

## Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

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### MEETING ALERT

Lots of activities for your calendar this month. I hope you'll catch at least one.

**January 24** – Barry County Soils & Crops Conference – 6 pm – First Christian Church, Cassville – alfalfa, fescue alternatives and beef genomics are the topics.

**January 29** – Jasper County Livestock & Forage Conference – 6 pm – Carthage Water & Electric Community Room, 627 W. Centennial, Carthage – streambanks, cattle handling facilities and warm season grasses for cattle nutrition.

**January 30** – U of MO Southwest Research Center, Mt. Vernon, 1 to 3 pm – see firsthand the feeding of anhydrous ammonia – treated low quality fescue hay and we'll try to answer all your questions about this process which can be likened to “making a silk purse out of a sow's ear.”

**February 7** – Beef ReproGene Workshop, 3 Cedars Event Center, Nevada starting at 4 pm – topics will cover the next steps in beef reproduction and genetics led by MU State Extension specialists Dave Patterson, Jared Decker and Jordan Thomas – Call 417-276-3313 to reserve your meal and save you \$10. There are live demonstrations and I highly recommend this workshop if you've missed those we've had the last two years in Springfield and Carthage.

**February 12** – Monett Beef Cattlemen's Conference – 4 pm - National Guard Armory – see attached or enclosure. This is the 50<sup>th</sup> event under this title and if you're attending you'll learn about beef cattle raising in the future and reminisce a bit about the very first conference in 1970.

**March 18** – Fescue Renovation Workshop – 8:30 am to 5:00 pm. – How long has your fescue pasture or hayfield been around? Most of you probably may not remember. In the 80's some old fescue fields were reseeded with fungus free fescue. It didn't survive over 2 or 3 years.

In the 90's, novel or friendly fescue was introduced and it survived so I feel confident in recommending it as a desirable, cool season grass. If your old Ky31 stand is thinning and weeds like ragweed, bull nettle, pigweed, ironweed, broom sedge, etc. are taking over you should register for the March 18 fescue renovation school at the

University of Missouri Southwest Research Center, Mt. Vernon. It's a day-long event from 8:30 am to 5 pm. You'll come away from it well-educated on all things fescue related. Registration deadline is March 8. For details, contact your nearest Extension specialist or Jendel at [wolfejl@missouri.edu](mailto:wolfejl@missouri.edu) or 417-466-2148.

### CALVING SEASON JUST AHEAD – BCS NOW

Hopefully, your cows that start calving around February 1 are in respectable body condition scores (BCS). Respectable to most researcher's data means mature cows are a 5 or 6. There's no need to have them fleshier than 6. If they're first calf heifers they definitely need to be 6's in order for them to rebound from calving, growth and lactation stress. Failure to have them at the 6 level will extend their interval from calving to estrus.

The difference between a 5 and a 4 is a fine line in appearance. The researcher's definition is the 5 does not have the last two ribs visible unless the cow is shrunk. The 4 does have the last two ribs very noticeable and the foreribs are slightly noticeable and they may show signs of muscle loss in the hind quarter.

Purdue research in the 1980's reflect a relation of BCS and the average interval from calving to first heat after calving.

BCS	Avg. interval	BCS	Avg. Interval
3	89 days	6	52 days
4	70 days	7	31 days
5	59 days		

To maintain a bunched calf crop and a 365 day PPI (Post Partum Interval) a cow or heifer should come back in estrus and breed and settle by 82 days. If you compare the table and reality on your farm, I'd bet you'd find your 4, BCS cows don't respond as well as the Purdue cows did.

On a predominantly, Ky31 fescue forage we discovered long ago that cows calving around September 1 typically bred back more quickly than those calving in the spring.

This is because the fall calvers come into the calving season in a better BCS with very few 3's and 4's. As a rule fall calvers are in a higher BCS than late winter calvers.

If you keep good records on your herd pick out a few of your extreme BCS cows and record it in your Redbook or other record keeping system. Remember you can't change a BCS quickly. You need to add around 80 lbs. to move from a 4 to a 5 or from a 5 to a 6.

