



September 2005

Department of Animal Sciences and Industry

www.asi.ksu.edu

Upcoming Events

Beef Stocker Conference

Sept. 15
Manhattan, Kan.
785-532-1267

Range Beef Cow Symposium

Dec. 6-8
Rapid City, S.D.

Verification programs required for exports to Japan

Sandy Johnson, livestock specialist

Given procedural and political issues, it is hard to say when the Japanese market will reopen. Despite that, in the last few months participation requirements have become clearer. While not everyone will be providing product for Japan or other export markets, understanding the process should be useful because there may be effects on other parts of the industry.

Beef exported to Japan must meet requirements in the Beef Export Verification (BEV) Program for Japan. Age verification is a key requirement. Regardless of final export destination or specific BEV requirements, providers who wish to label and sell products must participate in a preapproved Quality System Assessment (QSA). Products produced under a USDA Process Verified Program are eligible for BEV programs.

A QSA is a documented audit or verification trail that can support a specific product claim or requirement. Age documentation may include standard operating procedures, health records, shipping records, purchase records, documentation for identification of animals and/or breeding methods and seasons. An approved QSA must have a defined quality management system to show that characteristics of the product are being monitored and measured. Approved QSA programs are audited at least twice a year by the USDA. The USDA may conduct audits of the supplier's cattle while auditing the company's QSA BEV program to ensure requirements are met.

As of early August, there were 28 companies with approved QSA programs. Many received approval in June and July of 2005. The list largely includes packers, but also some feed yards. For packers with multiple locations, each location has been approved separately. View the current list at www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/arc/qsap.htm. It is expected that some animal identification providers will also seek QSA approval.

Cattle producers who want to sell beef to Japan can participate in a packer or other independent company's QSA or seek approval for their own QSA. Each QSA must conduct internal audits to verify compliance and maintain a list of approved suppliers. If a producer sells cattle to more than one packer and participates in each packer's QSA, then a separate set of records must be maintained for each QSA. A large feedlot that sells to multiple packers may wish to develop its own QSA. Some smaller producers may choose an independent QSA. Auction markets may have their own QSA or supply cattle under an umbrella QSA. Part of the QSA will be to document nonconforming product and how it is kept separate.

It is clear now that a signed affidavit passed as cattle ownership changes will not be sufficient to verify age. Claims made about age, source or other management practices must come with detailed documentation and a plan to ensure the accuracy of the information.

Contributors

Dale Blasi

Stocker, Forages Nutrition & Mgt.
785-532-5427
dblasi@oznet.ksu.edu

Joel DeRouchey

Livestock Production
785-532-2032
jderouch@oznet.ksu.edu

Ron Hale

Livestock Production
620-275-9164
rhale@oznet.ksu.edu

Larry Hollis

Extension Beef Veterinarian
785-532-1246
lhollis@oznet.ksu.edu

Sandy Johnson, Editor

Livestock Production
785-462-6281
sandyj@oznet.ksu.edu

Twig Marston

Cow-Calf Management
785-532-5428
tmarston@oznet.ksu.edu

Evaluating calving distribution this time of year allows time to make necessary changes.

Calving distributions reflect nutrition and fertility

Sandy Johnson, livestock specialist

A while back, a reader requested that this newsletter contain homework assignments for honing cow herd management skills.

Let's see what can be learned from looking at calving distribution data from a university herd so you can study similar information from your own herd.

If you use herd management software, the distribution may be generated for you automatically once calving dates are entered. If calving data is in a spreadsheet, it can easily be sorted and a graphic representation of the data generated.

According to standardized performance analysis definitions, the starting date for the first 21-day period of the calving season is 285 days after the bull is turned in with the mature cow herd. This is done for consistency even though heifers' beginning breeding date may be earlier. If this is unavailable, then the first 21-day period is started when the third mature cow (3 years and older) calves. All calves born, alive or dead, should be included.

Evaluating calving distribution this time of year allows time to make necessary changes. If there are no herd health problems, calving distribution is largely a reflection of nutrition and fertility. For a spring calving herd, fall is the easiest and least expensive time to improve cow body condition and reduce days to conception the following breeding season.

Figure 1 shows the calving distribution for the K-State research herd at the Agriculture Research Center in Hays for 2003. Distributions are shown for 2-year-olds, 3-year-olds and 5-year-olds and older. There were no 4-year-olds calving with this herd in 2003 because research took them to another project and herd.

