Beef Meetings

There will be a Beef Producers Meeting on Thursday, February 9, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. at Brush Creek Farm in Alleghany County. This is a joint meeting of several counties. Dr. Mark Alley, DVM from the NC State College of Veterinary Medicine will be the speaker. He will be addressing some new Pink Eye concerns and will also be doing a Cattle Handling demonstration. This is a great educational opportunity to learn new things, meet with other area cattlemen, and enjoy a good meal. You must register for this meeting by February 6 in order for us to make meal plans. To register, please call the Surry County Extension office at 336-401-8025.

Pasture Walk

- February 13, 2012
  - In Yadkin County at Brad Story’s Farm
    - 9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
  - In Surry County at Mike Jones’s Farm
    - 1:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Please call the Surry County Extension office at 336-401-8025 to register by February 10th.

Accommodation Statement

For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact the Surry County Extension office at 336-401-8025, no later than five business days before the event.

Disclaimer

Recommendations for the use of agricultural chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by North Carolina Cooperative Extension nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use agricultural chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Please be sure to obtain current information about usage regulations and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact your county Cooperative Extension agent.

Cattle Bowl

1. Approximately what percentages of feed energy and protein consumed by a cow is utilized for maintenance?
2. How many ribs does a cow have?
3. True or false: The energy requirements for a cow decrease during periods of extreme cold temperatures.
4. What is the term used for describing cattle that do not naturally have horns?
5. Which part of a cow’s stomach is used primarily for storage?
6. True or false: Over consumption of grain causes foundering in beef cattle.
7. The average gestation period for a beef cow is ____ days.
8. What is the average length of a beef cow’s heat cycle?
9. ADG stands for Average __________.
10. _____ is the term for moving cattle from pasture to pasture for more forage.

Quiz questions borrowed from: http://www.angus.org/njaa/contests/Quiz_Bowl_Study_Guide.pdf

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Grass Tetany Season is Around the Corner

Early spring is usually the peak period for the occurrence of grass tetany in lactating beef cows. The warm temperatures recently may hasten tetany problems this year. Grass tetany is caused by low blood levels of magnesium and is worsened by high levels of nitrogen and potassium and low levels of calcium and magnesium intake. The lush new growth of cool season perennials and annuals consumed by spring calving cows is a recipe for trouble. Heavy nitrogen and potassium fertilization intensify the problem. This makes it more of an issue where poultry litter is used routinely as a pasture fertilizer. Similar risks can be observed on pastures fertilized with other animal manures or bio-solids.

Grass tetany can be prevented by supplementing lactating cows with 0.5 - 1.0 ounces of supplemental magnesium per day during the high risk period. Magnesium is not effectively stored in the body, as such; supplementation is only cost effective during the high risk periods. There are several commercially high magnesium mineral options available from feed and farm suppliers across the state. Commonly called High-Mag blocks or mixes, these should contain about 14% magnesium with a targeted intake of 4 ounces per head per day. For small herds, it is usually more practical and easier to purchase these supplements than to mix ingredients.

Cattlemen also have the option of mixing their own magnesium-based mineral mix on the farm:

- 25% trace mineralized salt
- 25% dicalcium phosphate
- 25% magnesium oxide
- 25% corn or dried molasses

A mature cow needs to consume 4 - 5 ounces of the mineral mix daily. With this level of intake, a cow will receive 1.0 - 1.2 ounces of magnesium oxide daily. Magnesium oxide is about 60% magnesium, so cows will receive 0.6 - 0.7 ounces of magnesium daily from this mineral mix. In most situations this should control grass tetany. When using this mix or any High-Mag mineral mix, be sure to remove all other sources of salt from the cattle’s diet. Monitoring consumption of any magnesium supplement is important to insure that cattle are consuming the supplement at a level to provide protection. Magnesium oxide is an unpalatable mineral and the salt and corn/molasses are added in an effort to improve palatability and consumption. Monitoring intake will allow modification in the recipe. It is a mistake to believe that lower than expected consumption is due to a lack of need on the cow’s part. More likely it is an indication of the palatability of the mineral mix.

Other than palatability, low mineral consumption can be caused by poor mineral feeder placement or an inadequate number of feeders for the number of cows. Locate the feeders in the high traffic or loading areas and provide 1 feeder for every 20 cows. This will enable cows at the bottom of the herd packing order to consume enough minerals.
With the onset of bull buying season, having a systematic approach to finding and identifying the "right" bull is imperative. Bull selection is the most critical factor for genetic improvement in cow-calf herds, as the influence of the bull impacts both the immediate calf crop as well as future calf crops through the performance (and costs) of his daughters. Consequently, bull selection warrants careful planning and preparation, well in advance of any sale or visit from an AI representative.

Consider the following steps to assist in the bull-buying process:

1. Identify Herd Goals - Herd goals serve as the foundation for sire selection and provide guidance as to traits with the most relevance. Defining the production and marketing system, along with management strategies and environmental conditions are key factors that warrant consideration:
   - Will the bull be used on heifers, mature cows, or both?
   - Will replacement females be retained in the herd?
   - How will the calf crop be marketed (at weaning?, backgrounded?, retained ownership, sell females?)
   - What are the labor and management resources available?
   - What are the feed resources and environmental conditions of the operation?

2. Assess Herd Strengths and Weaknesses - Fundamental records are necessary to identify herd strengths and weaknesses. Basic performance parameters such as calving percentage, weaning percentage, weaning weights, sale weights, carcass merit, feed usage, etc., are necessary to serve as the basis for assessing areas of strength and those needing attention.

