

## Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

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### **BEEF REPROGENE WORKSHOP**

Please note the flier that goes with this letter. The workshop that will be at Joplin Regional Stockyards on March 8 will be a good one to attend if you want to stay on the cutting edge with your beef cow-calf enterprise. Drs. Dave Patterson, Jared Decker and Jordan Thomas will be down from the University at Columbia with new technology topics that will help you understand new heat synchronization protocols, expected progeny differences and genomic tests.

Tom Brink, chief executive officers of the Red Angus Association of America will also be on hand to share ideas on adding value to breeding stock and feeders. One of the highlights will be a hands on program using yearling heifers that have genomic results. To assist in meal and literature planning we need to hear from you by March 5.

### **BULL BREEDING SOUNDNESS CLINICS**

It will be bull turnout time before long so March is a good time to have your bulls checked for breeding soundness, given their booster shots and treated for internal and external parasites. Since 2005 I've been working with several veterinarians to have special one, two or more clinics for clients to have bulls checked out.

Here's the schedule. I realize these dates won't work for everyone but for those who can't make them, at least use this as a reminder. There are all kinds of special days, weeks and months so I'm designating March as, "Take Your bull(s) To The Vet Month."

March 7 – Barry County Vet Service, Cassville	847-2677
March 12 – Countryside Animal Clinic, Aurora	678-4011
March 13-14 – Dake Veterinary Clinic, Miller	452-3301
March 15 – Animal Clinic of Diamond, Diamond	325-4136
March 21-22 – El Dorado Springs Vet Clinic	876-5805
Mar 23-Apr 7-Countryside Veterinary Clinic, Bolivar	326-2992

BSE's help identify serious breeding problems, such as totally unfit for breeding. More often they help identify bulls with minor problems that result in strung-out calf crops. Over the years the fail or not so good bulls hit in the 10 to 15% range. Our severe cold weather may cause that percentage to run a bit higher this spring, especially with some of the Brahman crosses.

### **BULL SALE TIME**

The Southwest Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement Association will hold their bull sale on March 26, 7 pm at the Springfield Livestock Marketing Center at exit 70 off I-44. I've mentioned over the years, the tools to use as you shop for bulls wherever it is. Those items do change so here's a few current tips.

- Use EPD's (expected progeny difference). They are much more reliable predictors of an animal's genetic merit than actual or adjusted weights.
- Calving ease direct (CED) is the best predictor of a bull's expected calving ease.
- Ignore a bull's adjusted birth weight. Birth weight EPD is the major factor in CED so if your association provides a CED value for bulls, use it instead of the birth weight EPD.
- Indexes should be used rather than trying to look at a specific EPD. For example Angus combine birth weight, weaning weight, maternal milk and mature cow size into a \$Wean or (\$W) value that is more predictive if you're a feeder calf producer and you save replacement heifers. You may have used the \$Beef (\$B) in the past and that's fine if you retain ownership all the way to the packer. \$B does not reflect maternal merit if you save replacements.
- Know the genetic makeup of your cow herd and your plan for the future. Is there a younger generation coming on?

- Most of you may not know the genetic makeup of your cows unless you've entered steers in our Missouri Steer Feedout consistently or fed your own cattle out and received carcass data. The next best thing to do is research your last several bulls' EPD Percentile Ranking. Of course, you may choose to genomic test your replacement heifers and use that to position your herd in the future.
- Don't overuse Calving Ease Direct (CED). You can have calves that are too small at birth.
- You may have already selected for more milk in your cows than your forage allows them to produce.
- Docility is an EPD in several breeds you can use to move an excitable herd to one that's easier to handle. On docility, EPDs that are larger are the calmer ones.
- After doing your bull selection, look critically at your selections from the ground up. That means are their hooves sound for your pastures? Do they have long, curved toes? Do they appear to have had their toes trimmed? Are there corns between their toes? Do they walk with a nice long stride? When a front hoof is picked up does the rear one on that side strike where the front hoof was? Do you notice puffy hocks? Do you feel you could stand to look at the bulls you like everyday for the length of their life in your herd?
- Be sure the bull has passed a breeding soundness exam before bidding on him.

### **ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION**

Beef producers, nationwide, still do not use AI adequately to make rapid changes in their herds. So, instead of buying a yearling bull and waiting to see how he turns out, use AI bulls with high degrees of accuracy. Accuracies on bull EPDs vary from 0.05 up to a 0.99. The 0.05 simply is a pedigree estimate while a 0.99 accuracy indicates the bull has sired thousands of calves and had data compiled on their performances.

The Missouri Show-Me-Select program requires a 0.60 accuracy on AI bulls for CED. Accuracies can be enhanced with genomic data. Young bulls can obtain an accuracy in the upper 0.30's or even into the low 0.40's. Genomic tests can be run on newborn calves.

Genomic tests are plentiful and can be confusing as far as the numbers they put out. There are numerous genomic tests depending on the breed and some are designed for commercial crossbred animals. One good item on the genomic tests is the prices continue to come down.

### **FEED-TO-GAIN & TENDERNESS**

The above two traits are ones that it seems we really need to focus on in genomic beef selection. Any genetics report I've read indicate these items are still difficult to quantify by measurements in the live animal.

I'm sure genetics researchers are working on these as they work on genomics. The Grow Safe feed system has helped as we now can look at Residual Feed Intake (RFI). Most tenderness measures relate back to shear testing the grilled beef cut. Eventually, genomic testing will find a better way to select for them.

### **MONETT CONFERENCE REPORT**

Scott Brown, University of Missouri Extension livestock marketing specialist made these points during his talk at Monett.

- ✓ Feeder prices in 2018 will average about \$5 lower than 2017.
- ✓ Based on a show of hands from the audience, everyone in attendance has average or lower costs of production in their cow herds.
- ✓ Due to economies of scale, larger cow-calf operations tend to be more efficient.
- ✓ NAFTA is important. Cattle prices will drop if we pull out.
- ✓ Reputation feeder calves that have documentation are in high demand by feedlots.

### **WEATHER REPORT AT MONETT**

Pat Guinan, MU Extension climatologist had several interesting points regarding weather trends.

- ❖ Growing seasons are expanding both in the spring and fall by 6 or 7 days.
- ❖ A hot dry May is the best predictor of a dry summer.
- ❖ We've been in a unprecedented warming trend the last 20 years.
- ❖ August was the only unusually cool month in 2017.

### **VFD SURVEY**

The Veterinary Feed Directive (VFD) began just over a year ago. Michigan State University Extension specialists have developed a survey to see what the impacts have been on antibiotic use on farms across the United States.

To participate in the survey electronically use this link [https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eY83E3DiinnglJD](https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eY83E3DiinnglJD)  
If you'd like to use a paper copy, please contact me.