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### **SMS BRED HEIFERS TO SELL**

We're keeping our fingers crossed the Show-Me-Select Bred Heifer Sale will go off as planned on May 15, 7 pm at Joplin Regional Stockyards. Numerous events have been cancelled or moved to a later date thanks to COVID-19. In fact, the Farmington SMS sale has moved to June 12 and the Fruitland sale to June 5.

Our JRS sale will offer 235 head of heifers due to calve from late August to early November. About 50% are black baldies or black mottled-faced heifers. 25% are black and 25% are reds. Most will calve at 24 months of age but a few will be closer to 30 months.

Beef cow numbers are on the increase, especially in Missouri. However, Oklahoma and Texas are still ahead of us. Missouri's cows did produce a larger calf crop in 2019 than OK, so we can brag about our better calf crop percent.

Anyway, if you or someone you know is in the market for nice heifers, here's a good chance to purchase heifers that have not been culled from someone's herd. The majority of those heifers are crossbreds of some kind so the heterosis factor should enable them to stay productive about a year longer than purebred.

The sale will be carried by DVAuction and if you wish to bid and buy you must check with JRS two days in advance. Please let my office know if you need a print catalog. You may also find one at <http://www.swmobcia.com/>

### **BULL SALE RESULTS**

COVID-19 did cause changes in the 95<sup>th</sup> All-Breed Tested Bull Sale at the Springfield Livestock Marketing Center on March 30. I and my livestock specialist coworkers did not attend. The crowd was smaller, of course, and the buyers signup sheet was about one-half normal size. However, the average price of \$3087 easily topped the two sales in 2019 when they averaged \$2903 and \$2818.

The floor price was \$2250 and \$5000 was tops for the night. One-half of the bulls went to repeat customers while five different individuals bought two bulls each. The ratio of 450 pound, Medium and Large Frame, 1 & 2 Muscle steer

calves was 4.1:1 this sale. That's about what it averages, year-in and year-out.

### **BULL CLINIC REVIEW**

Fewer bulls came to the 5 days of bull breeding soundness clinics in March. The total bulls evaluated was 155. That's well below our average of 225 the last few years. Rain and mud were given as the reason for the low turnout.

The percent of bulls passing the exam was 94.8% which is one of the better rates we've had. Normally we're in the 90% range. One thing that caught my eye was the lower body condition score of the bulls. The 155 bulls averaged 5.5. One year ago the average was 5.7. That's not a lot of difference but it seemed like I had a lot more 4's and even a few 3's which is a thin bull.

I keep track of the breed makeup of each bull in the program. One thing for sure the percent of Angus bulls continues to drop this time it was 24.5%. Coming in a close second was Red Angus with 19.4% of the bulls. Just four years ago 50% of the bulls were Angus and 9% were Red Angus. Following those breeds in popularity were SimAngus, Charolais and Polled and Horned Hereford.

About 50% of the bulls evaluated were Trich-tested and no positives showed up. If you've not had your bull or bulls tested, do it before turnout time. It will cost in the \$50 per bull neighborhood but that's cheap compared to the story I heard at one of the clinics. The fellow had a cow herd of less than 30 head and was expecting to have calves just any day back in February. When no calves showed up the veterinarian was called to preg check the herd and every cow was open. The bull was shooting blanks all last year.

### **BODY CONDITION SCORE**

Glenn Selk, OSU emeritus Extension Specialist included a revealing body condition score chart from work done by Dave Lalman when he was at Missouri. The table clearly shows that thin heifers or cows just don't rebred in time to calve back and maintain a 12-month calving interval.

