

Ag-Info

October - November 2008

**Northeast Missouri Agriculture Newsletter
 serving Clark, Knox, Lewis, Marion, Monroe,
 Pike, Ralls, and Shelby Counties**

Alix Carpenter
 Agronomy Specialist
 University of Missouri Extension,
 Marion County
 Palmyra, MO 63461
 (573) 769-2177
 carpenterac@missouri.edu

Karisha Devlin
 Agribusiness Specialist
 University of Missouri Extension,
 Knox County
 Edina, MO 63537
 (660) 397-2179
 devlink@missouri.edu

Zac Erwin
 Livestock Specialist
 University of Missouri Extension,
 Lewis County
 Monticello, MO 63457
 (573) 767-5273
 erwinz@missouri.edu

Al Kennett
 Livestock Specialist
 University of Missouri Extension,
 Ralls County
 New London, MO 63459
 (573) 985-3911
 kennetta@missouri.edu

Calendar of Events

November 3, 10, 17, 24, December 1, 8	Annie's Project , Edina
December 6, 7	Livestock Symposium , Kirksville
December 8	Ag Lenders Seminar , Kirksville
December 9	Ag Lenders Seminar , Hannibal
December 11	Farm Lease Meeting , Palmyra
December 13	Show-Me-Select Heifer Sale , Palmyra
December 17	Farm Income Tax School , Kirksville

LIVESTOCK NOTES

Al Kennett

Watch Cattle for Oak/Acorn Poisoning

It has been a very good summer and fall for the nut producing trees. Included in this is the oak trees and acorn production which can be a problem for cattle producers.

Cattle with access to oak trees should be watched closely during the fall for symptoms of oak/acorn poisoning. Symptoms include constipation followed by diarrhea, anemia, frequent drinking, pale urine, and a tendency to stand off to themselves. Stools may be slightly bloody and have a dark brown, sticky consistency.

The disease may have a rapid course of only 2 to 14 days or it may be exhibited as a lingering debilitating condition. Oak poisoning causes kidney damage known as urine poisoning and can result in death. Over consumption of the acorns can result in compaction of the digestive tract.

It is somewhat undetermined which parts of the oak tree cause the problem, but most feel that all parts may be involved. For example problems have been seen when oak buds and leaves are eaten from the tree and most often problems are seen in the fall when there are abundant acorn and leaf crops that drop to the ground. Cattle seem to be more likely to consume acorns when we have dry conditions with short pasture supplies which is not a problem this year. However, sometimes particular animals seem to take a liking to the acorns and over eat on them.

The toxic components of oak trees are tannins found in all parts of the plant. The tannins are converted to chemicals such as tannic acid and gallic acid in the digestive tract which cause the kidney damage as well as damage to the digestive tract and blood vessels. It is not known for sure which oak species contain the tannins.

Treatment of oak poisoning should focus on restoring the nutritional status of the animal, removing cattle from oak tree access and dealing with effects of kidney failure.

Removing cattle from pastures with heavy acorn crops is the best prevention. If this is impossible, a supplement containing 10% calcium hydroxide (hydrated lime) may help prevent poisoning. A suggested mixture is 1000 lbs cottonseed meal, 600 lbs alfalfa meal, 200 lbs calcium hydroxide, and 200 lbs molasses or vegetable oil. In our area it would probably be more feasible to use soyhulls and/or corn gluten feed to replace the cottonseed meal and alfalfa meal. Feed 2-4 pounds per head per day depending on the age and weight of the animal.

The calcium hydroxide is very fine and dusty and not very palatable, hence the need for the molasses. It also helps prevent cattle from sorting out the hydrated lime.

I have often heard and read that the problem is reduced following a hard freeze. However, some articles disagree with this concept.

Redbooks

The "Red Books" are now available. Contact Zac Erwin or myself if you would like one. They are sponsored in our area by the Northeast Missouri Beef Cattle Improvement Association, F & T Livestock Market, and University of Missouri Extension.

These very handy pocket size cow record books help to provide necessary records for age and source programs as well as COOL requirement.

Show-Me-Select Heifer Sale

It will be held this year on Saturday, December 13, 12:30 p.m. at F & T Livestock Market, Palmyra, Missouri. Please note the change in the date and starting time.

