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REMINDERS

The **Novel Fescue Workshops** scheduled for March 24 and 25 at Harrison, AR and Mt. Vernon has become a victim of Covid-19. It's unfortunate as these workshops have been most helpful in getting rid of some trouble-making fescue that's costing you more than you think. I know we'll never destroy all of the "hot" Kentucky 31 fescue but almost everyone has some acres that trouble your cattle with the tell-tale symptoms such as heat stress, low rate of gain, poor conception rates, fescue foot lameness and general unthriftiness.

All of the problems contribute to low profitability of your herd. If you plan to stay in the farming business and pass it along to young family members you'll find especially beneficial as you plan for the future converting some acres to a novel.

95th TESTED BULL SALE

There are 37 bulls entered in the upcoming sale, March 30 at the Springfield Livestock Marketing Center. As in the past, Angus dominate with 35 head and there is one black Gelbvieh and a red 62% Gelbvieh. Sale time is 7 pm. Bulls will be available to view by 1 pm. Your Extension field specialists in livestock will have a 30-minute "Buying Bulls by the Numbers" session at 5:30 pm to answer questions about EPDs, percentile rank, indexes, frame size and how to evaluate the bulls for use in your cow herd.

I stress, the more you know about the strengths and weaknesses of your cows the easier it will be to pick prospect bulls. Not everyone needs the "top number" bull. There's usually some very useful bulls scattered throughout the sale the will help many herds. The floor price for this sale is \$2250. Remember the sale order is set by the bull's age, from oldest to youngest. Some bulls with excellent EPDs will sell in the lower one-half of the sale just because they were born in December, 2018 or January, 2019.

Another tip is to review the percentile rank of the bulls or semen you've used in the last five years. This should help you analyze your cow herd's EPD strengths and weaknesses. However, if you buy your replacement cows or heifers it won't help you.

HAIR SCORE EPD

The American Angus Association released in February a new EPD for early hair shedding/heat tolerance. University of Missouri it's grad student, Harly Durbin were heavily involved in this research as were Mississippi State and North Carolina State. The data gathering dates back to 2011.

Over 14,465 scores from 8,642 individual cattle were collected. The data mostly came from herds in the Southeast and Midwest subjected to heat stress and/or grazing toxic fescue. It was found that hair shedding is moderately heritable at 0.42. That puts it between weaning weight and marbling. Using the Angus data, it's estimated that a moderate genetic correlation between a dam's hair shedding score and the weaning weight of her calf exists.

The American Angus Association's release showed about 270 bulls were in the group and the breed EPD average is +0.53. Therefore, animals with values less than +0.53 are considered breed improvers if you're interested in selecting for earlier shedding. I've looked over the listing of the bulls with much interest since back in 2007-08 and later I'd been taking notes on which bulls were producing slow-shedding progeny.

The 270 bulls are almost a who's who in the Angus breed so you might want to look the list over and see how some of the bulls you've used rank. The list shows the birth year going back to 1978. It next lists his hair score EPD, then his accuracy and finally the number of progeny that had been involved in the scoring.

The EPD's range from -0.14 (early shedder) to +1.17 (slow shedder). The accuracy also is fairly low on most bulls. The highest accuracy I saw was .86 on a bull that had 318 progeny evaluated which is very good. The research report bulls were A.I. permitted and had an accuracy of 0.40 or higher.

Age had a significant effect on hair shedding. Yearlings, 2-year-olds and 3-year-olds have higher average hair shedding scores when compared to mature cows.

HOW & WHEN TO SCORE

Since we have lots of heat stress and fescue toxicosis interest in southwest Missouri here are some items of interest linked to hair shedding scoring.

The scoring is done from mid-April to mid-June. A 1 to 5 scale is used. A 1 is an animal that is completely shed from front to back, top to bottom. I like to say, they're slick as a mole. A 2 is 75% shed with the hair along the underline of the animal. A 3 is 50% shed will be slick around the head and neck and along the top and down in the brisket. 4's have only lost her winter coat around the head and neck and that's a 25% shed animal. The 5's have not shed any of their winter coat. If I'm scoring, I often grab the hair just to see if those 4's and 5's are even close to shedding.

They advise that you should score the entire herd within 7 days so appropriate contemporary groups can be compared if you're turning the data into the Angus Association. Even if you have commercial, crossbred cattle you might "play" with hair scoring and compare their performance within your herd.

FIELD TRIAL OPPORTUNITY

The University of Missouri is recruiting 2500 Hereford and 2500 Red Angus heifers in a heifer puberty and fertility genomic research project. They may be registered or commercial, purebred or crosses. You must work with a trained veterinarian as reproductive tract scores, pelvic measurements and preg determination via ultrasound to estimate fetal age no later than 90 days after the start of the breeding season.

Heifers must have known birth dates and be weighed at a year or at the pre-breeding check, 30 to 45 days prior to the breeding season.

What's the reward for you? You'll receive free genomic-enhanced EPDs if you collect a DNA sample using a blood card or the Allflex Tissue Sampling Unit. If they're Red Angus you'll receive the Red Navigator results. If you're interested let me or your nearest Extension livestock field specialist know. This project begins immediately and will run until June 1, 2022.

THOUGHTS ON COW SIZE

A popular topic for some time has been whether cows are getting too big. There's general consensus that as we select

for more growth at 12 to 18 months, cow size will increase. Maybe we can blame the packers for part of this as they have increased the desired carcass weight markedly in the last 20 years. A commonly held thought has been that a steer's slaughter weight is going to be close to his dam's mature weight. Most steers now kill at around 1300 up to 1500 lbs.

At our KOMA Beef Conference Eric Bailey, MU and Dave Lalman, OSU made comments I'll share regarding cow size and your operation.

- If I select for smaller cows and light birth weights will the feedyards want my "tiny" calves?
- We can make big cattle with technology such as using AI, cull heavily, select replacements and sires using data.
- Don't forget heterosis.
- Do your bigger cows eat one or two more big bales of hay in the winter?
- Keep good records so you know what's going on at your place.
- Since 2006, average sale weights of calves in the northern states have plateaued but in the southern states the trend to heavier calves continues. Maybe good genetics are just now coming to our region.
- Select for "curve-bender" genetics. Those are easy calvers but grow fast once on the ground.
- Moderate milk and moderate size works. Angus cows do not need to come from 50-pound milk EPD sires.
- There is tremendous variation in cow feed intake and output of calf weight. Cow efficiency may be found in both large and small cows.

STEER FEEDOUT SIGNUP TIME

You may now register to enter 5 steers or more in the next Steer Feedout that is for calves born after July 1, 2019. Entry deadline is May 10 with actual delivery to the Joplin Regional Stockyards on June 2. After processing that day they will be delivered to a feedlot in southwest Iowa where they'll be finished as part of the Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity. The entry fee is \$20, non-refundable. All expenses made during the feeding period will be deducted from the final sale receipts.

If you would like to learn more about the strengths and weaknesses of your steers and whether they deserve a price premium when you sell, just put them in the Feedout.