pastures.

Don’t forget that on your poorer soils, lespedeza is the best legume choice.