A great BCS publication was put out by the University of Nebraska with excellent pictures, called Body Condition Scoring Beef Cows, EC281. It's available online at <http://extension.unl.edu/publications>

### **THIN PASTURES = THIN COWS**

The title of this item is a no-brainer but a lot of folks never get the message. Eric Bailey, MU Extension specialists in nutrition pointed out that if stockpiled fescue is less than 4 inches tall, the grazing cow suffers from an energy shortage. This of course relates back to the previous BCS story.

Eric offered these tips on cow feeding at the Mt. Vernon Soils & Crops Conference. Regarding silage, he said moldy silage results in lowered digestibility and intake but the mold should not be lethal. Most beef cows should not need extra protein on good (8% protein) corn silage. He says free choice corn silage could allow cows to get too fat.

There were lots of corn stalks baled in 2018. I've seen test results from the lab with under 45% TDN and under 4% protein. I hope they are being supplemented adequately.

### **STEER FEEDOUT RESULTS**

Enclosed are the results of the Steer Feedout that concluded in late December. No group ended up being profitable as you can see with the overall average loss at \$158.94. We did have 22 individual steers that showed a profit with the best having a profit of \$156.80. The big downer on profits this time was we had 3 head (2.3%) die and 5 other steers were sold as realizers. In other words, they were salvaged just to stop the feed bill.

The health issue was diagnosed as mycoplasma. Daily gains and feed conversion were poor at 7.64 lbs. The sale price of the finished steers didn't help the profit margin. On the positive side there were opportunities for participants to see how their steers really perform once they leave their farm. Until you receive that type of feedback you can't know what genetic changes, if any, you need to make.

The Missouri Cattlemen's Association has announced plans for a Performance Challenge beginning in November. Watch for complete details. Those steers will be fed at the University of Missouri South Farm, Columbia.

Meanwhile our next Feedout will be for calves born after July 1, 2018. They will be sent to Iowa on June 4. Entry deadline is May 10.

### **WHAT DO FEEDLOTS WANT?**

At the Missouri Cattlemen's Association annual meeting earlier this month, Craig Uden, Darr Feedlot in Kansas addressed that question. Here are a few of his comments.

- Cattle should grade 80% or better Choice.
- Just being black isn't enough.
- Docility is very important.
- Carcass weight less than 1050 lbs.
- Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) certified.
- His lot tracks origin of cattle and they secure information on all cattle and focus on predictability of the cattle's performance.
- Cattlemen should remember they're in the food business.

### **MUD EFFECTS**

Mud is an item when we talk about cattle performance on pasture or in a feedlot. Nebraska research in the 90's showed the magnitude of mud losses on rate of gain.

Dewclaw deep	7%	Hock deep	28%
Skin deep	14%	Belly deep	35%

This work referenced feedlot mud if the cattle were in a dry lot and gaining 3.5 lbs. per day. Even dewclaw deep mud results in about .25 lb. a day loss during the muddy period. In addition to gain loss, the amount of feed per unit of gain increases. Do all you can to minimize mud on your cattle operation whether it's rotating pastures, providing bedding, maybe reduction the number of cattle or moving bale rings more frequently.

### **WORD FROM FINLAND**

I don't know much about the beef business in Finland, but our regional extension media specialist, David Burton, forwarded a request to me he received from Jari Isohanni, Finland. He'd seen an article that David and I released about waste plastic disposal from hay and haylage.

Jari wrote that some farmers burn plastics or get rid of them in other ways. Some have to pay local energy companies that burn them for energy. I responded that in this area we were not having much luck getting our hay and haylage plastic recycled. The silage plastics are better received.

Jari replied they were attempting to develop an intelligent wrapping that makes it possible to track how much plastic goes to different farms. The farmer could pay a deposit when they buy the wrap. When they return it or bring to a recycling point they get their deposit back. He added that RFID could be used to track the conditions of the bales during storage. He concluded this kind of solution isn't adopted yet but the technology is ready. Please secure all plastics on your truck so they don't end up in the road ditches.