May 20, 2013

CATTLEMAN’S DAY

Berachiah Beefmasters, owned by Lawrence and Connie Shuey, Cassville will be co-hosting an educational event at their place south of Cassville on June 15. The program begins at 10:30 a.m. Several talks should catch you attention such as: rebuilding the cowherd after the drought given by Andy McCorkill, University of Missouri Extension livestock specialist, Buffalo; heat synchronization and semen handling tips by Stan Locke and Tammy Wallace, Genex; adding value and marketing feeder calves, Ed Ford, Springfield livestock Marketing Center and Dr. Tommy Perkins, formerly with Missouri State University who now heads up the Beefmaster Association.

Lunch will be provided. For more details contact the Shuey’s at 417-826-5881 or 417-847-6977. Their farm address is 23332 Farm Road 1095.

CATTLE THEFT AND BRANDS

No arrests yet but there have been some thefts reported since I last wrote about it in my February newsletter. The most recent cattle theft was early in May in Barry county where 13 or 14 head were taken.

Don’t let your guard down and not keep close tabs on your cattle. Also, note suspicious vehicles and persons in your neighborhood who seem interested in cattle along the road. Of course unless they’re in a 2000, reddish, Ford Taurus, which could be me. I’ve been known to drive slowly by pastures and do some windshield evaluation of cattle, pastures, weeds, bale rings, mineral feeders, etc. I’ve even had my camera out taking pictures on occasion.

The interest in branding and brand registration has stepped up in the last month. If you’re thinking about designing a brand I suggest you stop by our office or a county recorder’s office and look through the 2010 brand registration book for ideas. You may also go online to: http://mda.mo.gov/animals/livestockbranding.php

There are lots of brands to browse over and many of them are not very good. It is easy to try and put too many characters or designs in a brand. Simplicity tends to make a clearer, more readable brand. Many of the alphabet letters have angles that result in blurred brands unless the corners or angles are rounded. There’s a love to put characters inside a box, triangle or circle, but that may also crowd an area with too much heat which results in a big blurry scar. If you make it large, say 5 inches, you might be okay.

Other ideas, instead of a circle consider a half-circle or quarter-circle above or below a character. Use lines, bars, rafters, slashes and back slashes either above, below, before or after a character. Even something as simple as a dot can be incorporated into a very legible brand.

Brands are to be at least 3 inches in diameter. Brands can be registered in 6 different locations, shoulder, ribs or hip on either side of the body. The hip is the preferred location due to a bigger muscle, flatter area and usually easier to reach in a squeeze chute. The usual age to brand is around 3 months. This small calf doesn’t fit very well in a typical squeeze chute for branding thus a tilt table could be the answer.

Brands do grow, especially when applied to young stock. Some folks use a 2 inch or so brand on the young calves as it will be a 3 inch brand before long. Of course, a 2 inch brand may be difficult to get a clear brand with if the brand is too complex. According to the brand law the brand must meet the 3 inch diameter at the time of application.

There are concerns by some that brands may reduce the value of the animal due to hide damage. The most recent beef quality audit shows the discount per animal is only $.74. Considering the value of theft protection and marketing promotion I’d say they outweigh the $.74 risk. Hot iron brands result in more damage to the hide than freeze brands but the latter can also inflict visible hide damage.

FLIES

Flies, primarily horn flies, cause a loss in animal performance. We usually say the economic threshold for flies is around 200 per head. I’ve seen data supporting the fact that steer gains can be improved around 0.2 lb. per day when effective fly controls are used versus none. A recent Arkansas Beef Cattle Research Update reported on cow milk loss in a cooperative study in Arkansas and Oklahoma.

The trial compared several different breeds. The study had fly counts ranging from 94 per head early in the season to a
peak of 503 flies in August. They did see milk yields drop, especially in some breeds, as fly counts increased. This would seem to affect calf weight gains. They suggest that selecting cattle for parasite resistance may be a consideration in the future.

