

Merry Christmas &  
Happy New Year



## Production and Management Tips for Beef Producers

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### SOILS & CROPS CONFERENCE

The 96<sup>TH</sup> Lawrence County Soils & Crops Conference is set for January 2 at the University of Missouri Southwest Center, Mt. Vernon. The event starts at 6 pm with ribeye steak sandwiches grilled by the Southwest Missouri Cattlemen's Association. You should register on-line or by calling the Extension Center, Mt. Vernon at 417-466-3102 by December 27.

The topics this year are: weed control in cropland by Kevin Bradley, state weed science specialist; farm liability insurance, Ray Massey, state ag economist; and spraying ahead of insects and diseases in grain crops, Jill Scheidt, field specialist in agronomy. Updates from the Lawrence County Commission and the Southwest Research Center will be given.

### CALVING CLINIC

Two sessions on calving are scheduled for January 14 at the Southwest Center, Mt. Vernon. One begins at 9 am and ends at noon. The same talks will be repeated at 2 pm. The topics include: assisting with difficult deliveries; caring for the newborns, caring for the cow and calf after birth; tube feeding stressed calves; and evaluation cow body condition.

Presenters include: Scott Pooch, Extension veterinarian from Columbia and regional field specialists in livestock. Please register by January 7 by contacting the Southwest Center 417-466-2148 or [southwest.missouri.edu/events](http://southwest.missouri.edu/events). Registration is required with no walk-ins allowed.

### STEER FEEDOUT POWER POINT

I had an item in last month's letter about our evaluation program on the 81 steers we sent to Iowa in early November. We've posted the power point presentation on-line for your viewing. Here's how you can find it. <http://swmobicia.com/>

### STATEWIDE SMS PRICES

There's always a lot of interest in comparing the averages on Show-Me-Select bred heifers around the state. Here are the results for the six sales:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>No. Head</u>	<u>Avg. Price</u>	<u>Avg. Weight</u>
11/15	Carthage	190	\$1672	1054
11/22	Kirksville	110	\$1811	1135
11/30	Kingsville	231	\$1768	1083
12/7	Fruitland	64	\$1651	1185
12/13	Farmington	112	\$1694	1134
12/14	Palmyra	229	\$2017	1198

Here's a post script on the sale at JRS. Two weeks after the sale a volume and repeat buyer called to tell me one of the heifers from the sale had a rectal prolapse. He wondered if that problem would be covered in the 30-day guarantee. I assured him that it should and to contact the seller and see what arrangements could be made.

In the process the buyer told me how pleased he was over the years with his Show-Me-Select purchases. He added that one of his early purchases had a calf that was coming backwards and he saved it. The next year, the same story with the SMS heifer, another breech delivery. Since then, that cow has given him 13 calves and no more breeches. She may be an exception but he sure likes the SMS program. By the way, he's from Arkansas. Another question he raised was whether the backwards birth was heritable and I assured him it was not.

Last week the buyer sent me a note indicating he and the seller had settled up and he was pleased. I'm sure he'll be back for more SMS heifers but if they all produce 15 calves it may be a while till he needs more replacements.

### WATCH EXTREMES

In my career I've seen a lot of changes in beef cattle breeding habits. As a young person in the 40's and early 50's the emphasis in beef cattle was placed on producing what was called "baby beef." Cattlemen wanted calves to be thick and deep. The deeper and thicker they were, the better. Two genetic problems arose from this drive and they were dwarfism and double muscling. Each condition was

bad and caused numerous herds to disperse due to “dirty” pedigrees and the recessive gene carrier animals.

These problems disappeared and over a number of years thanks to more moderate selection practices on frame and thickness. Much of this trend began about the time I graduated from college. The scale, frame measuring sticks and performance testing became tools of the trade for most breeders. In the mid-60’s and 70’s it seemed the British breeds were stuck in the 2, 3 and 4 frame score range.

