

**Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers****August 20, 2019**

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**CATTLEMEN'S TOUR**

Mark your calendar for September 21 for the Southwest Missouri Cattlemen's Tour. The tour begins at 1:30 pm in Lawrence county at Hillside Angus Ranch/Wide Range Bovine Unlimited, 44 Lawrence 2200. From Pierce City take Missouri 37 northwest 1 ½ miles to 2220 then west 2 miles. Other stops include Elbert Angus Farm and Marion Farms with supper at the Old Ritchey Mill on Shoal Creek. Local musicians will add to the affair. There is no charge, but for planning purposes, please call 417-466-3102 by September 18 to register. (See Enclosure)

**SOUTHWEST CENTER FIELD DAY**

The annual University of Missouri Southwest Research Center Field Day, Mt. Vernon will be held September 12, 8:30 am. The Center is located on State Road H southwest of Mt. Vernon. The event will have 1200 to 1500 FFA students from around the region along with the general public. The topics of interest are: Beef Reproduction Technologies; Basics of Forage Production in Missouri and Why Red Angus? A special attraction at 12:30 pm will be a tour of the beef farm, via bus. This will be a good opportunity to see the 125-cow beef herd that will just be starting to calve. You'll hear from the research team about future plans for forages and the cattle.

**FEEDOUT TIME**

Yes, it's time to sign up 5 or more of your early 2019 steer calves to go to Iowa for finishing. The entry deadline is October 10 with delivery to a pickup point on November 5. Our southwest Missouri pickup point will again be Joplin Regional Stockyards. The other confirmed pickup will be the Paris Veterinary Clinic, Paris, MO.

Our JRS pickup in November has become very interesting as we tie it in with our Cattlemen's regular monthly meeting and we have a good supper. Also, after the meal each feedout entry will parade through the ring to be evaluated by a panel of marketers, order buyers, cattle feeders and Missouri or USDA graders who essentially hold a clinic on what the various segments of the industry are looking for.

We've had a lot of cattle producers participate over the years. We'd love to have new faces show up so why not be brave enough to give it a try? You'll be glad you did.

**WORD FROM ARKANSAS**

Shane Gadberry, Arkansas State Extension livestock specialist wrote an article last month regarding feeder calf health perceptions about Arkansas calves. Southern Missouri calves have long been faulted for the same general health issues. We see it in the Feedout steers with a 3 to 4 ½ death loss some years.

Our feedout calves are on a suggested vaccination program but too many still end up in the sick pen or have to be treated once. We had 37.5% of the steers last November treated individually. The death loss in the 192 head was 4.2%. The deads were posted by veterinarians and not surprising, most of the causes were pneumonia. We did have one with hardware. Deaths occurred all the way from November 26 until May 28.

Shane had some other good comments which I'll share with you.

- The stress from weaning, shipping, commingling, a new, unfamiliar environment can overwhelm the immune system.
- Why are bulls discounted so much compared to steers? Experience indicates that bulls experiencing castration stress in addition to shipping stress at 6 to 7 months of age are 2 to 3 times more likely to become sick compared to steers that experience the same shipping stress.
- Vaccines aren't as effective when given to stressed calves. Vaccinate at home and they're better able to respond to the vaccine.
- A 2019 Arkansas Livestock Market News study indicated that buyers spent \$34 more per calf for value-added calves. They reasoned the added value expense would be \$14 so the true added value would still be \$20 per head.
- Heavier calves are less likely to get sick. They may be heavier due to better nutrition, genetics or they are older.

## **MORE ON PRECONDITIONING**

Over the years, we've seen the suggested time between weaning and marketing increase from 21 days to 45. I've even heard feeders say it would help the morbidity and mortality rates if they were weaned 60 days before heading to the auction.

Justin Sexten, formerly our MU State Extension beef specialist, now with Performance Livestock Analytics sees feeders paying more for heavier calves this year as grain prices move higher. For this reason he suggests backgrounding calves longer this fall.

