

OFF THE HOOF

Kentucky Beef Newsletter – September 2012

Published Monthly by Dr. Les Anderson, Beef Extension Specialist, Department of Animal & Food Science, University of Kentucky

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Timely Tips

Dr. Roy Burris, University of Kentucky Beef Specialist

Spring-Calving Cows

- Many calves were weaned early this year due to drought. If not, start the process of weaning spring-born calves. Stresses associated with weaning can be minimized by spreading-out other activities commonly associated with weaning – like vaccinations, deworming and, perhaps, castration and dehorning (which should have already been done!). Therefore, this month is a good time to do a “preweaning” working of cows and calves.
- Limited creep feeding can prepare calves for the weaning process since they can become accustomed to eating dry feed. This will especially benefit those calves which you are going to keep for a short postweaning period – like the CPH-45 program. It's time to start planning the marketing of this year's calf crop.
- When planning the preweaning working, consult with your veterinarian for advice on animal health products and procedures. Some procedures which can be done now are pregnancy checking cows (which will allow time to make culling decisions prior to weaning time), and blood testing cows for herd certification. The remainder of the work, like booster shots, can be done at weaning time.
- Begin evaluating calves for herd replacements – or culling. Each time you put them through the chute you can evaluate them for several traits, including their disposition.

Fall-Calving Cows

- Watch for early-born, light calves due to drought this year.
- Fall-calving should start this month. Get your eartags ready. Cows should be moved to a clean, accessible pasture and be watched closely. Tag calves soon after they are born and record dam ID

and calf birthdate, etc. Castration is less stressful when performed on young animals and calves which are intended for feeders can be implanted now, too.

- Move cows to best quality fall pasture after calving. Stockpiled fescue should be available to these cows in November-December to meet their nutritional needs for milking and rebreeding.
- Start planning now for the breeding season. If using AI, order supplies, plan matings and order semen now.

Stockers

- Calves that were weaned early might be fed for lower gains this year due to high feed process and “recovering” calf prices.
- Calves to be backgrounded through the winter can be purchased soon. A good source is Kentucky preconditioned (CPH-45) calves which are immunized and have been preweaned and “boosted”.
- Plan your receiving program. Weanling calves undergo a great deal of stress associated with weaning, hauling, marketing, and wide fluctuations in environmental temperature at this time of year. Plan a program which avoids stale cattle, get calves consuming water and high quality feed rapidly. Guard against respiratory diseases and other health problems.

General

- DO NOT FEED ANY CORN PLANTS (stover, silage, residue) WITHOUT CHECKING FOR NITRATES.
- Plan the winter feeding program. Take forage samples of hay which you will feed this winter. Request protein and TDN analysis so that supplemental feed needs may be estimated. Don't wait until you run out of feed in February to purchase extra feed. Plan to minimize hay storage and feeding losses because feed is too expensive to waste.
- Consider nitrogen application to fescue pastures for stockpiling early this month and allow them to grow and accumulate until November, or when other sources of grazing have been used up - so that grazing may be extended and feeding can be delayed. To make best use of this pasture, put fall calvers or thin spring-calvers on this pasture and strip graze. Consider seeding of winter animals in pastures which were damaged by drought.
- Don't graze sorghum or sudan pastures between the first frost and a definite killing frost because of the danger of prussic acid poisoning. Johnsongrass in stalk fields can also be a problem after a light frost. Grazing can resume after the sorghum-type grasses have undergone a killing frost and dried up.

It's Back....Beef Bash 2012

Dr. Roy Burris, Beef Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky

Beef Bash 2012 will be held at the UK West Kentucky Station in Princeton on September 27 beginning at 9 a.m. Beef Bash is a biennial field day with a little twist. We use the term “bash” as a noun which is defined as a “festive social gathering” and we include educational events, updates and activities. Funding for the event is made possible by commercial exhibitors which will be on-site with their latest products.

Beef Bash 2012 is a joint effort by the University of Kentucky and the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association and will feature live cattle demonstrations, research presentations, commercial and educational exhibits along with opportunities to visit with University and industry leaders and fellow cattle producers. We will

be out in the cow pasture or under a big tent in a relaxed environment where you can make yourself at home at a “working” animal research facility while catching-up on your industry.

There will be a wide range of activities to choose from that will be led by UK beef and forage specialists and other beef-related professionals. A lot of activity will deal with coping with the effects of the drought, feed shortages and high feed prices. A demonstration on meat cutting and preparation of new cuts of beef will be conducted at the research center. Research activities ranging from applied research to basic activities such as nutrigenomics will be highlighted. (You don’t have to understand all of the methodology to appreciate that your land grant university is involved in cutting edge research that generates sound recommendations for you.) The use of genomics in modern beef cattle breeding will also be explained. We will have a live animal contest in which prizes will be awarded for most accurately guessing the carcass attributes of finishing steers.