The barrier was finally broken and 5 and 6 frames became numerous. In commercial herds European breeds boosted frame scores beyond that as crossbreeding was used extensively. I remember the largest frame bulls sold at the state tested bull sale in 1987-88 were Simmentals that were 10 plus. I’m sure in the 60’s there were 1 frames among compressed or dwarf carrier animals. Since each frame change represents 2 inches, going from a 1 to a 10 means a 20 inch increase in hip height at the same age.

The use of objective measurements in selection is important and today we can change cattle much quicker than we did thanks to genomics, objective measures and expected progeny differences (EPDs). This is good but could be bad if not used wisely. The bottom line is, be cautious in selecting extremes. Sure, that extreme animal helps bring change quicker but EPDs are powerful and will bring about change more quickly than you might imagine.

Extremes aren’t just about frame size and visual thickness. They’re about calving ease, birth weights, milk, ribeye size and scrotal circumference. The term “middle-of-the-road” may be a wiser choice to make as you make breeding decisions. I hear many saying selection for extremes in calving ease is resulting in smaller calves at birth and that carries through in weaning weights.

### **FOOL OR TRICK YOUR COWS**

I’m sure you don’t enjoy getting up in the middle of the night to check cows and heifers calving. Quite a few years ago a Canadian discovered that if you feed the expectant mothers late in the afternoon that a higher percentage of them would calve in the daylight hours. Research supports this and it also works on sheep. Recommendations are to start the late afternoon/evening feeding about 30 days prior to the beginning of calving season. Of course, if you have an abundance of stockpiled pasture to graze this trick may not work as well as if the females were in a dry lot.

If you can gracefully arrange to feed as much as you can about dark, especially to first-calf heifers, I think you’ll see a benefit from it.

### **JOE SAID**

Joe Horner, State Agricultural Business Specialist spoke at the Ag Lender’s Seminar earlier this month. His first comment regarding beef prices was that we have fewer cows, less calves and based on the traditional, 10-year cycle, there should be a trend towards higher calf prices. We have fewer heifers being retained for breeding and that was noticed this fall in the lower numbers of heifers in the Show-Me-Select bred heifer sales.

At the same meeting, budgets for the coming year were released. They may not suit your operation as they are designed for a 50 cow herd which is average for Missouri. This budget has both January to June and July to December calves. It’s assumed the owner buys replacement females. The other assumption for 2020 prices was based on fall 2019 price forecasts.

What does it cost to keep a cow each 365 days? I hear this a lot and it seems most cow owners just shake their heads and shrug their shoulders and say, “I don’t know.” So, at our Monett Beef Conference on February 4, we plan to have three cow owners share their numbers. Our budget shows for operating expenses an average cost of \$865.24 for end of year calving cows. Those calving the first half of the year show \$855.71 cost.

This is for budgeting purposes only and if your wife, brother, son, daughter or accountant comes up with a different value than use it as you plan for the future.

In fact you can develop your own personal enterprise budget by using the Missouri Beef Enterprise tool: <https://extensiondata.missouri.edu/Pro/Beef/Docs/MissouriBeefEnterprise.xlsx> The spreadsheet allows users to make a beef enterprise budget for a cow-calf, heifer or steer backgrounding operation.

The 2020 beef budget for the average producer doesn’t look very optimistic but since most of you are better than average you might make some money in 2020 on your calf crop. Unfortunately, if you add ownership costs such as depreciation, interest, insurance, taxes on breeding stock and capital items the total cost to keep the cow rises to \$1000.

The above budget uses a sale weight of 590 lbs. on steers and 550 lbs. on heifers. The percent calf crop weaned is 88% on fall calvers and 85% on first of the year calvers. Something no one ever figures is their own labor per cow. The budget figures 8 hours at \$14.97 per hour. If you figure you’re running cows just for fun and are donating your labor, you’ll feel better about the profitability of your cows.