

Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

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SOUTHWEST CENTER FIELD DAY

This year's University Missouri Southwest Research Center Field Day will be held September 13, 9 am at the farm on State Road H about 4 miles southwest of Mt. Vernon. The day will be quite a bit different than recent days. The big difference is both FFA students and the public will be there on the same day. That will make it a little more crowded but the staff and faculty from the University are ready for it. Presentations you may be interested in include: beef cattle genomics, hair shedding scores, expanding the SW Center beef herd via reproductive and genomic technologies, drought management and more. You're welcome to attend any of the FFA topics. I hope to see you there.

FAIR HAY SHOW RESULTS

Southwest Missouri showed we have outstanding hay producers to go along with our top beef and dairy folks. Glenn and Toni Obermann, Monett won the Ozark Empire Fair Championship on an alfalfa-orchard grass entry that set the bar very high with a 234 Relative Forage Quality (RFQ). Remember, we now rely on the RFQ solely instead of combining the objective and subjective scores into an index at the fairs. Glen was a dairyman until selling his cows a few years ago. When I was pulling his hay show entries he was interrupted two or three times with cell phone calls. The callers were looking for hay to buy. Glenn said he'd had up to 6 or 7 calls a day this summer for hay.

The Reserve Champion entry at OEF was Charles Krueger, Verona. His entry was straight alfalfa with a 212 RFQ. Charles is a dairy producer.

At the State Fair, Glenn's hay was nosed out for the purple ribbon by John Staiger's, haylage entry that had a RFQ of 236. Yes, John's a long-time dairyman and participant in hay contests from Billings. Glenn did earn the Reserve ribbon on his OEF winner and also had the Champion alfalfa entry at state. At State Glenn has been the Champion 6 times since 2010 and Reserve Champion twice.

THOUGHTS FROM TENNESSEE

The National Association of County Agricultural Agents held their annual conference in Chattanooga this year. As usual, I signed up for as many beef cattle tour stops as I could. Here's some of my, 3-star plus, comments that were made by our tour guides and hosts at the stops. When I take notes, if something really sounds applicable to me and you readers, I give it 1 to 5 stars.

- ✓ Tennessee agriculture benefits from Ag Enhancement dollars. It's money from the tobacco settlement of several years ago. Eligible farmers receive those dollars for breeding stock purchases, hay barns and squeeze chutes to name a few.
- ✓ An Angus breeder was very enthusiastic about DNA or genomic testing. They described the DNA test as "looking under the hood" if you're car shopping.
- ✓ The manager of Livestock Producers Marketing with Farm Bureau explained how they helped small cow-calf producers with a bull leasing program. A \$6000 bull can be leased for \$2000 (1/3 of purchase price) for the breeding season. The association tries to break even on the bulls which are selected based on EPDs and genomics. There is a real need for this type of program in many areas where one-bull cow herds exist but it needs to be managed closely.
- ✓ A futuristic dairyman, who milks 1500 cows, makes cheese, is expanding his operation utilizing robots told us he's really in the entertainment business as 100,000 visitors came to his farm last year. He said, "young persons are going to change the way we eat and cook our food." By the way, he charges \$6 per person for his tours and will go to \$10. He has used Ag Enhancement money and doesn't do weddings, yet.
- ✓ Tennessee's big extension cow-calf effort is to have producers develop a defined calving season. That can also apply to Missouri.

- ✓ A purebred Angus farm manager said, “the show ring today is as far away from production cattle as it’s ever been and is almost antagonistic.”
- ✓ Black vultures are a problem with new born calves. The farmer speaking about them said that Farm Bureau members could kill up to three vultures to hang in trees to scare their buddies away.
- ✓ Tennessee Extension and a research farm have a heifer development center where farmers can send weaned heifers for 10-11 months to develop and breed AI. They do not have a sale as most heifers return to their farm of origin. The turn key cost for feed, AI, heat synch, labor has run from \$750 to \$950. Oh, Ag Enhancement dollars can be used to help with the cost. The target daily gain is 1.5 to 1.7 pounds.
- ✓ At the above center, there was a beautiful portable shade on wheels for the heifers. They need shade as they graze Kentucky 31 fescue much of the time. The price tag was \$16,000. The center did not pay for it. Don’t underestimate the benefits of shade for rate of gain and reproduction when your herd is heat stressed.
- ✓ The Tennessee folks didn’t seem too concerned with johnsongrass. There was plenty of it around.

NITRATES

We’ve had several samples of forage (corn, sorghum-sudan, johnsongrass and millet) brought to the office to be checked for nitrates. The results were all over the board from no signs to hot, hot, hot. Cattle can cope with low nitrate levels if they’re introduced to the forage slowly. The extension centers can do the quick qualitative test at no cost. If the reaction is extreme, we recommend a more complete sample be collected and sent to a lab for a quantitative analysis. Don’t take chances if you suspect your forage could be high in nitrates. There are a number of weeds that can contain harmful levels of nitrate if they make up a high level of the cattle’s intake. For instance, pigweed, jimsonweed, nightshade, dock and even thistle can accumulate nitrates. Most of these plants are not desired by cattle but I have seen cattle eat pigweeds.

FESCUE OBSERVATION

Back in late May, southwest Missouri had about 150 visitors from 17 different states. The three busloads made several stops in Arkansas, Oklahoma as well as Missouri. The tour was organized by the Western Livestock Journal out of Denver. In May we were still pretty green and the fescue impressed the visitors. I heard lots of questions and comments from the guests. The most amusing was their speculation as why so many cattle they’d seen around southwest Missouri and Arkansas were standing in ponds.

Finally, one woman came rushing up to a group of her friends and excitedly said, “a man told me the cattle stand in the water to draw the fescue toxins from their bodies out through their hooves”. Who says you can’t learn something on tours??

I haven’t decided if I should add that item to my list of way to cope with fescue toxicity. It may not be any more unusual than some on the list of coping strategies that now number 123. If you’d like to review the list it’s available at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/lawrence/livestock.aspx>

I don’t remember exactly when I began the list but likely in the late 70’s or early 80’s.

FEEDOUT 2018-19

I’ve already had requests for registration forms for our upcoming Missouri Steer Feedout. The entry forms, along with rules are now available on-line at: <http://extension.missouri.edu/lawrence/livestock.aspx>

If you don’t have internet capabilities just call our office and we’ll mail the information to you. Entry deadline is October 10 with actual pickup date November 6. Steers must be born in 2018 and weigh over 500 lbs. on delivery. They should be weaned by September 22. I won’t guarantee you’ll make money but I’ll guarantee you’ll learn a lot about the kind of calf you’re raising. You’ll learn how you can use the resulting data to make future breeding selections and marketing plans.

MO BEEF FOR MO KIDS

Last October a cooperative pilot project was started in the Mt. Vernon school system to double the amount of beef served to students in the school. The beef came from tax deductible donations of “retired” cows by local cattle producers from Lawrence, Barry, Newton and Dade counties. Most were members of the Southwest Missouri Cattlemen’s Association. Mt. Vernon Schools are targeted to participate again in 2018-19. Other schools around the state who have been picked by the Missouri Department of Agriculture and the Missouri Beef Industry Council for the program include: Bowling Green, Martinsburg, Nevada, Patton and Wellsville Middletown.

If you’d like to donate a retired cow, check with a nearby Missouri Cattlemen’s Association for details. Locally, Jim McCann can be reached at 417-737-2910.