

Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

June 20, 2019



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

STEER FEEDOUT FINALE

The “Finale” for the steers sent to Iowa last November is July 2, 7 pm at the University of Missouri’s Southwest Research Center, Mt. Vernon. During the program we recap the post-weaning and carcass performance of the 259 steers from 22 producers.

The cattle gathered at Joplin Regional Stockyards were featured at the Southwest Missouri Cattlemen’s Association monthly meeting. A panel of order buyers, marketers and USDA graders discussed what they liked and didn’t like about each group. We will review those comments during the slide presentation that includes pictures of many steers.

Each group will have daily gain, carcass grades, profitability status and individual achievements reported. The latter refers to items like top retail value per day of age, Certified Angus Beef and Prime quality grade. We’ll reveal how some persons in the audience last fall compared to the pros in the evaluation department.

I guarantee it will be a most educational evening. In addition to the steers gathered at JRS, steers from northeast Missouri at Paris will also be included in the PowerPoint. Now, a challenge for those attending. Getting to the Southwest Center will be a bit tricky due to road construction at I-44 exit 44. Coming from the west you’ll need to exit I-44 at exit 38 then follow the south out road east about 3 miles to the Center. Regardless of where you’re coming from it will be worth your while. Just allow yourself extra time to navigate the detour options.

YOUTH STEER EVALUATION

You’re invited to attend the Lawrence County Youth Steer carcass evaluation on June 27 at Cloud’s Meats in Carthage. These 6 steers have been on feed since February 2 at the various farms in Lawrence and Dade county. At the carcass evaluation, you’ll be able to see the carcasses on the rail and hear from a University of Missouri meats specialist on what graders look for in carcass evaluation.

The program begins a 6 pm.

THOUGHTS ON SMS HEIFERS

The four, Show-Me-Select bred heifer sales in Missouri for fall calvers are history. Here’s a quick recap of each sale.

Location	No. Head	Avg. Price	Weight
Farmington	116	\$1737	985
Fruitland	117	\$1891	1048
Carthage	240	\$1717	1038
Palmyra	87	\$1857	1157

The Carthage sale had 125 heifers that were black and black baldies that brought an average price of \$1998. The red, red white-faced, whites and yellows averaged \$1413, a \$585 spread. Besides the color difference, size or weight is a big factor in buyer choice. As I review the prices and the average weight I find the top-selling groups all ranged between 1075 and 1157 pounds. In contrast, the lower priced heifers’ groups ranged from 871 to 1071 pounds. Many beef cow owners say their cows are bigger than they like. However, when it comes to the SMS bred heifer sales they pick the biggest heifers every time. I’m pretty sure it’s not unique to SMS heifers.

There is not a perfect size or weight for every herd. It depends, in this part of the country we have better forage and usually more of it. A good target for mature cows runs in the 1200 to 1400 pound range. If we shoot for a 1300 pound weight and the bred heifers at our sales are in the second or early third stage of pregnancy and are about 80% of their mature weight those heifers should weigh about 1050 pounds in a 6 body condition score.

I’d like for your to keep track of your “retired” cows sale weight over a period of time. Let me know what their average weight is and if you feel it’s too big.

WANTED MORE SHOW-ME-SELECT HEIFERS

As good as the SMS sales results look, apparently the added-value premium isn’t enough to attract more participants. We would like more heifers that you can offer for sale. When we hear people say cow herds in Missouri average fewer than 40 head there’s an opportunity to market SMS heifers as small herds economically would be better off buying their replacements. I realize it’s fun and it gives

the small herd owners a feeling of satisfaction to raise their own replacements. The challenge is finding above average caliber heifers to put in the program. With the age of genomics, artificial insemination, along with heat synchronization, adding value should be easy. Yes, it takes work, good help, acceptable facilities and veterinarian help. If you buy weaned heifers, a big challenge is finding consistently good heifers, but it's doable.

If you're interested in entering the SMS program, let me or your nearest Extension field specialist in livestock know and we'll help you make it happen.

NEW ANGUS INDEX

My March letter mentioned the Angus Association would introduce some new indexes in the coming year. The June, Angus Journal revealed some of those moves in an article by Kelli Retallick with Angus Genetics, Inc.

A new index is \$M (maternal weaned calf value) that aims to predict profitability differences in progeny due to genetics according to Kelli. Indexes are built around EPDs. The nine EPDs used in \$M are: calving ease direct; maternal calving ease; weaning weight; milk; heifer pregnancy; docility; foot score both angle and claw set; mature cow weight.

Persons that complain about all those EPDs and how difficult it is to sort through the numbers should rejoice with this new index when you're selecting breeding stock. If you're not retaining heifers for your herd, you may not worry about the maternal index. We'll be encouraging Show-Me-Select producers to use it if they use Angus genetics. Other breeds have or will develop an index approach to bundle several EPDs into one index value. It's not enough to have calving ease in the service sire, they should have excellent EPDs on several traits. Our Tier Two SMS requirements only require a certain accuracy value. That could change as index values evolve.

ORGANIZING YOUR RECORDS

Successful beef cow-calf ventures require records of performance. The best records start with unique, but simple identification methods that stay with the animal it's entire life. When I started my Extension career in Saline county, many purebred herds used neck chains with metal or heavy plastic ID numbers placed on the chain. A few progressive cattlemen were just starting to try an ear tag made by Ritchey. So, here's a trip down memory lane.

I was intrigued by the tag and carried one in my pocket for a number of years. I showed it to a lot of cattle producers as the up and coming way to ID your cattle. I carried it even after moving to Mt. Vernon in 1968. I'm including a picture of that very tag, now in two pieces I have no idea why I put 14 on the tag. Also, you might ask veteran cattlemen if they still have a Ritchey tag applicator. I

couldn't find mine but they were dangerous. The veteran might even show you some hand scars.



I'm impressed today when at a sale of feeder calves or breeding stock or just driving down a southwest Missouri road looking at cattle, how many of them have ear tags. In fact a year or so back I asked a local livestock supply representative what their biggest selling item was and they replied, "ear tags". They come in all colors, sizes, with buttons, one piece EID types, pre-numbers or do it yourself numbers with lots of options.

My question is, do you get your money's worth out of your tagging system? Some buyers may look at your calves with a nice tag in their ear or ears and assume if you put tag in them you probably did some other worthwhile practices. Maybe it was castration, parasite control, preconditioning vaccinations. If that's true, you're getting some returns. Are you individually weighing each and every calf at weaning and transferring that data to their dam's individual record. If so, there is more benefit from tags.

Dr. Craig Payne, Extension veterinarian recently sent an introduction to production records for commercial cow-calf operations. There are useful computer records programs some of you already use. The secret is to gather the basic data, put it in a place you can get hold of it then actually use it. It all starts with unique cow and calf ID, probably a flexible ear tag.

AMMONIATING LOW QUALITY HAY

As most of you know there wasn't much cool season grass hay put up the first two weeks of May. The quality, energy and protein, drops significantly every day that harvest is delayed. Treating low quality hay with anhydrous ammonia corrects a lot of problems but it is work and anhydrous is not readily available.

As the rains continued into June we have what appears to be better than average fescue hay. Is it too good to treat? The best answer to that question is test the hay. Don't just get the least expensive test, request a test that includes neutral detergent fiber (NDF). If NDF is around the 70% level, anhydrous will help the feed value and intake amount.