Lunch (rib-eye sandwiches) will be available from the Caldwell-Lyon Cattlemen’s Association with proceeds going to their scholarship fund. Noon time speakers will be Dean of the College of Agriculture Scott Smith, Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture James Comer, and Don Pemberton (formerly of Kentucky) representing the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. The Kentucky Cattlemen’s Association Board of Directors will be in attendance, along with their officers and staff. We expect another good turn-out of producers. Our last beef bash had 495 attendees from counties all over Kentucky. Everyone that registers will receive a Beef Bash tote bag.

Commercial Exhibitors to date include (*in alphabetical order*): ABS, Bayer Animal Health, Boehringer Ingelheim, Callicrate Banders, Caudill Seed Co., Christian Co. Livestock Market, Farmer’s Pride, Gold Standard Labs, H&R Agri-Power, Inc., Kentucky Cattleman’s Association, Kentucky Forage and Grassland Council, Kentucky Farm Bureau Federation, Kentucky Livestock Coalition, Kentucky-Tennessee Livestock Market, Kentucky Beef Council, Mix 30 Liquid Feed – Mid South Ag., LLC, Pfizer Animal Health, Smoky Mtn. Cattle, and Southern States.

Please make plans now to be part of this event and visit the website (<http://ces.ca.uky.edu/beefIRM/bash/>) to stay up-to-date about demonstrations and exhibitors.

Kentucky Beef Leadership Conference: Tackling the Issues of the Industry

Dr. Les Anderson, Beef Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky

Last week, 110 leaders in the Kentucky beef industry gathered to help direct local and state educational beef programming for the next decade. This meeting was sponsored by the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, the Kentucky Cattlemen’s Association, the Kentucky Beef Network, the Agricultural Development Board, Bluegrass Marketing Group, Tarter Farm and Ranch Equipment, and Central Kentucky Ag Credit. The mission of this conference was “*Empower new leaders in Kentucky’s beef industry who will help shape local, regional, state, and national beef extension programming to meet the newest challenges faced by today’s industry and maintain Kentucky’s position as THE source for feeder calves in the United States. And to determine and sustain the future direction of UK’s Beef IRM educational efforts as they continue to serve the Kentucky Beef Industry.*”

Leaders were broken into small groups and were asked to identify the five factors that were the most important or most limiting the beef industry today. The major issues identified by these leaders included the limited knowledge of the public on agriculture, the dearth of young people in the beef industry, efficient use of land, marketing options/profitability, and animal welfare. Many counties identified the top

local issues as public education on ag and animal welfare. Two new state programs will be developed to address these issues. Dr. Darrh Bullock will lead an effort to create a new certification program that will focus on proper animal handling and animal welfare. Another new program being developed is a Professional Cattlemen's Program. The goal of this program is to identify a group of cattlemen and train them to professionally interact with the public on behalf of the Kentucky Beef Industry.

Another undertone of the meeting was production efficiency. To address this issue, a Master Marketer program will be added to the Master series of beef educational programs. Also, a Cow-Calf Conference that focuses on business and production efficiency will be developed. This conference will address banking, enterprise analysis, budgeting, and whole-farm resource analysis to help ranchers identify methods to enhance their business.

Our leaders also identified the need for infusing more young people into the beef industry. Many local county programs are planned to help identify new farmers and get them involved. Also, this generation of farmers accesses and processes information much differently than previous generations so new educational materials need to be developed to meet their educational needs. We also discussed the Farm-Link program in Wisconsin. This program networks retiring dairymen with younger people interested in the dairy industry. This network builds a relationship so that the mentor can help the young dairyman enter the industry. Our long-term goal is to establish a program similar to this for beef producers in Kentucky.

The issues have been identified and plans have been created. Now it is up to each local county group, the UK Beef IRM team, and the Kentucky Beef Network to begin to implement these action plans and move the industry forward.

An Update on MAG-60

Dr. Les Anderson, Beef Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky

To enhance the value of our feeder calves, UK, KBN, and the Agricultural Development Board has launched the MAG (Management And Genetics) - 60 (60-day postweaning) program. In this program, KBN partnered with beef producers to synchronize estrus in their beef females for timed insemination. Producers inseminated their females to a small, select group of sires that were proven in their ability to sire productive, profitable calves. The ultimate goal was to increase the market value of this set of feeder calves by enhancing their genetic ability to excel in the feedlot and on the rail.

