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FLU VACCINATION ALERT

Have you received your flu vaccination yet? I got mine in early October and the University is encouraging us to remind our clientele of the importance of getting a flu shot in light of the crazy year with the COVID pandemic.

FEED EFFICIENCY EVALUATION AT SW CENTER

I mentioned in the October letter that local folks will have a chance to enter their spring, 2020 beef heifers in an evaluation program using the GrowSafe feed system at the Southwest Research Center. There's more certainty this month and if you'd like to enter some of your heifers act quickly.

There are 80 slots available with a maximum of 10 feeding spots in each of 8 GrowSafe units. You may enter 1 or more heifers if they have been weaned at least 45 days. They must all have received two rounds of IBR, BVD, PI3, BRSV with the second one a modified live dose. They must be OCV for Brucellosis. Two doses of blackleg must be included. They must be negative tested for BVD PI, be polled or dehorned and healed.

The heifers will be delivered to the SWRC, Mt. Vernon in early December. Upon arrival they will be given a RFID tag, boosted for IBR, BVD and blackleg and treated for internal and external parasites. The actual test period for residual feed intake evaluation will be 21 days for warmup and 42 days actual test.

You're all wondering what this will cost. I admit it's not cheap and will cost \$400 per heifer. Only individual dry matter intake will be calculated. We were hoping it could include EPD development but we do know the breed associations support the evaluation.

Please act quickly if you're interested. You may call me or better yet the Southwest Center at 417-466-2148. The target ration will be mostly forage with enough supplement to support an average daily gain of 1.75 to 2 lbs. per day. You'll get the heifers back in time to breed next spring.

University of Missouri System, Lincoln University, U.S. Department of Agriculture & Local University Extension Councils Cooperating

HORN FLY TOLERANCE WORK

The University of Wyoming is conducting studies with beef cattle and horn flies. I saw in a High Plains Journal article how they're going about determining the genetic differences in animals and their tolerance to horn flies.

The article said that when horn flies pierce the hide of the cattle, they inject an anti-coagulant to help free the flow of blood. This piercing disturbs the animal so they stop grazing, swing their head, switch their tail all of which reduces their grazing time. The researchers found some animals had well over 200 flies per side while others only had four flies. I'm anxious to follow that work as we know from our own observations that some cows are fly magnets.

WHAT'S NEW IN SW MO?

We now have wind farms in Lawrence, Dade, Barton and Jasper counties. They're not operational but they dot the countryside. So far, the cattle don't seem to mind them. Unfortunately, the turbines do not provide much shade or windbreak protection for the cattle that live around them.

GIVE ALFALFA A CHANCE

Many of you may need to buy some hay this winter. If you do, I encourage you to consider buying alfalfa or alfalfa-grass hay or haylage. Over the years, cattlemen consistently report that feeding some alfalfa along with fescue hay seems to allow their cattle to show improvement in gain, reproduction and appearance.

Alfalfa isn't cheap but compared to the nutrient makeup of it and a bale of mature, outside-stored fescue that costs \$30 to \$40 per 800 to 900 lbs., I'd bet on the alfalfa to help the most for the investment.

You may feel that you'll spoil your cattle by giving them alfalfa every few days. Protein supplements do not have to be fed daily. Most straight alfalfa hay runs 20% crude protein. That's also about the protein content of many protein supplements that cost more per pound of protein

than alfalfa. By the way, red clover and other legume hays can also be used to reduce the negative effects of fescue that may be high in ergot alkaloids such as ergovaline.

OTHER TIPS FOR WINTER

Here's a checklist of sorts for cow-calf and stocker operators as we head into the winter.

- Include an ionophore in your supplement concentrates. The more common ones used in this area are Rumensin and Bovatec.
- If your forage is below 8% crude protein, you probably need additional protein for most classes of cattle. Do the math and determine what each pound of protein costs.
- Salt is still a fairly efficient way to limit supplement intake.
- Sort cattle into groups as best you can. Don't run fall calvers with those calving after the first of the year.
- Don't run open heifers and first-calvers with adult cows as they have distinctly different needs.
- Body condition score (BCS) at least a few of your cows. A 5 and 6 score which means adult cows are a little fleshy with maybe only a slight showing of the last pair of ribs on the 5's.
- A BCS change of 1, such as going from a 4 (several pairs of ribs visible) to a 5 is about an 80 to 100 pound change. It will take several pounds of feed per day to make that change.
- Don't feed or encourage parasites, both internal and external. Don't wait until cows start rubbing hair off before you treat for lice.
- Test some of your forage and compare the results with the nutritional needs of the cattle you're feeding. Regional field specialists in livestock can provide you with the nutrient requirements for a wide variety of classes of cattle.
- Don't waste hay by feeding in muddy areas, using bale rings without a solid skirt around the bottom.
- Don't pay too much for convenience feeds.

FESCUE FOOT FORECAST

Over the years, it seems fescue foot outbreaks occur right after Thanksgiving. Research has concluded the toxins, like ergovaline escalates in rank Kentucky 31 fescue, fall growth. This is especially true if high levels of nitrogen from commercial fertilizer or poultry litter has been applied in the fall. It seems to be worst following a dry, late summer.

Well, we did have a dry late summer in much of this area, but we didn't see a lot of stockpiled Ky31 growth. The other ingredient is very cold weather in late November and early December. Since rank growth didn't occur in most pastures in the area this fall, I doubt if we see a serious problem with fescue foot this year.

Of course, there's an old adage that "all signs fail in dry weather" and we are still generally dry. That will be my excuse if you witness true fescue foot between now and January 1.

I encourage you to still keep your eyes open beginning now for cattle that are ouchy on their rear feet and legs. There may be some swelling in the ankle and dew claw area and the limping will be mostly seen early in the morning when the cattle come off their beds. Some have described their appearance as "acting like they're walking on eggs". They may stop and flip their rear leg and possibly reach around and lick their lower limb. They obviously have discomfort from the poor circulation in that extreme part of their body.

What do you do if you suspect you have one or more animals affected? The first thing is get them off the pasture they've been in for a few weeks. You just need to remove the affected ones at first and continue to watch for other suspects each day. You may think they need to be given antibiotics and if you do that and they get better then maybe it was true foot rot and not fescue foot.

Fescue foot doesn't affect a high percentage of the herd, but I've witnessed up to 20% may show the classic symptoms. A small percentage may actually develop a ring around the top of the hoof, even up higher on the lower leg where the skin breaks and the lower portion of the leg is lost.

The true fescue foot dilemma is a gruesome mess but may not be as much of an economic loss as many herds experience year in and year out with poor animal gains, reproduction losses, market discounts for unthrifty appearance.

If you choose to live with "hot" fescue, then dilute it with other feeds, like legume pasture and hay. The silver bullet has not been found as a cure for fescue toxicosis. I continue to add to my list of "cures or remedies" given by lots of folks. They range from farmers, veterinarians, feed reps, university researchers, extension folks, breed reps and the list is now up to 128.

If you have a remedy that you think is not on my list, let me know.