Even though the 2-year-olds calve a couple of weeks ahead of the mature cows, their distribution has been separated and lined up with the mature cows. This is because the number of 2-year-olds has varied in this herd, which distorts the data when

comparing to other years or herds. A 45-day breeding season is used on yearling heifers, so you can see they are nearly done calving by 42 days.

Monitoring calving distribution by cow age may point to weaknesses in the nutritional program before the problem shows up as open cows in the fall. If the calving distribution for 3- and/or 4-year-old cows is delayed compared to the rest of the herd, the young cow nutrition program may need to be adjusted.

Included in Figure 1 is a benchmark from the Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS) summary of 111,583 cows from 1997 to 2001. These mature cows are a bit behind after 21 days compared to the CHAPS average. In 2002, cows were bred to one of four fixed-timed AI protocols. Treatment differences were expected and found, so this difference may not have occurred if the single best protocol had been used. The use of comparative data is important to the evaluation process.

Another way to look at calving distribution data is over time. Figure 2 shows the distribution by week for the herd from 1999 to 2004 (mature cows only). Each breeding season after 1998, these cows were synchronized and inseminated at a fixed time, with the exception that five days of heat detection and AI were used in 2000.

Even though cows were bred on a single day, they calved over a three-week period. The total breeding season was shortened from 70 days in 2000 to 51 days in 2001 and remained at that point. End-of-season pregnancy rate averages 95.5 percent and has not changed (range of 94 to 97 percent). The use of synchronization has increased the proportion of cows calving early, especially by the end of 42 days (or six weeks).

Have you made any management changes over time that may be affecting your calving distribution? Have you looked? Many producers know what happens the first month of calving but do not follow the pattern through the last calf.

continued on page 3

from page 2

Another reason to examine this distribution now is that you may wish to take some culling measures this fall to shorten your next calving season. Bred-cow prices will likely continue to be strong for a while, so if your calving season has gotten strung out, this may be a good time to consider options. Your veterinarian can estimate the stage of pregnancy of the cows that were bred late in the season, as well as identify opens. Pregnancies can be staged more accurately if you do so before 100 days of pregnancy. The

information from the pregnancy diagnosis can be used to decide if culling late-calving cows may be a good decision this year. As with marketing open cows, consider seasonal price patterns and options to improve condition before selling.

If you have questions about your calving distribution data or if you are willing to share what you have learned from it, contact Sandy Johnson, livestock specialist, at 785-462-6281 or sandyj@ksu.edu.

Figure 1. Cumulative proportion of cows calving by age and CHAPS database average (1997-2001)

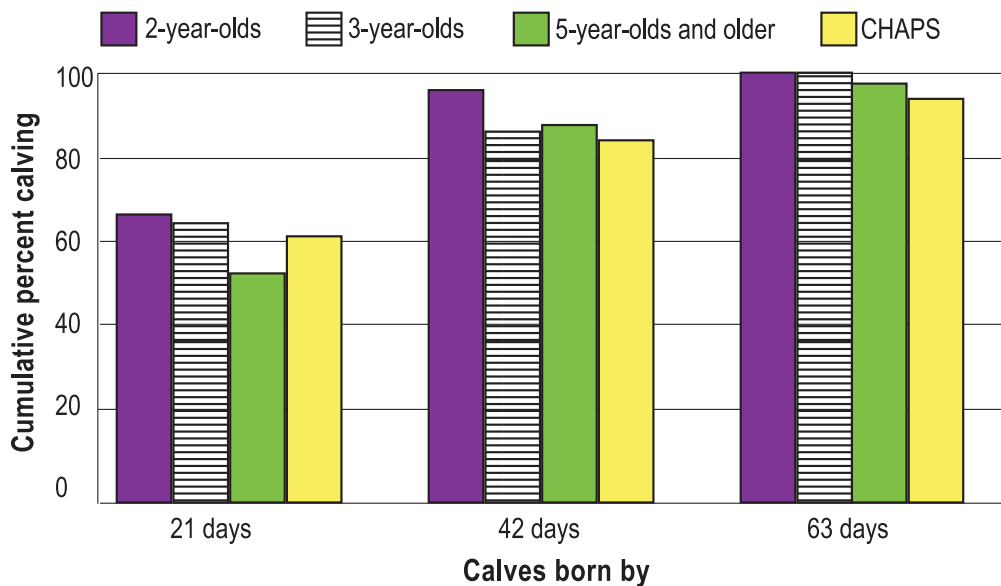
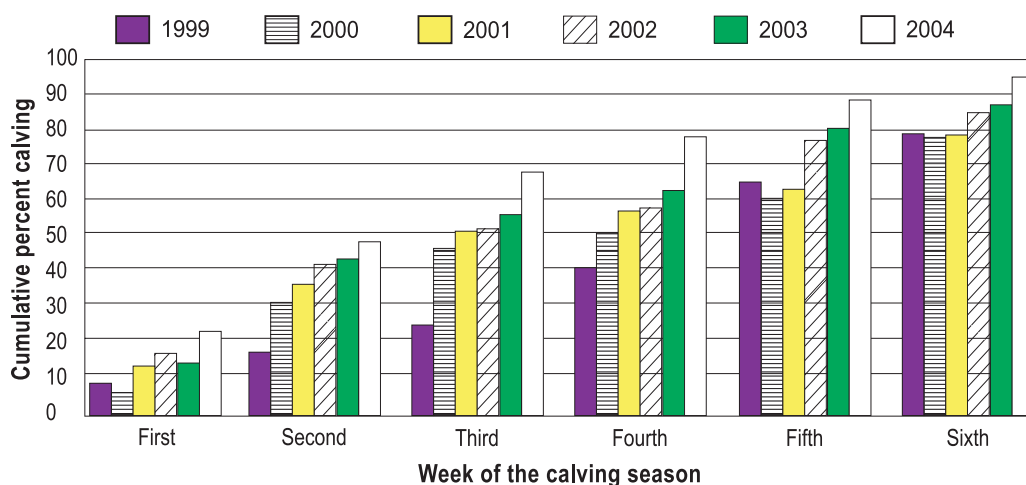