We expect to have around 200 head of bred replacement heifers in the sale this year. They will be mostly black and BWF heifers with most of them being bred to Angus bulls. Catalogs will be available in mid-November.

AI Breeding Boxes

If you are doing much AI work this fall, especially fixed time AI, you would benefit from the use of the AI breeding boxes that we have available in our area. We presently have a single cow box and a double cow box available and hope to have a second double box by fall breeding time. Contact me, (573) 985-3911 for more information.

Finally, Many years ago in Scotland, a new game was invented. It was ruled "Gentlemen Only – Ladies Forbidden". Thus the word GOLF entered the English language!!

LIVESTOCK NOTES

Staying Profitable: Retaining Ownership vs. Fall Calf Marketing?

The action and volatility of the markets the past couple of weeks, has led to more pressure on the calf market, due to the extreme pressure being placed on both the cash and futures markets. For cow-calf producers the opportunity of retaining some form of ownership, whether it is backgrounding, winter grazing or feedlot is looking more favorable. However, a producer must understand the challenges and risks associated with retaining ownership of cattle. A profitable margin on the calf crop to be shipped this fall would make it a very difficult decision to extend ownership through 2009. Thus, producers should evaluate what their breakeven is before making any decision as to retain ownership of their calves past 2008.

There are several outside economic factors weighing in on markets for cow-calf producers. First and foremost, beef producers will have to deal with the negative effects of the current economic turmoil. Cattle-Fax reports indicate the credit crisis has made it difficult for buyers of feeder cattle to obtain necessary loans, with requirements of deposits in some cases doubling the amounts required in the past. The market has pointed toward a fall rally in the fed market for several weeks, which now seems in doubt. Cattle feeders have struggled with negative margins for months. Those losses, combined with tighter credit on cattle operations, would suggest additional pressure on stocker and feeder markets. The Chicago Mercantile Exchange reported that the crash of global equity markets this October has again made the US dollar the currency of choice for investors. The rise in the dollar brings two negatives to cattle

Zac Erwin

producers. First, the US beef industry relies on beef exports. The increase in the value of the dollar will lead to a decrease in global demand for US beef. Second, if the increase in the value of the dollar is sustained, I would expect an increase in the amount of beef imported into the US. Increases in beef importation subsequently increase domestic competition between US and imported beef.

The bright side, for cattle producers, is that the downturn in the stock market has reduced the amount of money fund buyers are using to buy commodities with, which has led to recent falls in commodity prices. Also, the increase in the dollar has reduced global demand for corn stocks, thus the slide in the price of corn is making margins more encouraging to cattle feeders. As the price of commodities decrease, so will the price of their by-products. The decrease in by-product feeds will make it more attractive for producers choosing to grow their cattle and delay fall marketing. There are several options for retaining ownership; I would encourage anyone thinking about retaining ownership to contact their University of Missouri Extension Livestock Specialist to learn more.

The bottom line: Cow-calf producers must know their calf breakeven coming off the cow, recognize the risks associated with retaining ownership, and weigh those risks against possible advantages of retaining ownership. Also, recognize that in any given week variables such as weaned or unweaned, pre-conditioned, vaccination programs, etc. will have an impact on calf values and spreads could be as wide as \$10-15/cwt (Cattle-Fax October 2008).

AG BUSINESS NOTES

Karisha Devlin

Pasture Insurance... New to Missouri

Pasture, Rangeland and Forage (PRF) insurance is a new pilot group risk protection program offered by the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA). This innovative program is only being offered in a few states. Some states will be based on vegetation greenness and others on rainfall indices. Missouri will be based on rainfall indices.

PRF insurance for 2009 will be available in Missouri from crop insurance agents. This new insurance must be purchased by *November 30, 2008*. The purpose of the program is to provide livestock producers the ability to purchase insurance protection for losses of forage produced for grazing or harvested hay.

PRF insurance policies use innovative technology to assess losses in forage production across diverse range and pasture environments in many states. The Rainfall Index used in Missouri is based on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) data and will use an approximate 12 x 12 mile grid. Producers must select at least two 2-month time periods in which precipitation is important during the growth and production of forage species. These time periods are called index intervals. Insurance payments to a producer suffering a loss are calculated based on the deviation from normal precipitation within the grid and index interval(s) chosen. This insurance coverage is for a single peril – lack of precipitation.