The first sets of calves from the MAG-60 program are hitting the ground this month. Last fall, 2,674 females were bred to one of 20 sires. Last spring, over 4,972 females were bred in the MAG-60 program. Steers sired by AI will be managed according to CPH health requirements and will be backgrounded for a minimum of 60 days postweaning. The calves will be age and source verified, thus, we will be marketing feeder steers that are age, source, and genetically verified for superior performance. Feeders produced in this program will be co-mingled by our marketing agents and marketed either in CPH-like feeder calf sales, video sales, or directly to feedlots. Our current plans are to video and weigh the calves on each farm by the end of April 2013. A MAG-60 video auction will then be conducted in May or June of 2013. Calves will then be delivered to collection points for transportation to the feedyard. Although some producers will likely chose to retain ownership, we feel that most of the MAG-60 calves will be sold in the video auction.

This fall marks the final breeding season for MAG-60. We are currently looking for producer's interested in participating in MAG-60. Bulls that will be used for AI this fall include: from Select Sires, GAR

Predestined (AN), Counterpart (AN), Free Lunch (CH), Durango (HE), and Rookie (SM); from ABS, New Standard (AN), Foresight (AN), Gridmaker (CH), Ribeye, (HE), and Combination (SM); from Accelerated Genetics, Fast Track (AN), Total Impact (AN), Platinum (CH), On Target (HE), and Manifest (SM); and from Genetic Horizons Right Answer (AN), Tokach Update (AN), Bluegrass (CH), Revolution (HE), Dew Time (SM).

For more information regarding the MAG-60 program, contact Mr. Land Dale or Mrs. Becky Thompson at KCA (859-278-0899) or Dr. Les Anderson at 859-257-2856.

Drought Impacts on the Beef Cow Herd Could Accelerate This Fall

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

It is difficult to estimate just how much impact the drought this year has had on the cow herd. Beef cow slaughter for the year to date is down nearly 11 percent from last year, a smaller decline than previously expected. While this indicates some additional herd liquidation, just how much more beef cow slaughter would have declined without a drought is uncertain. Perhaps even more uncertain is what is happening with replacement heifers. The inventory of beef replacement heifers was up slightly at the beginning of the year but the drought could be forcing producers to divert more heifers into feeder cattle markets rather than entering the herd as breeding animals. The number of heifers on feed on July 1 was up slightly from last year. The combination of cow slaughter and heifer placement into the herd will determine the year over year changes in the beef cow herd inventory.

Whatever level of liquidation has already occurred leaves the important question of whether producers have made enough adjustments relative to forage conditions and winter hay supplies. There are some anecdotal indications that minimal adjustments in cattle numbers have been made in some areas leaving those operations especially vulnerable to winter weather conditions. Pasture and range conditions remain very bad in many regions, though most areas have shown slight improvement recently. Percent of pastures and ranges rated as poor to very poor are 59 percent for the entire country with higher percentages for the Great Plains (77 percent); Corn Belt (69 percent); and Southern Plains (66 percent) along with the Western region at 54 percent. These are slightly offset by significant improvement in pasture conditions in the Southeast and Northeast.

Poor summer grazing conditions this year are accompanied by severely reduced hay production. The August USDA Crop Production report included estimates of 2012 alfalfa and other hay production for the U.S. and for most states. Alfalfa hay production is estimated to decrease by 21.5 percent and other hay production is projected to decrease by 13.3 percent compared to the 2006-2010 average. These combine for an estimated 2012 all hay production for the U.S. that is 17.3 percent smaller than the 2006-2010 average and would be the smallest total U.S. hay production since 1976. This estimate includes 21 states with all hay production down by more than 10 percent and includes 13 states with reductions in excess of 20 percent. Current year hay production plus May 1 hay stocks represent the total supply of hay available going into the winter. Total U.S. May 1 hay stocks were 5.9 percent above the 2006-2010 average but this masks the fact that hay stocks were down more than 10 percent in 14 states, including several states impacted by drought in 2011 or 2012 or both years.

The estimated all hay supply for 2012 (May 1 stocks plus 2012 production) is down by 14.4 percent for the U.S. compared to the 2006-2010 average including 18 states down more than 10 percent, of which 12 states are down more than 20 percent. Arkansas is the lowest with an estimated 2012 total hay supply down 49 percent from average, followed by Iowa, Oklahoma and Kansas, all down 33 percent or more. An

additional five states (Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska and Wisconsin) have 2012 hay supplies down more than 25 percent from average. Other states with estimated 2012 hay supplies down 15 percent or more include Colorado, Kentucky, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming. Limited hay supplies will be accompanied by record hay price. Current Livestock Marketing Information Center (LMIC) projections put the 2012/2013 season average hay price at a record \$195/ton, exceeding the 2011 record of \$173/ton and up 60 percent from the 2006-2010 average of \$122/ton

Cow culling normally peaks seasonally in the fourth quarter and we may be vulnerable to stronger than normal culling this year. The reality of limited forage and hay supplies combined with high hay and supplement feed cost could prompt additional sales of cows and other cattle this fall. The current pace of beef cow slaughter implies a herd culling rate of 11.4 percent, which is above the long term average of 9.6 percent, but well below the 2011 rate of 12.3 percent. Additional cow culling may be needed this fall. For example, a modest increase in the beef cow herd culling rate to 11.6 percent, would mean that beef cow slaughter for the remainder of the year would be down only 5.25 percent compared to last year and would result in a year over year decrease in beef cow slaughter of 8.5 percent. It all depends on how much adjustment to limited forage supplies has already been done and how much more might be needed in the next couple of months.

