August 20, 2015

MCA REGION 7 TOUR
Some of you might be interested in the Missouri Cattlemen’s Association Region 7 tour on August 29 beginning at 9 am in Springfield at the Darr Center, Missouri State University. You’ll then go to the MSU North Farms, Fair Grove for more touring and lunch. The cost is $7 per person. To reserve your spot or to learn more about the day’s activities call Jim McCann 417-737-2910.

SOUTHWEST CENTER FIELD DAY
This year’s Field Day at the University of Missouri Southwest Research Center is September 11. The farm is southwest of Mt. Vernon on State Road H. The tours begin at 9 am and run until 1 pm. Lunch is free to the first 500 visitors. Tours feature beef, agronomy, dairy, horticulture and viticulture.

ANGUS NATIONAL CONVENTION
The American Angus Association Convention and Trade Show will be in Kansas City, November 3-5. A special deal this year for the 3rd, you can ride on a bus to KC from Joplin Regional Stockyards. The bus leaves early and returns that evening. Convention registration this year is $75. You sign up for the bus when you register. To learn more and register go to www.angusconvention.com

FALL CATTLEMEN’S SEMINAR
Dow Agro Sciences and Boehringer Ingelheim are sponsoring a program in Springfield on September 1, 8:30 am at the Ozark Empire Fair E Plex. Speakers come from Texas A & M, Oklahoma State, University of Arkansas, commercial firms and a panel discussion on managing endophyte-infected fescue pastures. Reserve your spot by calling Kevin at 877-702-0115, ext 7161 by August 25. The Southwest Missouri Cattlemen’s Association will prepare lunch.

SUMMER REVIEW
Since my last Beef Newsletter I’ve been to our National Association of County Agricultural Agents Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference. This year it was in Sioux Falls, SD. As part of the event, we toured a number of ranches from Rapid City to Sioux Falls. Here are some highlights.

- As we drove across the state I was fascinated by the behavior of the cattle along the roads. They were usually bunched up in a fence corner during the heat of the day,. I asked several people why they were huddled together as it seemed it would be cooler with more air movement if they spread out. Most of the replies seemed to favor the idea the cattle were protecting themselves from flies, probably stable flies. Several said they were horn flies. A few said foggers or mist sprayers seemed to help unbunch them.

- At Blair Brothers Angus, a large seedstock ranch, they were total AI and if a cow doesn’t breed, she’s sold. They started putting 5 steers in South Dakota’s Beef Discovery Program and now shoot for 50% Prime, an average daily gain of 5 lbs. and a feed conversion of 5:1. Their 2015 slaughter steers sold at 1600 lbs.

- Blair’s stated that docility is a big deal and no one wants a wild bull, not even the cowboys. They use a Bud Box for working and loading cattle.

- The Blair’s find that the best weather in which to work cattle is when there are no shadows.

- The Orwick Ranch, also in western SD, runs ewes and Hereford-based beef cows. The ranch feeds very little hay and the cows average around 1300 lbs., it takes between 20 and 25 acres per cow. The ranch was hit by the October, 2013 Atlas storm. The owner said Hereford cattle fared better than Angus due to thicker hides and they didn’t bunch up as badly as Angus.

- Most of the ranches were multi-generational and there was concern over who would take over eventually as the owners aged. South Dakota Extension has offered
courses on generational transfer. That is also a high priority in Missouri Extension.

- Stomprud’s Angus was probably my favorite stop of all. Again this was a multi-generational operation started in 1909. They run 300 registered Angus cows and the next generation is still in the learning phase and the young couple attended the SD extension course to learn more about ranching. The wife, is from Hawaii and he worked for a car dealer in Montana for ten or more years before returning to the ranch. They seem to be making the adjustment but it’s been tough.

- The Stomprud’s were hit hard by Atlas and lost 50 cows, one herd bull and 3 calves out of 150 cows in one pasture. They pointed out that there were blessings from Atlas. The relief fund was an example. They said checks would just appear in their mail box from all over the world. Insurance did not cover Atlas but their loss was more than just money. They lost their livelihood, years of genetic improvement and the emotional side of proving death losses, pulling ear tags from the dead cows, etc. They made new friends some of who gave them breeding stock to replenish their herd.

- Just because your family has lots of land, 1000 cows and you go to college doesn’t mean you have to return to the ranch and do exactly what your family has done. At the R & L Hunting Lodge we heard from Sal and Kelly Rowland. In his senior year in college, an assignment was to develop a business plan for a ranch. He and two women worked as a team and came up with a plan for a hunting lodge. Since they’re in the heart of pheasant country, that seemed a natural.

After graduation, Sal returned to the ranch still remembering the college business plan. His family was skeptical but his banker bought the idea after one afternoon’s visit. From the looks of the venture the lodge is now more profitable than the 1000 cows. A possible exception was 2014 when calves were record high. Here are a few stats that Sal and Kelly shared.

- Everything they serve their guests is South Dakota produced.
- Hunters have come from most states and 13 countries.
- They include farm tours with their clients to give them a lesson on where their food comes from.
- Hunters (from 500 to 600) kill about 15,000 pheasants a year.
- Birds are processed in a nearby town which adds to the economic impact.
- They promote hunting as a family experience not just a “man thing.”
- The fee is $750 per day per person which includes food, lodging, guns, ammunition, dogs and atmosphere.
- They purchase all the pheasants at 15 weeks of age at $14 each.
- They have big name sponsors like Cabela’s and Winchester.
- By the way, their liability insurance is $30,000 per year. So far they’ve never had a shooting accident.
- We didn’t hear much about their cow operation.

- They own all the cattle they feed and they seek out reputation cattle as they want a high percentage of Prime carcasses. They shoot for a 1450 lb. sale weight and recently sold a large group that went just over 1500 lbs. Their mature cows average around 1500 lbs. They avoid buying high-risk cattle and prefer buying cattle from ranches they’ve fed cattle from before. In fact they have contracted for cattle that haven’t even been born.

The average death loss, year-in-year-out is around 0.5%, their goal is 0.25% They have an incentive for workers when they have exceptionally low death loss.

They watch feed conversion closely in their own herd and pay attention to residual average daily gain (RADG EPDs)

- Someone asked if they fed natural cattle and they quickly replied, “no they’re a pain in the _ _ _.”

Well these tour reports will probably continue in future Beef Newsletters as I’ve not been able to include them all this month. I was impressed with South Dakota except for all the bunched up cattle in the fence corners on a hot afternoon. If they drove through our fescue country on a hot afternoon the South Dakota folks would probably wonder why so many of our cattle are standing in ponds.