Selecting for resistance is a very long-term project, but keep it in mind as you observe your cattle this summer. You may even make some notes about which animals in your herd appear to be fly magnets. Short-term control of horn flies has several options. I’m still pretty biased towards the use of back rubbers or dust bags for economical fly control. The rub needs to be located so the cattle pass under it daily.

Fly tags still offer help for fly control if they’re applied around this time of the season. Often they are applied in early April and their effectiveness diminishes by the time big fly number occur. An animal’s ears also only can accommodate so many tags over time without appearing to be mutilated.

Last year Kansas State animal scientists conducted a 77-day grazing trial comparing no fly tags, 1 fly tag per animal or 2 tags per steer. The study was done in the Flint Hills and due to the dry weather the trial stopped early. Numerically there were differences in daily gain (1.45, 1.53 and 1.58 lbs.) going from 0 tags, 1 tag and 2 tags. However, the differences were not considered statistically significant.

Feed thru or oral fly controls seem to be gaining in popularity. They are effective if started early in the season and your cattle consume the adequate amount of mineral. We do caution that cattle across the fence on the neighbor’s place that doesn’t use the oral product can have flies that find your cattle. Get your pencil out and look closely at the comparative cost, convenience, etc. of the various methods of control.

**HEIFER SALE – WHAT HAPPENED?**
The Show-Me-Select Bred Heifer Sale on May 17 was anything but a runaway. After the sale, which averaged $1524 on 283 heifers that sold, everyone was asking why didn’t they bring more?

A couple of months ago folks were optimistic about a “hot” sale. I was one of those optimistic persons. Feeder cattle were selling well and based on the 11-year average ratio of the number of 550 lb., Medium-Large frame, 1 Muscle steers it takes to buy a bred SMS heifer on average the heifers should be close to $1850.

Obviously, after the sale and the feeder price compared to the bred SMS heifer price was run, instead of a 2:1 ratio it figured to be 1.8:1. On top of that, the feeder market has not had the normal price rally. Right after the sale I asked several folks why there was not more interest and enthusiasm. Most offered a reply and here’s a sample, not in any particular order.

- The weather was too nice and people were in the field trying to catch up after the unusually cold wet spring.
- Corn and all feed prices are discouraging to the cattle industry.
- The board on cattle was down.
- The abrupt jump in gas prices the last 2 weeks had a negative effect.
- There’s just a tired and depressed feeling among farmers after the last couple of year’s weather.
- Young farmers who would like to get into the cow business are finding it tough to get financing.
- Older farmers who reduced their cow herd due to the dry weather and short feed supply are hesitant to return to the hard work and low returns they’ll encounter.
- Our loss in pasture and hay stands the last year has left us short on forage until we can re-establish.
- McDonald’s have dropped their Angus burger.
- Jackie Moore wasn’t there.
- Dona Goede wasn’t there. She’s resigned and gone to Wisconsin.
- My co-worker, Andy McCormick, Buffalo gave me this quote, “paper stock (stock market) may now be worth more than 4-legged stock.”

There are lots of opinions and some have merit while some have less validity. The bottom line is, this was a buyer’s sale and those $1400 to $1500 or less heifers will have someone “smiling all the way to the bank” in the next few years.

The top price of the evening was $2100 paid by Scott Casey, Eldorado Springs, a repeat buyer. The seller was John Wheeler, Marionville. The 5-head set was Angus-Herford F1’s. They were AI bred to Hoover Dam, an Angus. Overall the AI bred heifers brought $150 per head more than the ones bred naturally. Wheeler’s 54-head consignment averaged $1667.

The high consignor average went to Jerry Carnes – Jireh Acres, Diamond. He sold 3 head for $1900. That lot was also purchased by a repeat buyer, Roger Smithson, Bruner.

The second high consignment came from Jera and Jace Pipkin, Republic a pair of juniors who sold 17 heifer an average of $1721. They were a mix of straight Angus and Angus-Herford cross. They were all AI bred to Connealy Right Answer 746.

Longtime consignor, Quinton Bauer, Verona sold 63 head for an average of $1608. The volume buyer for the sale was Charlie Neidert, Neosho. He purchased 27 head.