Partridge Pea –Is it Safe?

Dr. Michelle Arnold, Dr. Cynthia Gaskill, Dr. Ray Smith, Dr. Garry Lacefield, Dr. Jeff Lehmkuhler, and Dr. Roy Burris, University of Kentucky

Partridge pea is a warm-season legume commonly used in wildlife seed mixes. Conservation Reserve Program lands are often seeded with these wildlife mixes as they provide good nutrition and cover for

Flower of Partridge Pea

Photo courtesy of: Patrick J. Alexander @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



Photo courtesy of: Clarence A. Rechenthin @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database



birds and other wildlife. The current drought has resulted in the opening of many CRP lands for livestock foraging and many producers have questions about the safety of feeding partridge pea to livestock. The fruits and seeds of partridge pea contain anthraquinones that may cause irritation of the digestive tract if consumed in large quantities. When this occurs there may be diarrhea and some abdominal pain (colic). Treatment of the diarrhea is seldom required due to the short duration of symptoms and the fact that they usually stop eating when they feel sick. There have been no good dosing studies of partridge pea toxicity in cattle and no published reports on the maximum amount of partridge pea that can be safely fed to cattle. Some have reported that if the diet is < 25% partridge pea there should be no problems, but no documentation could be found to confirm this recommendation. However, it seems reasonable to suggest that if the partridge pea is diluted with other forages so that it comprises a low percentage of the diet, it should not cause a problem.

Of greater concern is sicklepod (*Senna obtusifolia*) and coffee senna (*Senna occidentalis*) that look somewhat similar to partridge pea but are significantly more toxic. These may be found along roadsides, in waste areas and in old pastures. These species of *Senna* contain a series of anthraquinones, primarily found in the seeds, that exert toxic effects on many tissues, including those of the digestive tract and skeletal and cardiac muscle. Diarrhea and straining are usually the first signs observed followed by going off feed, lethargy, weakness, and trembling of the hind legs. As the muscle degeneration progresses, the urine becomes dark and coffee-colored and the animal goes down and is unable to rise. Death may occur within hours or the animal may survive several days after progressing to the stage of a downer cow. Treatment primarily involves treating the diarrhea and good nursing care. Animals removed from the plants at the earliest indications of problems may not develop the more serious muscular effects.



Sicklepod

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Ted Bodner @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database/ / James H. Miller and Karl V. Miller. 2005. *Forest plants of the southeast and their wildlife uses*. University of Georgia Press., Athens



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Coffee senna-Photo courtesy of: Pedro Acevedo-Rodriguez @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS database

Kentucky Beef Cattle Market Update

Dr. Kenny Burdine, Extension Specialists in Ag Economics, University of Kentucky

After falling since June, feeder cattle prices showed some improvement during August. This was a very welcome sign for a market that needed some positive news. As can be seen in the chart below, 5wt steers traded in the mid-upper \$140's on a state average basis by the first of September with some groups well into the \$150's. Heavy feeders were variable, but generally in the upper \$130's for groups of 7wt steers and lower \$130's for groups of 8wt steers. The price improvement can likely be attributed to several factors including a leveling off of corn prices, indications that the fed cattle market finally put in its summer lows, improved pasture conditions in much of KY, and a significant amount of corn silage available for feed.

As we turn our attention to fall, many things will likely drive prices. USDA will continue to fine tune its estimate of the 2012 corn crop. With supplies already tight, any changes in expected harvest level will have a significant impact on price. Secondly, with feed prices so high, winter wheat grazing conditions will be especially important this year in setting the tone for the fall calf market. Statewide, we haven't seen many calves move yet, so it will be interesting to see how this market reacts to the fall calf run once it is in full swing.

Seasonally, calf prices tend to decrease in the 4th quarter, but our seasonal patterns have been a bit less predictable as of late. Still, I would expect these calf markets to soften a bit as we move towards winter once we start pushing significant numbers through our markets. As mentioned earlier, improvement in wheat grazing conditions or unanticipated decreases in grain prices could certainly change this. As we look towards spring, tight supplies should pave the way to another very good spring market. While it's difficult for me to predict as strong a market as we saw in 2012 given likely corn prices, I do expect spring 2013 prices to be very close to 2012 levels.

**Kentucky Auction Prices
Medium / Large Frame #1 Steers
500 to 600 lbs**

