NEOSHO & OZARK GRAZING SCHOOLS
There should be some space left at the Neosho and Ozark grazing schools. The one at Neosho is June 4, 5 and 6. Location is Crowder College. Starting time each day is 8 am. For registration, contact Tracy White at 417-451-1007.

The Ozark school runs June 11 to 13. Call Henry Rauch at 417-581-2719 for details.

Our Mt. Vernon school had 31 attendees with almost all of them cow-calf owners. A couple had sheep and or goats. The evaluations were very complimentary for all sessions.

FEEDOUT FINALE
I don’t have a date yet for the Steer Feedout Finale that began November 6. Patrick Davis and I went to the feedlot the first of May when they made the first sort. We took a lot of pictures and at the Finale we’ll show the before and after shots of the steers. Along with the pictures, we’ll have the evaluation panel’s comments in November along with the actual steer feedlot and carcass data. It should be right around July 1 so look for specifics in the June newsletter.

About any hay or haylage is eligible as long as it was harvested in Missouri in 2019. Lab results will be used exclusively to determine the top entries using the RFQ (Relative Forage Quality) system. Just because rain has been a challenge in 2019 I’ll bet you’ll still learn a lot about your forage’s quality and how it compares to others around the region.

ALFALFA THOUGHTS
Many of you know I’m a big fan of alfalfa for beef cattle on fescue. If you will be buying hay this season, try to lay in some alfalfa hay or haylage. I saw an article in the March, 2019 Hay & Forage Grower written by Peter Robinson a dairy extension specialist with U. of California-Davis that points out lower lignin alfalfa will have higher net energy values that deserve a premium.

Other pluses pointed out by the specialist for alfalfa that especially aids the dairy cows is a high cation exchange capacity or the alfalfa’s ability to stimulate cud chewing. He also pointed out that a nutrient (example pectin) that alfalfa has to offer. I’ll bet some of these alfalfa features can also be a plus for our beef cows on fescue.

WEATHER & REPRODUCTION
As long as I can recall, a cold messy winter is followed by cow-calf raisers delaying bull turnout or artificial insemination. Just remember when you do that you’ll probably end up with a lower pregnancy rate when that breeding season extends from late May into August.

The reason is hot weather and pregnancy losses early in the breeding season as cows may run body temperatures well above the average normal temperature of 101.5. Bull fertility and libido may also suffer.

Yes, cold, wet weather in February may result in death loss of newborns and discomfort for the owner. However, if you target mid-March or April calving you’ll not necessarily...
have a higher pregnancy rate. A lot may depend on the weather that season, the type of forage fed along with shade availability. “Hot” fescue really limits preg rates.

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State, retired livestock specialist wrote a recent news item that a cow’s core body temperature peaks at 2 to 5 hours. He said the peak body temperature normally occurs at 6 pm to 11 pm. This indicates that inseminating cattle in the morning hours avoids the heat stress of evening breeding.

NEW BRANDED BEEF PROGRAM
Perhaps you’ve seen the announcement of a new branded beef program called, HOLSim™. The American Simmental Association (ASA) and the Holstein Association USA (HAUSA) have teamed up on this venture. The release from the ASA says the objectives are: provide additional revenue to dairy producers by adding value to terminal calves; offer new marketing opportunities for beef seedstock herds; and offer a consistent supply of high-quality calves to capture market premiums.

The Registered Holstein cows are bred to a SimAngus bull that ranks high on the HOLSim index based on the IGS Feeder Profit calculator. The eligible bulls must be black homozygous polled, have a minimum birth weight accuracy of .4 and meet a minimum threshold in the HOLSim Index. Those minimums are adjusted for calving ease, muscle conformation, grading ability and sensitivity to carcass length.

Unfortunately, the number of Holstein cows in southwest Missouri shrinks monthly so I’m not sure how much impact we’ll see in this area. Reagan Bluel, Extension field specialist in dairy, who covers this region discussed having meeting for the dairy farmers who plan to exit the business and look for alternative enterprises. This new program may be an option for some.

DNA TESTING TO PROVE GENETICS
This item also refers to a traceability program started by Tyson. They will use DNA to identify cattle raised through their Open Prairie Natural Angus Beef brand. DNA will be used to trace the origin of beef in the supply chain. Remember, in a previous newsletter from me I asked if you’d heard the term “blockchain”, well this is an example of that. The program helps assure purchasers the beef is sourced from farms and ranches that meet specific requirements such as no antibiotics ever and no added hormones.

The news article indicates at this time most of the cattle are raised by independent ranchers in Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon and Washington. A representative of Tyson Fresh Meats says this program is about meeting a growing demand for more transparency about how food is produced.

These two programs are just examples of efforts to differentiate beef so you may find yourself joining forces with those mentioned or similar program as they all attempt to market something other than commodity beef. Just keep your eyes and ears open to what’s likely to be a growing list of niche or greater beef markets.

PUGGING
Have your cattle been pugging your pastures? Tim Schnakenberg, Extension field specialist in agronomy used the term earlier this month at our grazing school. Only two or three persons raised their hands when I asked how many of the 31 attendees had heard the term before.

Tim said it’s a term used to describe the hoof action of cattle or horses as they tromp around in muddy pastures causing the loss of the stand of forage. I’m sure most of you can say you’ve witnessed pugging first hand this year.

I did resort to Webster’s for a specific definition of pugging and it said, the mixing of pug (wet clay). Ohio State Extension specialists have an extensive fact sheet on line discussing pasture repair if pugging has taken place.

CHANGING OF TERMS
Persons involved in the raising, marketing, harvesting, retailing beef have used the term “beef industry” as a general reference to the production of beef. At the recent Southwest Missouri Cattlemen’s Association meeting Scynthia Schnake and Brooke Mareth were telling about their experiences at the Missouri Cattlemen’s Leadership College. A speaker at one of the sessions suggested if you used the term, “beef industry” many would visualize a production unit like a factory instead of a rice farm or ranch. To avoid that image from consumers they were encouraged to refer to the beef business as a “community”. The speaker felt this would especially be more appropriate when using social media.

INSULATION AND CATTLE
A caller asked about the possible risk of cattle eating fiber glass insulation. This seemed logical since recent tornadoes spread insulation across many miles of pasture and hay ground.

There should not be any toxic effects if they just nibble on it. Cattle do eat strange things, usually out of curiosity not for nutritional reasons. I suppose a large intake of insulation could result in blockages in the digestive system resulting in death. Certainly, I’ve heard of plastic shopping bags and plastic twine ending up in cattle’s digestive system and they can cause death.