

## Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

September 20, 2018



Eldon Cole, Livestock Specialist, P.O. Box 388, Mt. Vernon, MO 65712  
(417) 466-3102 or [colee@missouri.edu](mailto:colee@missouri.edu) or <http://muextension.missouri.edu/lawrence>

### **BREEDING SOUNDNESS EXAM TIME**

Hot weather and toxic fescue not only affects early pregnancy rates in cows, they affect bull fertility. With that in mind, I suggest you consider getting your bull or bulls a breeding exam. Once again, some veterinary clinics have a one-day special on BSE's.

Here's a schedule and if these dates don't fit your schedule call anyway for an appointment on another date. Your bull may have been perfectly fine last spring but the heat of the summer may have compromised his fertility so invest in another BSE.

Oct. 3 – Barry County Vet Services, Cassville  
417-847-2677

Oct. 15 & 16 – Dake Veterinary Clinic, Miller  
417-452-3301

Oct. 18 – Animal Clinic of Diamond, Diamond  
417-325-4136

Oct. 16 & 18 – El Dorado Springs Veterinary Clinic,  
417-876-5805

Oct. 22 – Countryside Animal Clinic, Aurora  
417-678-4011

You may not plan to turn your bulls out until Thanksgiving but testing in October gives you a little more time to go on a bull search if a bull fails. Before making the purchase, review your "genetic game plan" for the next few years. Don't buy the first \$1500 - \$2000 bull you run on to, unless his expected progeny difference (EPD) values and indexes meet your plan. Bulls do cost money, but most folks still need them unless they're very good or lucky with artificial insemination (AI). Real genetic progress comes faster with AI and the use of bulls with at least a .60 accuracy on the EPD values.

If you use AI and follow the heat synchronization protocol to the letter, 60-65% conception rates can be attained. To distinguish AI-sired calves from the

cleanup bulls calves wait 14 days after the AI breeding date to turn the cleanups in.

### **CALVING EASE AND BIRTHWEIGHT**

Has calving ease and birth weight EPDs been oversold? No and Yes. I firmly believe either of those has helped producers understand and have greater confidence in their use as a measure of getting a live calf on the ground. However, we may have reached a point where putting excessive weight on that trait may have overshot the mark. Just as calves can be too big, I hear a considerable amount of talk that calves from bulls that are in the high percentile for calving ease direct (CED) are too small at birth.

Those small calves sometimes grow well so be sure and keep an eye on calving ease calves growth patterns. When bull shopping remember if a CED value is available, use it rather than the birth weight. Birth weight is already accounted for in the CED and it serves as the best EPD to use. Also, if you're breeding older cows, don't give CED too much consideration. CEDs are most helpful for virgin heifers but with cows look for bulls with more performance.

### **TESTED BULL SALE**

The Southwest Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement Association will hold their 92<sup>nd</sup> All Breed Performance Tested Bull Sale October 29, 7 pm. Sale location is at the Springfield Livestock Marketing Center on I-44 west of Springfield. As we've seen for a number of sales, Angus are the dominant breed with 41 head. Polled Herefords have 3 entries.

Our sales for years were about the only sales that provided performance data. Today most progressive breeders put the complete performance facts in their catalogs. For some this may be too much information. The SW MO BCIA sales unique feature is that we include calving ease direct, weaning weight, yearling weight, milk, ribeye and marbling EPDs in the catalog. To be "performance" eligible a bull must have above average (50<sup>th</sup> percentile) on 3 of the 6

EPDs. This gives the bidders a chance to buy bulls with above average numbers for a few traits.

When you attend the sale you will see that some bull's EPDs have changed, maybe up or down. EPD's do change as more data is submitted on the bulls' kinfolks but more than likely the breeder DNA tested the bull. Those new number are what we call genomically enhanced (GE) and it will give them higher accuracies. So those sheets on their gates at the sale take precedent over the catalog. You can go to the breed's sire summary and search for their current EPDs by entering their registration number in the catalog.

The sale order is established in order of age with the oldest first and the youngest last. We do have a 30 minute program at 5:30 pm in the sale arena to answer questions you might have regarding all the numbers we throw around. You may find the catalog at [www.swmobia.com](http://www.swmobia.com) or call your nearest livestock specialist.

### **BLACK VULTURES**

During the past week I've heard of three concerns about increasing black vulture numbers in southwest Missouri. One Lawrence county farmer said a large number were in his pasture and they made his cows nervous. Another farmer in Barry county said he was pretty sure a newborn was killed by vultures. The most concerning call involved 3 or 4 cattle in Howell county that were killed by the vultures. Those were older animals and included a 1600-1700 pound cow that was attacked in the eyes and rectum.

The black vultures, also known as Mexican or Spanish vultures, are smaller than the turkey vultures and do not have any red around their head. They are very aggressive.

Back in July, on my tours in Tennessee the black vulture topic came up and a cattleman said they were allowed to shoot them in that state if they were harming livestock. He added, after shooting them take time to hang them up in a tree or fence. Apparently, they do not like seeing their dead fellow vultures "hanging around."

### **FESCUE ALERT**

George Garner, retired University of Missouri professor and researcher of fescue toxicosis used to tell us that vigorous fescue growth following a drought tends to set the table in the late fall, early winter cold period for fescue foot. We've had the drought now we're seeing amazing growth so watch out for a really cold period in late November, early December. At that time, observe your cattle closely early in the morning for rear leg/hoof lameness. When you first see one limping, remove them from the pasture and feed them

non-toxic hay plus some corn by-product, like distillers grain and soybean hulls. If you have either orchard grass, bermuda or novel fescue pasture you can put the affected cattle on it. Not all cattle show symptoms. Usually, no more than 25 percent in the herd will be seriously affected.

### **PREG CHECK SOON**

Reports of above average numbers of open cows at preg check this fall are being heard. Those most likely to be open are those bred in late May and June. If you turned bulls out in mid-April your preg rate may be good. However, the hot May and June weather could bring your preg rates down.

Dr. Scott Pooch, University of Missouri Extension Veterinarian says one of the big causes is the increased internal temperature of the heifer or cow. He adds the early embryo, prior to 8 days gestation is sensitive to above normal body heat. Cows affected at this stage will come back in heat right on schedule. Some of the fescue toxicity work at the SW Center shows it's not uncommon to find rectal temperature above 103° F and a few of the cows approached 105° F if they've been on toxic fescue pastures.

### **HAIR SHEDDING & COMPUTERS**

My Beef Newsletters contain a lot of items related to fescue toxicity and one of the very visible symptoms is hair shedding. I still feel at some point more clarity to this symptom will be revealed as a genetically linked problem.

I've written about the research effort that Jared Decker has here in Missouri and a number of other states to study various traits recorded in cattle relating to their adaptability to that environment. Hair shedding and beef cow performance are items that have been monitored during the last three years not just in Missouri but wherever fescue is a major part of the animal's forage.

This month at the Southwest Center Field Day, Dr. Decker was unable to attend to discuss his research efforts. Two graduate students, Harly Durbin and Troy Rowan presented. Harly had developed a handout that provided a set of pictures of cows in various stages of shedding that you can use to get a feel for what a 1 score through a 5 looks like.

Harly used emojis (I never thought I would include that word in my newsletter) to depict what the 1 and 5 hair score cows looks like. I get lots of comments about my lack of computer skills but Harly has made a believer out of me as one way to catch the FFA students' attention.