A few years ago on a feedlot tour in southwest Kansas I asked a yard manager and a pen rider, "What kind of cattle do you like to feed?" I was thinking they would name breeds, weights, area of origin, color, sex but they simply said, "healthy ones."

As a cow-calf producer you hold the key to producing those "healthy ones." I love to go to special value-added calf sales where there is a minimum of bawling going on. Unfortunately, on regular sale days there's a lot of noise. You can help yourself and the next owner of your calves by weaning on your farm and not on the truck or trailer.

I fully understand why many of you sell your calves right off the cow. The lack of facilities, pens, etc. probably heads the list. The need for quick cash might be another high ranking reason. Of course, the other reason is, "we've always done it this way."

## **51 YEARS AGO**

The third Beef Newsletter I wrote after coming to Lawrence county in 1968, contained an item on, Preconditioned Feeder Calves. I stated that it is a popular topic in the past year or two. As I recall, most of the push for preconditioning then came from an Iowa veterinarian.

In my letter I wrote, "preconditioning means to prepare an animal to better withstand the stress of shipment and feedlot adaption." I listed the following five items required for preconditioning at that time.

1. Dehorned and castrated at least 30 days prior to shipment.
2. Vaccinated for blackleg and malignant edema.
3. Treated for grubs and internal parasites.
4. Vaccinated for IBR, shipping fever, BVD and PI<sub>3</sub>
5. Weaned 3 to 4 weeks prior to shipping and start on concentrate feed at that time.

A few things have changed since the 60's but not that much. The vaccination protocol is more sophisticated with names like mannheimia, haemolytica and bovine respiratory syncytial virus. Grubs are now rarely seen in calves in this area and the required time for weaning has increased.

Otherwise, not much change and still not widespread adoption across the industry of some basic, healthy practices. Fast forward to the next 50 years, I wonder what we'll be doing then?

## **TRENDS**

The August Angus Journal carried an article about the Cattle Fax annual survey taken earlier this year. The respondent's average herd size was 404 cows so that's significantly larger than the upper 40's for cow herds in Missouri. Their average weaning weight was 567 lbs. for steers and 527 lbs. for heifers. The average cow cost per year was \$604 with a range from \$667 down to \$563. Their average calf revenue was \$872 per head.

The survey's high-return producers typically wean a 90% or higher calf crop while the lower producers have 86 to 87%. The high-return producers have a tighter calving season of 45 days or less with few beyond 60 days. The high-return group has calves that are 25 lbs. heavier at weaning than the average.

Finally, the records indicate ranches that wean and precondition their calves for 45 days usually yield the most return so long as the protocol is communicated to buyers.

The survey's analyst stated that spending more on bulls can pay off in the end. The numbers showed that bulls costing \$2501 to \$5000 returned \$865 per head while those costing \$5001 to \$7500 returned \$943 per head. They based those values on an average of 25 calves per year. As for cow longevity, the producers indicated they expect to get 7 or 8 calves from a bred heifer.

## **VACCINE STORAGE**

Since much of this letter has been about preconditioning and vaccinations are a fairly large part of a pre-con program let's finish with some vaccine storage thoughts.

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State, Retired Extension Specialist brought out a few things to think about. First, most biological products should be stored at 35 to 45°F. Always read the label to be sure of the suggested temperature range. Killed vaccines are especially susceptible to freezing and it can affect the animal's immune response.

Modified live viruses are more stable but can be inactivated if cycled above or below the required temperature range. Once the MLV's are mixed their effective life will be reduced to 1 to 2 hours. The temperature during that time should be maintained in the 35 to 45 degree range. Don't mix up more than you'll use in that time and keep it in the cooler until it goes in the animal as much as possible.

Arkansas and Idaho researchers found that 26.7% and 34% of refrigerators were within the acceptable temperature range 95% of the time. They suggest you keep a thermometer in your refrigerators to see if they are in the desired range for your vaccines.