

July 2007

UPCOMING DATES:

August 1-4, 2007
Ripley County Fair
Doniphan, MO

August 22-25
Butler County Fair
Poplar Bluff, MO

August 31-Sept. 1
Reynolds County Fair
Redford, MO

October 5-7
Madison County Fair
Fredericktown, MO

October 11-13
Iron County Fair
Ironton, MO

October 26
SEMO Bull Sale
Farmington Livestock Auct.

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WHAT'S THE COST OF A MISSED BREEDING CYCLE?

Many Extension beef cattle educators preach the importance of a short breeding season where most of the cows and heifers conceive on the first service. Certainly a number of issues can affect how long it takes to get the entire herd settled, but a tight breeding season offers the opportunity to manage and market the resulting calves as one consistent group.

However, have you ever considered the direct economic benefit of cows that conceive on the first cycle? Assuming adequate nutrition is available, a good calf is likely gaining about 2.25+ lbs./day at weaning time. If born 21 days later than his counterpart, a calf could easily weigh 40-50 lbs. less as a feeder calf come market time in fall 2008. If feeder calves are worth \$1.20/lb. next fall, one missed breeding cycle could cost \$50-60 for each calf that is born only one cycle late. For a cow that's two cycles late, those numbers double.

Herd health (vaccinations, etc.), cow body condition (nutrition), bull (breeding) power, bull breeding soundness and estrus synchronization programs are all factors that equate to getting cows settled early in the breeding season. Now's the time to consider the economic impact of each of these management opportunities as it relates to the harvest of your 2008 calf crop.

-- Stan Smith, Ohio State University Extension

2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE

All agricultural operations, large or small, are important to U.S. agriculture but it is often difficult for the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) to reach the smaller producers. This is unfortunate because census data are used by local communities, businesses, government agencies and others to make critical decisions about the future of farming and rural America. You could help improve the Census data in several ways by encouraging farmers and ranchers to sign up to receive a Census Data Form. People can sign up by calling 1.800.892.1660 between 8am and 4:30 pm MT, or online at www.nass.usda.gov/counts by encouraging recipients to complete and return the Data Forms to NASS by early February 2008. Please note: NASS will 'finalize' the mailing list in early August so sign up time is limited. After that, special arrangements may be made for minority outreach groups. For more information contact Cedrick Reddick at 202.720.3441 or cedric_reddick@nass.usda.gov Post cards for census promotion or data collection activity are available by contacting Cedrick Reddick

SHOW ME SELECT HEIFER ENROLLMENT



September 1 is the deadline to enroll heifers into the May 2008 fall calving sale. If you are interested in putting heifers through the program give me a call.

LOW INTEREST LOANS FROM THE USDA

From time to time the U.S. Department of Agriculture designates counties as disaster areas due to some sort of natural disaster. The most recent natural disaster we have had was the April freeze that killed many wheat and alfalfa crops as well as other vegetation. I looked up all the counties I served (Butler, Carter, Iron, Madison, Reynolds, Ripley and Wayne) and qualified farm operators in these counties are eligible to apply for low-interest loans from the Farm Service Agency (USDA office). Typically a farmer has eight months from the time a declaration was issued to apply for the loans. If you are in Iron county you are also eligible for low-interest loans due to flooding disaster. For more information contact your local FSA office or go to their website at www.fsa.usda.gov

HORSE SLAUGHTER PLANTS CLOSED

As of the first of July all U.S. horse slaughter plants are closed. The last plant, located in Dekalb, IL, closed due to the state legislature issuing a ban on horse slaughter. A similar rule was created in Texas, closing the two plants located there. Currently, over 100,000 horses in the U.S. are displaced or unwanted each year. Many horses are now exported to Canada for slaughter. Horse prices were not the greatest before the plants closed, and now those unwanted horses have no value. There are places where these unwanted horses can go including rescue camps, adoption facilities, and animal reserve areas but the question arises what is going to happen when these places fill up?

PURCHASING HAY

Most people have finished cutting grass hay for the year unless you are hoping for a fall cutting. If you have found that your hay supply is going to be short this year you may be looking for a place to purchase hay. Let me say that I know of little to none for sale in the area. However, there are a few websites that connect buyers and sellers of all types of hay. The first is through the University of Missouri and Missouri Department of Agriculture at <http://agebb.missouri.edu/haylst/index.htm>. Another site is www.haybarn.com. The Farm Service Agency recently updated its hay listing website which can be found at www.fsa.usda.gov. If you are one of the lucky producers to have extra hay you can list hay for sale on these websites also.

STOCKPILED FESCUE

Now is the time to think about how you are going to feed your cattle through the winter. You can always rely on the time old tradition of feeding hay. It generally costs \$14 per bale to mow, rake and bale. That is not including the fertilizer you remove from that field when you take the forage off. Each bale of hay constitutes to about \$15 worth of fertilizer. Add that all together and it costs about \$30 per bale which equates to \$60 per ton. Hay is not bad to feed but if you figure up the costs associated with it and the relatively poor nutritional value of most hays, you are better off doing something else.

Stockpiling fescue may be a more sensible way to manage your cattle during the winter. The biggest problem you have when stockpiling fescue is having enough pasture in reserve to keep animals off after August 1st. The best pastures to save are the ones that you have clipped, mowed or grazed the top-growth before June 1st. This will allow for maximum growth in September and later. Applying 60 to 80 lbs. of nitrogen fertilizer around the 15th of August will increase your yield, even in dry years such as this one. In trial studies performed on research farms, stockpiled tall fescue was the cheapest feed used to winter cattle at a cost of \$22.33 per acre for 125 grazing days. Hay was estimated at \$56.00 per ton and winter annual pastures cost \$70.33 per acre for 93 grazing days.

The nutritional value of stockpiled fescue can far exceed that of hay. During the months of November and December the percent crude protein of stockpiled fescue is typically 14% and rarely falls below 11.5% in late December. Typical averages for grass hay quality can range from 12% crude protein from hay cut in May to a low of 6% for late June and July cuttings with the average being 10% crude protein.

The best way to graze stockpiled fescue is to strip graze the pasture after October 15th. This is usually accomplished by stretching an electric wire across the field using temporary posts and allowing animals access to as much pasture as they will clean up in 3-4 weeks. At the end of that period move the wire back the same distance and allow cattle to clean up that area. By strip grazing, you can save up to 40% of your forage from waste.

Stockpiling tall fescue for winter grazing is a very feasible and economic way to supply your animals with good-quality winter forage. Remembering a few key dates to manage your stockpiled fescue can be critical to the production and quality. Remove cattle by August 1st to allow for fall growth, apply nitrogen fertilizer around August 15th, and hold off grazing until after October 15th. Happy grazing!