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### **NOVEL FESCUE WORKSHOP**

An in-person workshop at the University of Missouri Southwest Research Center, Mt. Vernon will be held March 23. The day-long event begins at 8:45 am and runs until 4:15 pm. There's a variety of speakers and topics that explain fescue toxicosis and how to effectively convert a toxic pasture to a novel stand of fescue. Space will be limited so reserve your seat at: <https://grasslandrenewal.org/workshops/> or call the Southwest Center, 417-466-2148. Face masks are required.

### **BULL CLINIC SCHEDULE**

If it's almost March, it's time to schedule appointments to have bulls examined for breeding soundness. It could be more important than ever this year considering the sub-zero weather we've had earlier this month. Frost-bitten scrotums, prepuces, etc. could be a problem we find this year. If you run Brahman cross bulls, it could be especially bad unless they were in a well-protected, bedded area. Here's the schedule for the clinics.

March 2	Barry County Vet Service Cassville	847-2677
March 16	Dake Veterinary Clinic, Miller	452-3301
March 18	Animal Clinic of Diamond, Diamond	325-4136
March 24	Countryside Animal Clinic, Aurora	678-4011

You may call to get an appointment. We're fortunate to have a number of veterinary clinics in the region who do a good job of performing BSEs on bulls so make your appointment with your vet.

Over the years we have found between 10 and 15 percent of the bulls to be questionable as satisfactory potential breeders. If they're not in good shape on their BSE then you'll end up with a strung out calf crop next year or maybe no calves at all.

### **KEEP BIRTH DATES**

I imagine most of you keep a pretty decent record of what cow had a calf on a given date. In the last year or so, it seems beef repro specialists target to have about two-thirds

of your calves born in the first 21 days of the calving season. That means your bulls need to be ready to go on the first day of the breeding season.

Of course, the other critical part of the puzzle is the females as they need to be cycling at bull turnout. As a rule this will happen if the cows are in a 5 or 6 body condition score and first-calf heifers are at least a 6 BCS. The recent cold spell and the fact that many were short of hay you may be faced with slow cycling cows and heifers this year.

I encourage you to increase the energy intake of your cattle so you don't sacrifice too many days on getting your cows bred back. Cows that breed back in the first 21 days this year will help boost herd weaning weights by roughly 40 pounds per head on those calving early next year versus those calving in the second and later 21-day period.

### **THAT'S WILD**

I'm not talking about an animal with a temperament score of 5 or 6. I'm talking about a research project that Jared Decker, MU animal genomics researcher and an electrical engineering/computer science researcher at MU that will team up to provide a better understanding of how a herd's environment and management impact productivity.

They will predict factors such as cow size, surface area to volume ratio, skeletal structure, fat resources and hair coat using 3-D image data. Their goal is to optimize efficiency in feeding and how much energy is coming out in heat or used for the animal to grow. They'll use high-tech cameras to capture images of cows using a special cattle chute that includes sensors that create 3D models and thermal images of the animals.

Jared has received a \$500,000 grant from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture for the work. I can hardly wait to see what an EPD from that study will look like.

## **CATTLE PRODS & PACEMAKERS**

I had a different device implanted on February 4. I “think” the acronym is ICD or implantable cardioverter defibrillators. Back in June, they had installed something different but decided I need the ICD.

Long story shortened, is in June they told me things to stay away from which didn’t seem like I was too worried about. After the February event I actually was bored and read a lot of the manual. Included was almost 12 pages of items to avoid close contact with from electrical or magnetic items.

Most of the items gave me no concern as you must be no closer than 6 inches to a house arrest bracelet. There was no distance required for a digital scale, thus no problem if I’m weighing weaned calves or Show-Me-Select heifers. The most surprising item on the list that I might encounter was a cattle prod. I must stay at least 12 inches from those. So this is fair warning, don’t get closer than 12 inches of my chest if you have some stubborn cattle we’re working.

## **TEMPERAMENT SCORING CATTLE**

If you’ve ever worked beef cattle, you know there is a difference in their attitude. You’ve probably had those that were slow-moving and easy-going with a few that border on “killers” with attack behavior.

Those latter types are the ones you look for a good reason to cull. Unfortunately, if it’s a good producing cow that calves every twelve months and raises an above average calf you may keep her around for several years waiting for her to trip up.

Cattlemen today realize life’s too short to put up with ornery, trouble-making cows, bulls, steers or heifers. In keeping with modern times and conveniences we even have some breeds that have gone the extra step to develop an expected progeny difference (EPD) to help make culling and replacement selection more objective.

The breed leader in the docility EPD project was the North American Limousin Foundation when they unveiled their program in 1994. Some of you who were around the Limousin breed remember them as being a breed that probably could stand some “genetic calming” as they were somewhat athletic. The same could be said for a few other Continental breeds and of course British breeds have a few outliers that can get excited.

Up until that time, temperament wasn’t viewed as a trait to evaluate. I did find in the 5<sup>th</sup> edition – 1986 Beef Improvement Federation Guidelines for Uniform Beef Improvement Programs, a reference to temperament codes as simply satisfactory, fair and poor. They did not quantify what number value to put on them. There was a Limousin

breeder I weighed, graded and frame scored their weaned calves and I believe we just scored them as 1, 2 or 3 in 1994-95.

From that 1994 – beginning the beef industry has come a long way in evaluating something that is often referred to as a convenience trait. Many cattlemen now may even look at the docility EPD as seriously as calving ease, growth, carcass traits and milk production. It’s even included in some genomic evaluations which gives the EPD greater accuracy.

The evaluation standards have definitely become more sophisticated. The scale runs from 1 to 6. The following is a brief description of each score based on the BIF Guidelines.

1 = Docile – Mild disposition – exits chute calmly, does not pull on the headgate in chute.

2 = Restless – Quieter than average – exits chute promptly – may try to pull back on headgate – some flicking of tail.

3 = Nervous – Temperament is manageable – moderate, struggling, movement and tail flicking – exits chute briskly.

4 = Flighty (wild) – Jumpy, out of control – struggles violently – continuous tail flicking – defecates and urinates during processing – exits chute wildly.

5 = Aggressive – Similar to a 4 but with added aggressive behavior – extreme agitation and continuous movement including jumping and bellowing – exits chute frantically.

6 = Very aggressive – Thrashes about or attacks wildly in small places, pronounced attack behavior.

Docility scores are recommended to be given at weaning and/or yearling time when they’re worked through a chute. Be consistent when and under what conditions and who does the scoring. The steers we send to the Missouri Steer Feedout at the Tri-County Steer Carcass Futurity. in Iowa are scored each time they run them through the chute. Their close out, data, based on thousands of steers, shows a loss of \$62 per head for those with a score of 3.0 or higher. We generally consider the heritability of temperament to be in the 35 to 40 percent range. This is considered moderate and if you feel you need to put more pressure on the trait you should be able to make progress.

Although, I do not score all of the Show-Me-Select heifers, I’ve done enough to say the trait is very repeatable. SMS heifers are not required to be exceptionally calm. However poor dispositions and aggressive behavior is not acceptable.

Even if you’re not a purebred breeder, a SMS producer or have steers in the Feedout you might use the docility/temperament scores to make cattle-working a little quieter, less dreaded, more Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) acceptable and more profitable.