Predicted number of days from calving to first heat as affected by body condition score at calving and body condition score change after calving in two-year-old beef cows. (Body condition score scale: 1 = emaciated; 9 = obese) Source Lalman, et al. 1997

Condition Score at calving	Body Condition Score Change in 90 Days After Calving						
	-1.0	-0.5	0	+0.5	+1.0	+1.5	+2.0
BCS = 3	189	173	160	150	143	139	139
BCS = 4	161	145	131	121	115	111	111
BCS = 5	133	116	103	93	86	83	82
BCS = 5.5	118	102	89	79	72	69	66

This clearly illustrates why our Show-Me-Select heifer program strives to sell only 5 or better BCS heifers. The past wet winter and the low quality hay fed will result in you having a strung out calf crop next year. As we get ready for hay season do all you possibly can to harvest and store the best hay you possibly can. Hopefully that hay will keep your bred females in a 5 or better BCS.

### CALLERY PEAR TREES

No, I've not become a horticulture specialist but I do want you to be aware of a new threat to agriculture. It's the Callery pear that you've probably called a Bradford pear. It's fast-growing and has been used as an ornamental tree. It is a native of China. The last few years you may have noticed it early in the spring with white blooms. Well it has gone rogue and become a real pest in the countryside near areas where it was used in landscaping. The Missouri Conservation magazine in the latest issue listed it along with sericea lespedeza as a "least wanted" invasive species. Small trees can be removed by hand but take the root too. Larger trees must be cut and the stump treated.

### HOWELL WHEATON THOUGHTS

Many of you knew our Missouri Extension Forage Specialist back in the last century, Howell Wheaton. Howell lives just west of Columbia and still runs an Angus herd. For a number of years, he's written a column in Missouri Angus Trails magazine. His last two articles have focused on fescue's importance to the beef industry in Missouri and how you can cope with it without totally renovating all of your "hot" fescue acres. He makes a lot of sense and if you have a chance, look up his articles. They should show up on Google under "Hay and Cows and Chaff and Stuff".

One item concerning fescue that brought back a memory to me was he said a grizzled, older cowman in the Ozarks told him years ago about Ky31 fescue, "a poor grass that you got is a lot better than a good grass that you ain't got."

### HOT VS NOT FESCUE

Reference was made a few years back about comparing cattle eating habits on hot compared to non-toxic fescue.

The study was from the University of Georgia and helps explain the difference in animal performance.

As you look this over, can't you imagine the grad students time and effort in gathering the data. It's certainly revealing why hot fescue gives poor performance yet in spite of the problems, fescue has made southwest Missouri cow country.

	<u>Non-Toxic</u>	<u>Toxic</u>
% Time Grazing	41.9	36.1
% Time Ruminating	34.7	32.4
% Time Idling	23.4	31.5
Bites per Minute	56.3	48.4
Bites per Day	33,973	25,024

A fescue study I'd like to see, is to monitor grazing habits of cattle. Do some cattle have the ability to "graze smarter" and sort out hot fescue? When cattle awake each morning do they go to the same spot in the pasture to graze as they did the day before? As we study cattle's genomic makeup regarding shedding and performance on fescue how much is a result of their upbringing by their dams? We know a cow is supposed to be able to give her calf an alert to not graze certain toxic plants, does that apply to fescue? What about fetal programming and fescue? The above thoughts can run through your mind as you check your cattle. See if you can pick out the smart grazers.

### JOHN MASSEY PASSES

John passed away March 27. John was one of my idols. He served as Missouri Extension livestock specialist from 1961 until 1992 when he moved north of Aurora on Highway K. He developed the Missouri on-farm beef performance testing program and the all-breed performance tested bull sale which began in 1963. He was innovative and ahead of the time with the introduction of using ultrasound measuring for backfat and ribeye area in cattle and hogs. He was a strong advocate for putting more frame on cattle in the 60's and helped develop the frame score system that's still in use today. Crossbreeding was another beef topic he promoted even though there were strong sentiments towards purebreeding at the time.

### SCOTT BROWN, VISIONARY

Scott Brown, Missouri Extension livestock marketing specialist spoke at the Stone County Livestock Forage Conference on February 6. As usual, I took notes, sorry Scott, here are some quotes.

- Corona Virus – pay attention to it!
- Everything in the cattle picture is positive, so good news beef producers.
- All cattle prices should be better in 2020. Fed cattle could hit a \$1.35 top.