

## Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

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### **STEER FEEDOUT FINALE**

The Finale will be June 26, 7 pm at the University of Missouri Southwest Research Center on Highway H southwest of Mt. Vernon. The program is loaded with information on how the 239 steers performed from November to May in Iowa at the Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity.

On top of the slide show which shows a selection of pictures of the steers along with their performance stats we have Jodie Pitcock, USDA Grading Supervisor based in St. Joe. He'll explain how feeder cattle grades are utilized by the industry. Jodie was an evaluator last November for the steers loaded out of Joplin Regional. Another attendee on the 26<sup>th</sup> will be Eric Bailey, State Extension beef nutrition specialist. He also was one of the panelists.

Unfortunately, the Feedout Finales don't attract a very large audience but there's much information to be presented that applies to persons who didn't have steers in it. Around 100 cattle producers attended the initial evaluation last fall at JRS and made their estimates on which groups of steers would excel in gain, carcass, feed conversion and profitability. I hope many will turn out for the finale to see how things turned out.

Many of you participate in our Missouri Feedouts or retain ownership, the next challenge is to use that data to aid in breeding decisions as well as in marketing. As the current feedout shows, the top profit group made \$195 per head while the low profit group lost about \$145 per head. That's \$340 difference. When your cattle sell arm your auctioneer or ringman with figures like that to give a plug for your cattle's performance.

I hope some of you without steers in the program will attend, you just might learn something.

### **OTHER FINALE ITEMS**

Last November I asked the audience to pick their favorites

for gaining ability, feed to gain ratio and high quality carcasses. Eleven brave folks did so and turned in their signed evaluation cards. On the 26<sup>th</sup> I will reveal who the top-notch evaluators were. I will give this hint, none were perfect. The best estimator only "batted" 67%.

Three persons filled out all the questions but did not sign their card. They can get in on the fun if they choose to tell me their names. None of those three however were very close to the 67% person. The average accuracy on the questions was 41%. It would have been interesting to have our evaluation panel turn in a card. Maybe this November I'll have them do that.

### **QUESTION OF THE WEEK**

Should I ammoniate my low quality fescue hay or wheat straw this summer? I've found over the years that ammoniation of fescue seed aftermath is a good deal. It makes it more palatable, more digestible, almost doubles the protein level, reduces waste and if it's hay that has high toxin (ergot alkaloids) levels, it seems to reduce their bad effects.

The ammoniation process needs a sharp pencil put to work to determine the economic benefits. The poorer the hay quality, the more effective the process is. I've even likened it to, "making a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

A few key points:

- Don't treat hay that's running much under 70% neutral detergent fiber. You may want a lab to test it.
- Weigh some bales to know how much anhydrous ammonia to apply.
- Add 2 ½ to 3 percent (60 lbs.) anhydrous ammonia per ton of hay. Don't over treat!
- Cover the bale pile with black plastic immediately and add the anhydrous slowly over night.
- Be careful when handling anhydrous.

- Leave the pile covered three weeks before feeding the hay.
- Use lime or soil to hold the plastic down securely around the edges.
- Wheat straw can also be ammoniated.

Ammoniation catches a lot of interest when you say it almost doubles the protein level of the treated forage. That's probably not as important as the improvement in palatability and digestibility, as far as I'm concerned.

### **WEATHER & PREG TESTING**

Remember in my last letter I mentioned the May weather often sets the tone of heat and moisture for the rest of the summer. Well, here we are in mid-June and hot, dry weather is on everyone's mind. Lots of cows have gone to market as farmers get their cow inventory down to a more manageable number.

Hay and pasture are scarce so deeper herd culling seems to be the order of the day. Hopefully, cow herd records can lead you to cows and heifers that need to go. I encourage you to do early pregnancy checking 30 to 40 days after the bull's taken out of the heifers' breeding pasture. As for the cows, an early preg check may be in order and older cows that aren't bred can have their calves weaned and the cows sold. The bottom line is preg testing and culling spares your pastures for your more productive females.

### **WHITE CLOVER PROBLEMS**

In spite of a dry spring we have loads of white clover showing up. White clover seldom causes bloat problems but every now and then I am asked if the phytoestrogen levels maybe a problem in the reproductive life of a cow.

I directed the question to Dr. Dave Patterson and he said he did not know if the phytoestrogen level was negligible or significant in our white clover. He promised to "dig" around some and get back with me.

### **ERGOT & SPOTTED KNAPWEED**

Early June is the time you'll see ergot and spotted knapweed appear in southwest Missouri. Ergot is found in the seedheads of fescue. It resembles tiny mouse droppings. It is super toxic if consumed in sufficient amounts. For some reason cows, at least some, really like it and in late May-early June they do a lot of fescue seedhead stripping. We believe as a result of this intake cattle suffer heat stress symptoms worse than if they were eating endophyte fescue year round. Clipping seedheads around mid-May helps reduce the severity of heat stress.

Spotted knapweed is a noxious weed in Missouri and started showing up around 2000. We don't know exactly how it came to arrive but likely was via hay, straw or seed. There are lots of theories about it's arrival. We know it showed up first along roads and railroads where excavation took place. It is terribly invasive in pastures. It's easy to control with herbicides similar to what and when you treat thistles. If you're not sure what it looks like it's a pale green, almost gray, plant that's now blooming with a lavender flower. Either go on line or drive down I-44 or Highway 60 and you'll see it.

Fortunately, not all regions are affected but learn what it is and protect your property.

### **HAY SHOWS**

I've started getting Ozark Empire and Missouri State Fair hay show entries. The show is a good way to learn about the quality of hay you'll be feeding sooner or later. A hay test for \$23 helps you make better choices on supplements. If you have the good fortune to be able to sell hay, this will help attract potential buyers.

Please contact me or the extension specialist nearest you for details. The deadline for entries at OEF is July 10. The State Fair cutoff is July 25. The lab we've used for both shows has been sold. Monty and Kathy Dade, Golden City have sold Custom Lab to Steve and Karie Currence and the lab is relocated to Duenweg. It's easy to access just off I-44 exit 15. Even if you don't want to enter the shows I encourage you to use forage tests to improve the utilization of the forages you produce or buy.

This year, hay is short. This means you need to figure out how to make your hay dollar go farther. A hay, haylage or silage analysis by a lab will make you a smarter buyer of hay. Extension specialist can help you interpret the results.

### **BQA & TYSON**

Craig Payne, Extension veterinarian in Columbia has told us that as of January 1, 2019 any cattle supplier to Tyson Foods, including livestock markets will be required to have Beef Quality Assurance training on file with the company. I know a number of you already are BQA certified as various entities such as the Missouri Cattlemen's Association, stockyards and some extension events have given you that opportunity. This may be a requirement for participants in the Missouri Steer Feedout as those steers sell through Tyson's in Dakota City, NE but we're still not sure on that.