

## Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

April 20, 2018



Eldon Cole, Livestock Specialist, P.O. Box 388, Mt. Vernon, MO 65712  
(417) 466-3102 or [colee@missouri.edu](mailto:colee@missouri.edu) or <http://muextension.missouri.edu/lawrence>

### **SMS Heifer Sale**

The Show-Me-Select Bred Heifer Sale is May 18, 7 pm at Joplin Regional Stockyards. The number entered is down from recent sales as only 200 are scheduled to go through the ring. They come from 15 different farms and there are 4 first-timers and 2 are in only their second sale. About one-third will be red or red white-faced heifers.

We've been running over 300 heifers the last few sales but this time that number is down. There doesn't seem to be a clear-cut reason but some usual consignors had poorer AI conception rates, the cleanup bull didn't do their share of the breeding and one potential consignor decided he'd sell older cows and keep his bred heifers.

I anticipate this sale will have a nice average due to the low numbers consigned. Recent sales have seen the average price about the equivalent of 2, 550 lb., Medium-Large number 1 and 2 muscle steer calves the week of the sale. Of course, some really nice heifers that are Tier Twos or Show-Me-Plus will bring more.

Some of you probably feel that's a little pricey but when all things are considered you may still be getting a bargain to buy instead of raising your own. Perhaps you can upgrade your genetics through a SMS purchase. I even had a request last week from a buyer who was looking to buy one or two registered heifers bred to an outstanding AI bull. He was hoping they would produce a bull calf or two which he could grow up to be his cleanup bull. The sale catalog can be found at: <http://www.swmobcia.com/>

### **BSE CLINIC REPORT**

There were 220 bulls examined during the bull breeding soundness clinics in March in Cassville, Miller, Aurora, Diamond and El Dorado Springs. The percent that were passed was 90. This is exactly the percent overall since we started the program in 2005. Just because your bull or bulls was breeding cows last season isn't a guarantee he'll be ready this season. Sure, 90% of the bulls checked out as

satisfactory potential breeders but you might have one of those 10 percenters. The BSE won't cost more than \$50 and could be less.

The primary cause of not passing a BSE is failure to have 70% or more of the sperm being normal. This failure occurs for a variety of reasons some temporary due to a disease, heat or cold stress, others may be long term problems related to age. Regardless of the problem your bulls may have, visit with your veterinarian about having your bulls checked out before you turn them out.

### **BULL PENS**

As I wrote the item above and mentioned "turning the bull or bulls out" I thought of how many cow-calf producers in the area never pen the bull up in the first place. It should be a given, that the bulls have a designated time to be with the females, then back to the bull pen. With our usual split calving season, I see the bull being out 75 to no more than 90 days each season. Some will narrow the season down to 45 days in the spring and late fall early winter.

The bull pen should be fairly handy to the farm headquarters. I suggest having around three acres per bull in a pasture type setting. Along with that, shade and windbreaks or sheds can be an asset. Of course it's a given that it has a good source of fresh water either from a stream, pond or automatic waterer. An electric fence may be added to the basic wire fence for reinforcement.

A bull pen is a vital part of any well-managed cow-calf set up. It helps bunch calf crops and prevents bred heifers. It also helps you identify cows that are slow breeders that should be culled.

If you don't have a bull pen maybe you should consider leasing bulls for a designated period and let someone else warehouse them or even arrange with a neighbor to care for them and the neighbor may even have a different breeding season than yours. Remember you probably only need a

bull 150 to 180 days a year if you have two calving seasons. If you have only one season, that translates to 75 to 90 days of need for a bull.

### **VFD SURVEY REMINDER**

The folks at Michigan State report they have received 327 VFD surveys that I mentioned in my February letter. They'd like a few more so if you have time I ask that you look up the online survey using the link

[https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_eY83E3DiinnglD](https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eY83E3DiinnglD)

By the way, 25 of the surveys were from Missourians so there's need to hear from more of you.

### **CROSSBREEDING**

Commercial cow-calf raisers in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the United States pretty much relied on a straightbred cows. The term hybrid vigor wasn't in their vocabulary unless they were talking about mules.

In the 50's, Charolais came into the picture to join Angus, Hereford and Shorthorns with a great deal of debate about mongrelization. The introduction of Brahman crosses, in the south, was accepted to allow the crossed offspring to survive against heat and insect pests.

I well recall as a student at the University of Missouri our animal breeding professor, John Lasley promoting breed crossing in commercial herds to capture the benefits of hybrid vigor. The purebred associations were pretty much against it, as you might understand. Some work on crossing had been started in other institutions to explore it's value.

MU joined the ranks in that research area around 1960 with a bold venture into the use of Herefords, Angus and Charolais at the Thompson Farm in north Missouri. Certainly, the Shorthorn breeders in the state were upset but Jerry Litton and the Charolais folks were pleased as that added credibility to their place as a terminal cross.

Fast forward into the late 60's and we saw numerous breed introductions, almost monthly, from Europe. It was exciting to hear about and see my first half-blood Simmental, Limousin, Maine-Anjou, Gelbvieh, Belgian Blue and those leggy, Chianina calves that became the darlings of the steer shows, especially if they were black.

Angus and their black hair color and carcass grade became the trend along with the label development of Certified Angus Beef (CAB). All of a sudden it seemed to be make them black regardless of the breed. The dominance of black coat color made this a fairly easy transition. This move increased hybrid vigor into that crossbreeding effort.

The best documentation I've found over the years for comparing breeds comes from the Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Nebraska, a federal research unit that still today provides unbiased research.

There is a place for both pure and crossbreeding, it all depends on your goals and market. For many of you crossbreeding has a lot of merit. The big advantage to a cross comes from the cow's side as research shows that maternal hybrid vigor increases calving rate (6%), weaning rate (8%), weaning weight (6%) with only a slight (2%) increase in birth weight. Overall, cow lifetime productivity is increased by 25%. I've heard researchers put it this way, "a crossbred cow will wean off the equivalent to an extra calf in her lifetime compared to a purebred cow."

Even though Dr. Lasley was a firm believer in the crossbred female he generally believed you needed to keep, "one side of the house pure." Today we accept that a crossbred sire might enhance the crossbreeding effort and give a program maximum heterosis. This could result in the offspring having 4 unrelated breeds. This may be a bit complicated unless you purchase replacements which is where we started earlier in this letter as I mentioned why buying Show-Me-Select heifers deserves consideration.

### **PHENOTYPE & GENOTYPE SHOW**

The Angus Association has developed plans to help juniors in the Eastern Regional Show this summer learn the value of Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) in the process of selecting seedstock. This is a special show that requires both genotypes and phenotypes to be considered equally in the final placings. The heifers must be genomic tested prior to the entry deadline. The same judge will evaluate the two sections. EPDs and a percentile chart will be evaluated before the phenotype classes. The EPDs presented include: calving ease, birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight, milk, marbling, ribeye area, \$Wean and \$Beef.

The judge will place the animals on-foot as with any regular phenotype show. He or she will only have birthdates on each animal. The two scores will be compiled, weighted 50% genotype placing and 50% phenotype placing.

I like the concept of combining objective and subjective data. I hope this type of show won't be too involved and time consuming. The showring has always had the stigma of possible favoritism and placing the person on the halter more than the conformation of the animal. We'll see how this effort plays out. Oh, also I hope there is no hacking of the computer system when they tally the votes.