STEER FEEDOUT FUN

It’s time again to consider whether you’re interested in truly learning if the cattle you breed, raise and market are what your customers want. The Missouri Steer Feedout is accepting consignments until October 10. Eligible cattle are steers born in 2014 that should weigh at least 500 pounds by November 4 when the steers will be processed and sent to southwest Iowa for finishing to slaughter weight.

I understand it’s hard for you to decide to forego getting $1300 or more for that calf this fall just to own it 5 or 6 months to learn how he turns out. I truly believe that any beef cow owner should, at least once, take that step to see what their years of genetic selection has resulted in. This year the feedout could offer a better than usual chance to make money by retaining ownership until April or May. The big reason is expected low corn prices.

The cattle are fed with feeders in Iowa who participate in the Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity. The cooperative, TCSCF bends over backwards to help cow herd owners learn about their cattle and the cattle feeding business. They even provide you with a $400 per head cash advance if you enter 10 or more head.

In southwest Missouri we use Joplin Regional Stockyards as our pick up site. There will be the usual site in northeast Missouri at the Paris Vet Clinic. Any other location around the state with good pickup facilities and a Missouri Department of Agriculture Market Reporter who agrees to grade and put a value on each steer at that location are welcome.

At the Joplin pickup, we tie the weighin/evaluation in with the monthly Southwest Missouri Cattlemen’s Association meeting. Following a great supper, the steers are brought through the sale ring, one owner’s at a time. The audience evaluates the calves for feedlot and carcass traits along with a panel of three or four persons who know a thing or two about cattle. This event is November 4 at JRS.

You can get the details on the feedout online at: http://extension.missouri.edu/lawrence/livestock.aspx
Or just call me or any of the Missouri Extension livestock specialists.

INTERESTING FEEDOUT DATA

One thing participants in the feedout learn is how their steers act when they leave home. Each time the cattle are processed, they’re scored for temperament. The scoring scale goes from 1, very calm in the chute and when released from the scale to a 6. The 6’s are flat mean and will come looking for you. I’ve just received the re-implant report on the 137 steers we sent up in June and the average disposition score was 1.96. This is fairly normal. The range went from the very docile 1’s to several 3’s, 4’s and even a 4.5 or two.

The TCSCF says the heritability of disposition is in the .40 range which means improvement is possible through selection. Several breeds report a docility Expected Progeny Difference (EPD) which allows you to make temperament decisions when purchasing bulls or semen.

Poor disposition cattle have higher death loss, they gain more slowly and have lower quality grades. Combining those negatives together results in an average per head loss of $60 compared to docile cattle. This amount can vary depending on market premiums and discounts.

We also see significant discounts in breeding stock value at our Show-Me-Select heifer and tested bull sales. We try to cull those before they ever reach the sale ring but some slip by. When the crazies “blow up” you can bet buyer interest drops.

You can make progress in the temperament area by making notes on your cow’s permanent record. You may not score them 1 to 6 every time you work them but get something down on paper or in the computer about those troublemakers. Also, look at docility EPDs.
OIL THAT GATE, ETC.
One contributing factor to nervous, high-strung cattle just could be you. Even though you might not like to admit it you, your help and your facilities may be part of the excited-cattle syndrome.

I think anyone with cattle has heard of Temple Grandin by now. She has done a lot to bring awareness to the industry for quieter, easier working of cattle. Sure, sometimes you need to resort to a bit more aggressive tactics, especially if you’re dealing with 4 and 5 temperament scoring animals. However, as a rule the old adages, easy does it or if you want to work cattle faster, do it slower, are good to live by.

While in Alabama, one cattleman pointed out with pride that he’d discovered the secret to working cattle through the corral was to put the slow, calm, easy-going hand in the back loading the tub and lead-up alley to the head chute.

I’ve noted time and time again frustration often begins when the person loading the tub puts twice as many animals in the tub as they should. If it will hold 8 head, try putting only 4 in at a time. In the long run, it speeds up the process.

Before working cattle this fall do a walk-through of your corral and repair gates, pens, check the scale, make sure any squeaky gates are well oiled and in general attempt to develop a quiet, efficient working environment. If the cattle flow through the corral isn’t “flowing”, try to analyze what the problem is. Ask your veterinarian, cattle hauler and even your extension livestock specialist for help.

Back in the 90’s I spent some time videotaping people working cattle. I started out in the pasture as they gathered the cattle and followed them all the way through the head chute. It was fascinating to see trouble spots even with veteran cattle handlers. Maybe you need to take video of you and your cattle working episodes. You could even end up on YouTube like the Flint Hills cattleman who called up several hundred yearlings with his trombone playing.

Oh, I almost forgot the dogs. They may work fine in certain instances, but around the working chute itself, they’re better left in the trailer or on the truck.

SMS CATTLE & FORAGE TOUR
There will be a tour at the Scott Casey Farm near Eldorado Springs on October 16 at 1 pm. Scott is a regular buyer of Show-Me-Select heifers having bought in 13 sales since he first bought in the May, 2007 sale. He’s bought from several different herds so we felt this would be a good place for a “show and tell” type of tour.

We’ll not only show you his cattle, we’ll discuss sire selection, heat synchronization, artificial insemination, buying heifers vs. saving replacement, weed and brush management, body condition scoring and more. Watch for details in the news media.

BULL BREEDING SOUNDNESS CLINICS
Have we got a deal for you. It’s time to check bulls, inside and out, for breeding soundness for the fall-winter breeding season. We’ve held these since 2005 and veterinary clinics and Zoetis team up to make this a reasonably priced event.

Not only will you learn if your bull or bulls will breed cows in November, they will be vaccinated, given internal and external parasite treatment and checked for trichomoniasis, if you like. Some might be interested in having bulls checked for genetic prediction via Zoetis’ High-Density 50 K test. If so, the veterinarians will be prepared to do that. The test cost may be a significant savings bonus offered by Zoetis. The schedule is as follows:

October 1 – Barry County Veterinary Service, Cassville 417-847-2677
October 14 – Animal Clinic of Diamond, Diamond 417-325-4136
October 15 – Dake Veterinary Clinic, Miller 417-452-3301
October 17 – Countryside Animal Clinic, Aurora 417-678-4011

Call the office nearest you to set up an appointment. I’ll be at the clinics to visit about bull buying, EPDs, body condition scoring and anything else you’d like to visit about. Remember about 11% of the bulls we’ve checked since 2005 have been unsatisfactory potential breeders.

SUMMER OF 2014
For most this has been a good summer. Most of you received decent rain until August. White dutch clover was everywhere. Cattle have gained well and most of you have observed your cattle slicked off better than usual.

The downside I’ve noted is AI conception rates on the SMS heifers is lower than usual. In fact, they’ll average 50% on herds I have data on. The overall preg rate on AI and natural service is about 83% on SMS heifers.

On the bright side, open heifers are still worth a lot as feeders. Preg checking will make you money or save money however you wish to look at it.