There are some rules for the program including seeding and overseeding. To establish a pasture, the deadline is July 1 prior to the insured year. So if

you want insurance in 2009, the pasture must have been established prior to July 1, 2008. The program does allow overseeding into an existing stand.

This insurance policy will count towards insuring all acres for the new farm bill. Some programs affiliated with the new farm bill are going to require insurance on all acres, including pasture and hay acres. The PRF insurance is one choice of insurance on the pasture and hay acres. For more information contact a local crop insurance agent, or visit the RMA website: www.rma.usda.gov.

Upcoming Program

Annie's Project is a comprehensive educational program and support network for farm women. It is based on the experiences of an Illinois farm wife who spent a lifetime learning to become a better and more involved business partner with her farm husband. During the class, farm women will receive training on financial records, production records, marketing plans, risk management, legal regulations, records, and human resources. The dates for the program are Nov. 3, Nov. 10, Nov. 17, Nov. 24, Dec. 1, and Dec. 8 (a total of 6 sessions). The program will be held at the Knox County High School in Edina, Missouri.

Farming is a complex business today, and it is critical that everyone in the operation is well versed to try to handle any problems that come up. Class size is limited, so if you are interested, contact me at (660) 397-2179 as soon as possible.

AGRONOMY NOTES

Soil management following flooding

Flood waters can introduce new weed species to a field. While some may germinate in the flood year, others may not be noticeable until the year following a flood. Flood waters may also deposit soil, which is different chemically (pH, nutrient status) and physically (texture and organic matter

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content) from that of the field. These changes may affect crop safety and herbicide performance.

New weed species

After planting in 2009, fields flooded this year should be carefully monitored to determine if weed species new to the fields are present. If densities of

any new species reach the economic threshold, chemical or mechanical control will be warranted.

Herbicide carryover

In fields which were flooded this year, the likelihood of imported soil containing herbicide levels which will affect next year's crop may be small, but can be easily determined. Herbicide degradation in soils occurs primarily by microbial breakdown. Such microbial breakdown slows considerably in cool and flooded (anaerobic) soils. A simple bioassay can be performed to determine if there are any herbicide residues in the soil which will impede crop growth. To perform a bioassay:

- take several one quart soil samples from the flooded field
- take several soil samples from a herbicide-free site
- plant three to four seeds of the anticipated crop in each sample
- grow the seedlings for two to four weeks

If plants in the samples from the flooded fields appear normal, growing as did those in the herbicide-free soil, this is an indication that it is safe to plant the planned crop in the flooded field. If the plants from the flooded field do not grow as those in the herbicide-free soil, it will be necessary to determine if herbicide contamination is the only cause of these symptoms. Please contact me if you would like assistance making such a determination.

Nutrient loss

When soils are flooded, nutrients may be removed from the soil or, in some cases, deposited in the soil. There is no way to make an accurate determination of the level of various soil nutrients without the benefit of a soil test. On a positive front, with skyrocketing fertilizer costs, soil tests are now an even more cost-effective tool than ever before.

Textural changes

Silt and sand deposits are common in slack water areas where water velocity was low. Normal tillage activities, even no-till operations, can probably be performed for next year's crop with little or no change in management plans. Where scour has occurred, some land leveling and redistribution may be necessary for reestablishing an acceptable field surface. Some topsoil from excess deposits should be used to fill in these scoured areas to help maintain an acceptable topsoil layer in these areas.

Cost-share funds available to Missouri organic producers

The Missouri Department of Agriculture (MDA) has announced that through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Organic Program, the department is helping to provide cost-share monies to Missouri producers. The cost-share program provides assistance for qualified organic producers in the areas of crop, wild crop or livestock and handlers of agricultural products who obtain certification under USDA's National Organic Program.

This program will allow MDA to reimburse each eligible producer up to 75% of their certification costs, not exceeding \$750. Since funds are limited, MDA will process applications in the order received until all funds are consumed. For organic producers to qualify, applicants will be required to complete a signed application and supply a copy of their organic certificates along with an invoice documenting their cost of certification. To obtain an application and complete guidelines, visit www.mda.mo.gov/abd/organic.htm.