Regional Beef Notes
Summer 2010

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Pounds Matter

With high feeder cattle prices this spring we have seen a lot of young lightweight cattle marketed at the Stanly County Livestock Market. On June 2, 2010, 400-445 steers averaged 425 pounds and brought an average of 117.95 per CWT-that’s $501.29. And 500-545 steers averaged 521 pounds brought $111.74 for a total of $582.17 average per head, $81 more than the 4 weight counterparts. The bottom line is that pounds matter whether you are selling on the regular weekly auction, graded feeder cattle sale, Value Added BQA sale, or marketing truckloads.

The big question is how we put those pounds on our feeder calves efficiently and there is not one single answer for everyone. Do we rely on the dam’s milk only or are we creep feeding, creep grazing, or weaning and preconditioning our calves? The key may be in the timing of our marketing these calves and using the resources that are the most economic while at the same time providing adequate nutrition to maximize growth potential. If we are relying on the cow then genetics is critical and also the availability of quality forage for milk production is also of great importance. For example, pastures of endophyte infected fescue in July and August when the plants are under stress and the endophyte is working it’s hardest is a hard time in a cow’s life especially if she is nursing a calf with any size at all. Supplemental feeding could be the means to nutrition and maximizing growth potential during this period and can be accomplished in various ways: planting warm season annuals, creep feeding, creep grazing, or weaning the calves.

That’s when we always hear: “But I can’t afford to feed them.” With beef prices high and forecasted to remain strong into early September, it makes better sense to feed them now than it has in a long time. Whether it’s grazing these calves on quality forage or feeding commodity blend concentrates or a combination of the two, maximizing pounds gained when we sell by the pound is
important. Record keeping during this process is the only way to know if what we are doing makes sense financially. What is going to be my cost of gain? If the costs to add a pound of beef is less than what the feeder cattle will bring per pound then it makes sense to feed. For example, a commodity blend of corn gluten and soy hulls costs around $0.08 per pound. Feed conversion on average genetics will be 8 pounds of feed to gain one pound of beef for a cost per pound of $0.64. As long as your feeders will bring more than $0.64 per pound then it makes sense to feed them and in fact is a missed opportunity if you don’t. What about grazing? What’s that cost? Do I need to put a value on my time and add a cost per hour for my labor? These are all questions you have to ask yourself and determine the answers to in order to know if it makes sense. All of these variables are why there is not a “cook book recipe” to the beef cattle business. If you need assistance in working on your farm’s “recipe” contact your local extension agent. Remember when you sell by the pound, pounds matter and dollars per head is what you put in your pocket when all is said and done.

Reproduction has the greatest impact on cow herd profitability of any management area. It has been estimated by several different sources that a one percent improvement in reproductive performance generates three times the return of a one percent improvement in growth or physical performance. Yet many cow-calf producers leave much of their reproductive management to chance.

Varied research sources document that fewer than 16%-20% of beef producers utilize pregnancy diagnosis in their cowherds. The general practice is after weaning a calf, producers wait for the cow to calve again to determine if she is pregnant. If a controlled breeding and calving season is practiced, there will be a very defined window to wait on. However, if calving occurs over many months or even year round open cows many times slip through the cracks and end-up having a very negative impact on herd profitability.

For many fall calving herds this is the time of year when calves are being weaned. That makes it a perfect time to pregnancy check cows, because with her calf weaned she really has no other reason to stay around unless she is pregnant. The advantage of identifying those open cows is that you can save on their feed bill. Fifty-five to seventy percent of the costs of keeping a cow are nutrition related. Savings there have a very positive impact on herd profitability. Even during this time of year while those dry girls go to pasture, there is still nutritional costs. All the grass she eats could be eaten by a pregnant cow or growing calf.

Three methods are available to pregnancy evaluate a cow. They are rectal palpation, transrectal ultrasonography and blood testing. Each method has advantages and disadvantages. Different costs are associated with each. Talk with your veterinarian or extension agent about what they can offer you for your herd.

Brood cows that are not pregnant cost you money. Spending just a little can save you a lot. Think about pregnancy evaluating your cows this year.
What's Wrong with my Watering Hole?
Jamie D. Warner, Extension Agent, Agriculture, Montgomery County Center

If you are noticing green, floating material in your pasture pond during this time of year, you are not alone. Chances are this floating green mess is one of two things: duckweed or watermeal. These plants seem to disappear in the late fall, but they overwinter on the bottom waiting until the spring to resurface. Both plants reproduce quickly so it is important to take action promptly. Please refer to the bulleted list below for help identifying and treating the problem in your pond. For more information on these plants or any other aquatic weeds and their control, please contact your local Cooperative Extension Office. As always, when using chemicals to control weeds, make sure to follow the directions on the label and observe the fishing, swimming, and drinking restrictions.

Duckweed
- Free floating
- 1/8 to ¼ inch in width
- Roundish in shape
- Single (hair-like) root hanging from each plant
- Recommended Control Methods: Diquat or Fluridone

Watermeal
- Free floating
- Less than 1mm in diameter
- Rootless
- Feels gritty when rubbed between fingers
- Recommended Control Method: Fluridone

Foot Rot in Cattle
Tiffanee Conrad-Acuña, Extension Agent, Agriculture, Richmond County Center

Foot rot is a serious disease of cattle involving swelling and lameness of one or more feet. Either injury or softening of the skin between the toes by puncture wounds or continuous exposure to wet conditions are necessary to provide entrance points for infectious agents. This infectious bacteria enter the wound and produce toxins that cause decaying of the infected tissues. This bacteria can almost always be found in the environment and can survive away from the animal anywhere from one to ten months. The first signs of foot rot are lameness, swelling of the interdigital skin, and an increased body temperature. Eventually, the interdigital skin cracks open, revealing a foul-smelling, decaying, whitish-yellow material. Diagnosis of foot rot can be made by a thorough examination of the foot, looking for the characteristic signs. Around 20% of all lameness issues in cattle are actually foot rot. There are several other diseases that cause lameness and are often confused with foot rot. Cattle grazing endophyte infected fescue pastures that develop fescue toxicity, causing loss of blood circulation to the feet, which ends up in lameness, are sometimes mistaken as having foot rot as well. Producers need to work with their Veterinarian for the best treatment options. Treatment
should always begin with cleaning and examining the foot to establish that lameness is actually due to foot rot. At this time, a topical treatment should be applied. Some very mild cases will respond to topical therapy only. However, most cases require the use of antimicrobial therapy. LA 200, penicillin, and Tylan 200, are examples of over the counter treatments. Naxcel and Albon are antimicrobials restricted to the use by the order of a veterinarian. The standard footbaths such as 10% zinc sulfate or copper sulfate can be somewhat effective in preventing the disease. Please call your local Extension Agent if you have questions about foot rot.

2010 Norwood Area Feeder Cattle Sales Dates
July 15
July 22 – Value Added BQA
August 19
September 9 – Value Added BQA
September 16
Consignments required - Call 704.983.3987

Calendar of Events
July 14, 3-5 p.m. — 2 hour credit X - Private Applicator - Anson County Extension Office, 501 McLaurin St., Wadesboro. To register call 704-694-2415 or for more information contact Aimee Marshall. For more information on other credits in our area please call the Anson County Extension Office at 704-694-2915.
Aug. 10, 7 p.m. — Anson County Cattlemen’s Association meeting located at the Anson County Extension Center.