

*Eldon Cole*

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### GRAZING SCHOOL SCHEDULE

Here are the upcoming grazing school particulars.

- **Bolivar**, May 4, 6, 10, 11 and 15.  
Contact 417-345-2312, ext. 3
- **Crane**, April 27, 28 and 29.  
Contact 417-723-8389
- **Mt. Vernon**, May 25, 26 and 27.  
Contact 417-466-2148
- **Neosho**, June 8, 9 and 10.  
Contact 417-451-1007, ext. 3

The fall series will be in September and October. All schools, except the one at Bolivar are daytime schools.

### BULL SALE REVIEW

The 97<sup>th</sup> All-Breed Performance Tested Bull Sale wasn't exactly All-Breed as we only had 29 Angus. Buyer interest was good as the 29 bulls averaged \$4231. The sale top was \$10,250 on an entry from Beau Davis, Strafford. The buyer was Kenton Teague, Willard. Johnson Farms, Springfield was the volume buyer with 6 head purchased that averaged \$5508.

The sale average was the sixth highest ever, out of 97 sales. The Davis bull was the second highest bull to sell ever. The record seller was \$13,000 and he brought that back in 2016 when prices soared for a few sales.

A long time ago I started keeping track of the bull sale average and compared it to the price of a good feeder steer. At first I used a 450 pound steer, the same week of the bull sale in Kansas City since there were no market reports from southwest Missouri. In the very early sales, the average bull price averaged 3.3 times the average price of a 450 lb. steer in KC. Then we hovered around 4 to 1 and changed markets, first Springfield then to Springfield-Joplin as reported by the Missouri weekly market news summary. The last two sales we've hit 5.4:1, on average.

I doubt if the bidders on the seats give much thought to that comparison but it's interesting to follow the trends. I know the sellers usually seem pretty happy after we have a 5:1 sale. We may need to throw out these last two sales as people kept saying the prices for the bulls were high thanks to the stimulus checks and/or the drought assistance checks people were receiving.

### SHOW-ME-SELECT SALE

The next, Show-Me-Select bred heifer sale in this part of the state will be May 21, 7 pm at Joplin Regional Stockyards, Carthage. We've catalogued 250 head with most expected to calve from the last week or so of August to the end of October. The breed breakdown is about one-third each of black, black baldies and red heifers.

The heifers have jumped through the hoops and over the hurdles since they were weaned. Most will calve around 24 months of age and will probably average weighing in the 1025 to 1050 pound range on the 21<sup>st</sup>. A calving date will be projected to the day but there is no guarantee going with that date. The veterinarian's projection is pretty close however, when they use ultrasound to estimate calving dates before the heifers are less than 90 days along.

The only guarantee the SMS consignors offer is that if a heifer loses a pregnancy or comes up in heat within 30 days of the sale date the buyer will replace her or refund the money. The sale will be on computer to view as a preview or the sale itself at [www.joplinstockyards.com](http://www.joplinstockyards.com).

The sale will have a mix of veteran consignors and also several folks who are in the sale for fewer than five sales. Remember., those heifers have met the same standards for performance, health and some are Tier Two eligible. Four owners have genomic tested their heifers to expand their genetic profile which let's buyers know more about what they're buying. See you at the sale.

### FESCUE WORKSHOP THOUGHTS

Have are a few one-liners of sorts regarding fescue management. They were mentioned by speakers at the workshop in March at Mt. Vernon.

- If you make haylage from toxic fescue, the haylage preserves the ergot alkaloids so it is not a solution to toxicity.
- Novel fescue stand may be damaged if disc mowers are set too low (under 3-5 inches), the first year.
- Even mature stands of Ky31 can be harmed by disc mowers when set under 3 inches.

- When converting from Ky31 to a novel variety, begin by only converting about 10 percent a year.
- One spray treatment, then plant a novel, will not work. It will take at least two spray treatments.
- Stripping Ky31 fescue seed heads by cattle in May can spread the endophyte to a novel stand unless a 2 to 3 day waiting period is followed.
- Lamb birth weights are much lower when the ewes are fed fescue seed. The trend has also been noted in cows.

### **CALVING SEASON 2022**

Calving season length has been shortened by a number of you and that's a good plan. Many may start out with never taking the bull away from the herd. But it seems interest in shortening the season has really started to catch on. A realistic target is to have a 60-day breeding season.

Due to the rough, mid-February 2021 some of you are now planning to start your breeding season on June 1. That may sound good on paper, but not so good if June turns very summer-like. Bull fertility, when on "hot" fescue, can be reduced and they can be less active. The result is, they'll string out the 2022 calf crop. When the calves come later, they likely will weigh less at weaning.

So, what seems so simple, like turning the bulls with the cows on June 1, can end up costing you pounds and pregnant cows. Of course, turning the bulls out today, April 20, can put you at risk of bad weather come early February, 2022. I'll try to remember to revisit this item next calving season, in the meantime good luck on reducing the length of your breeding/calving season.

### **ASK THE CATTLE**

I saw an article in the March issue of Hay & Forage Grower that Jaymelynn Farney, extension beef specialist at Kansas State had contributed that caught my eye. The bottom line of the article was to evaluate the taste preference of Holstein heifers for a variety of cover crops.

Included were three general categories of plants: preefreeze for fall and winter annuals; postfreeze for winter annuals; summer annuals. The test animals had never been exposed to any of the forages. They used video to monitor the selection of the forages in the various tubs.

Since we're approaching the planting season, I'll review the order of preference and comments for the eight forages. The top three in order were forage sorghum, sorghum sudan and pearl millet. The sorghums were preferred over millet. They thought the millet might have

a higher nitrate level, but testing all three, the millet was the lowest in nitrates. Close observation showed the millet had a "hairy" leaf underside while the sudans were smooth. Another idea was the sudans both had the brown midrib (BMR) trait which could have made them more palatable.

The middle choices were sunflower and sunn hemp. The least preferred were okra, mungbean and safflower. These studies were "spot" tests for two days. Jaymelynn points out that cattle can learn to eat less desirable feeds so if exposed to these forages over the summer there could be some differences in selectivity.

Another interesting project in the University of Nebraska's Sandhills Lab involves the impact of milk production on cow-calf productivity, grazing behavior and profitability. They'll be tracking the movement of 30 cow-calf pairs, taking milk samples, fecal samples and time spent nursing.

Not to be outdone, the University of Missouri has their own fascinating project. The unit is now at the Southwest Research Center and will monitor genotype and methane emissions from the University's cow herd over the next three years.

### **MISSOURI STEER FEEDOUT**

The deadline for entering the next steer feedout is May 10. An entry consists of at least 5 steer calves born after July 1, 2020 and weighing at least 500 pounds.

The steers will be loaded out on June 1 and head to a feedlot in southwest Iowa. In this part of the state, loadout will be at Joplin Regional. Other loading arrangements will be made after May 10.

The entry fee due on May 10 is \$20 per head. All other feed, hauling and lot charges will be deducted from the sale of your carcasses at the end of the feedout. If you have 10 or more steers entered, you can receive a cash advance once the steers are processed in Iowa.

Why should you enter? To learn more about what kind of feeder animal you're putting out. Do they deserve a premium or a discount? If you direct market, locally will your customers be happy? If your cattle perform well and we get a strong market you might even make some money.