3. Establish Selection Priorities - Concentrate on those factors which stand to have the largest impact on profitability. Remember that income is derived from both current and future production, sales, and marketing sectors. Of critical importance is that the bull be from a reputable source which will stand behind his product. It may be necessary to look at several sources in order to find the correct bull.

4. Utilize Selection Tools - Once selection priorities have been established throughout the calving season, consider the following tools to assist in making genetic improvement. Genetic differences across breeds have been well established, and utilization of different breeds in a complimentary fashion through structured crossbreeding plans provide the opportunity for improvement in multiple traits. Most importantly, heterosis attained through crossbreeding has been shown to have significant favorable impacts on traits such as reproductive efficiency and cow longevity, which are critical for herd profitability. The limited ability to select for reproductive traits in the form of EPD’s further emphasizes the importance of capturing the value of heterosis.

   EPD’s are available for many traits of economic importance. The introduction of economic indexes which combine several related traits and their economic values into one prediction tool are available to assist with simultaneous improvement in multiple traits which impact areas such as carcass merit and post-weaning profit. Again, with the large number of EPD tools available, the critical step is to determine the EPD’s which are most important and establish benchmarks relative to each.

5. Establish Benchmarks - Several tools can be utilized to assist in the determination of EPD specifications. EPD values for current and past sires can be used as benchmarks. With these benchmarks, EPD specifications can be set to reflect the desired increase or moderation in performance for a particular trait. As an example, establishing a benchmark for milk EPD can be determined through the relationship between previous sires’ genetics for milk and the performance of his daughters.

6. Find Source - With the above defined, we can now begin to look at individual bulls. There are many sources of bulls that warrant consideration such as production sales, test stations, and private treaty sales. Of critical importance is that the bull be from a reputable source which will stand behind his product. It may be necessary to look at several sources in order to find the correct bull.

7. Do Your Homework - The first step to doing so is to evaluate the sale catalog, performance pedigree, and data. By examination of the bull’s performance record, determine which bulls meet the EPD and other specifications that have been established (and likewise eliminate those that do not meet the specifications). Be prepared to make trade-offs, as the perfect record may not be attainable. Do not be surprised or alarmed when the bulls you have high hoped appear scattered throughout the sale order. Remember to stick to the selection criteria and qualifications/specifications that have been identified and should be accomplished prior to departing for any sale.

Take a Look - Once the list...is narrowed to...bulls which meet the criteria, these bulls can be further evaluated and selection refined. Having a list of suitable bulls prior to arrival at the auction or farm will not only save time, but also assist in making sure the right bull for the situation is purchased. When narrowing the potential candidates on paper, the bulls can be evaluated for suitability of phenotypic traits and the potential candidate list shortened even further. Not all relevant traits have EPD’s (examples include disposition, foot soundness, fleshing ability, etc.), and must be evaluated visually.

Make a Sound Investment - For many cow-calf producers, purchasing a new bull is...relatively infrequent...This emphasizes the importance of selecting the right bull, particularly in a single sire herd. The value of the right bull cannot be underestimated.

Investments in good genetics will pay dividends both short and long term. Through the influence the bull has on both the calf crop as well as his daughters that are retained in the herd.

Manage the New Bull Properly - Equal importance is the care and management of the newly acquired bull. Proper management and nutrition are essential for the bull to perform satisfactorily during the breeding season. With the onset of breeding sires purchased as yearling bulls-management prior to, during, and after the first breeding season is particularly important. Plan ahead by acquiring a new yearling bull at least 60 to 90 days prior to the breeding season so that ample time is available to allow for adjustment to a new environment, commingling with other bulls, and getting the bull in proper breeding body condition.

What is Animal Agriculture Worth?

In an effort to estimate the economic impact of animal agriculture, the United Soybean Board funded an economic analysis conducted by Promar International that found 1.85 million jobs throughout the American economy in 2010 as a result of animal agriculture.

The United Soybean Board (USB) funded the study because domestic animal agriculture is "...by far the major source of demand for U.S. soybean meal, and future soybean demand is tightly linked to the health of those industries." According to USB, animal agriculture uses more than 50% of all soybeans in 2010, and that was the "principle driver of soybean processing, which also produces the soybean oil that is essential for the U.S. food industry." The report, Animal Agriculture Economic Analysis, found that in addition to 1.85 million jobs, animal agriculture (which includes beef cattle, hogs, broilers, turkeys, eggs, sheep, dairy and aquaculture) has a $289 billion impact on total output in the economy. They also found a $51 billion impact on household incomes, a $13 billion impact on income taxes paid, and a $6 billion impact on property taxes paid.

February Beef

- Have all calving supplies on hand and review calving assistance procedures
- Move pregnant heifers and early calving cows to calving area about two weeks before due date
- Check cows three to four times per day during calving season (heifers more often to assist early, if needed)
- Keep calving area clean and well drained, move healthy pairs out to large pastures three days after calving
- Ear tag and dehorn all calves at birth; castrate male calves in commercial herds
- Late gestation mature cows should gain 1.0 lbs. per day
- Target gain for pregnant heifers and Three-year-olds should be 2.0-2.5 lbs. per day
- Keep high-quality, high-magnesium minerals available
- Vaccinate cows against scours if it has been a problem
- Assess herd genetic goals and assess bull battery, make plans to attend spring bull sales and/or order AI semen
- Frost seed clovers (mid to late month)
- End breeding season early in the month
- Remove bulls and check condition
- Begin creep feeding or creep grazing calves, if desired
- Plan marketing strategy for calves
- Begin feeding high magnesium minerals to prevent grass tetany
- Continue to check calves closely for health issues
- Frost seed clovers (mid to late month)