Figure 2. Calving distribution for the same herd over six calving seasons*



*Estrus was not synchronized in 1998. Single, fixed-time AI in each following year except in 2000, which had five days of AI.

Beef Stocker Conference set for Sept. 15

Kansas State University's annual Beef Stocker Conference is set for Sept. 15 at the Holiday Inn/Holidome in Manhattan.

The program begins at 9:30 a.m. and features these topics:

- *Traceability and the Brand Premise: Making Stocker Operations Fit in the Equation*, Leann Saunders, IMI Global
- *Tomorrow's Stocker Program: Will Preconditioning Fit?*, John Butler, Merial, Ltd.
- *Legal Issues Facing Stocker Operations*, Allie Devine, Kansas Livestock Association
- *Dealing with Weight Variation: The Swine Industry Perspective*, Mike Tokach, K-State
- *Strategic Use of Antibiotics in Stocker Operations*, Mike Apley, K-State

The day includes a tour of the K-State Beef Stocker Unit facilities and a barbecue.

Registration, which covers lunch and supper, breaks and conference materials, is \$20 before Sept. 5 and \$30 after that date. For more info, call 785-532-1267.

Beef Improvement Federation materials online

A record number of people attended the Beef Improvement Federation meeting in Billings, Mont., in July. With the help of industry financing, technology has provided an easy way to take part in the meeting from your own home. If you missed the meeting, you can watch many of the presentations and download copies of slides and proceedings from the Internet. I have listened to the two opening speakers, Randy Bloch from Cattle Fax and Vern Pierce, economist from the University of Missouri. Both provided some great insights about where the beef industry is and where it is headed. These presentations are informative and thought-provoking regardless of what segment of the industry you are in. Selection indexes and efficiency were other key topics at the meeting. Visit www.bifconference.com to learn more. If you have trouble viewing the streaming video with Netscape 7.1, try Netscape 8.0 or Internet Explorer.

Meetings slated on reproductive issues in beef cattle

The North Central Region Bovine Reproduction Task Force will join forces with several other institutions this fall to host intensive workshops on reproductive strategies for beef cattle. The workshops, "Applied Reproductive Strategies in Beef Cattle," will be held in three locations around the country. The meetings are Oct. 27-28 in Reno, Nev.; Nov. 1-2 in Lexington, Ky.; and Nov. 12-13 in College Station, Texas.

"The excellent pregnancy rates possible with today's synchronization systems and the increasing opportunities to get paid for specific known genetics make estrous synchronization and AI even more valuable tools than they have been in the past," said K-State livestock specialist Sandy Johnson, who is one of the conference coordinators.

The meetings are for those interested in beef cattle reproduction and estrous synchronization, including producers, veterinarians, AI (artificial insemination) technicians and Extension specialists. Workshops are designed to improve the understanding of the physiological processes of the estrous cycle, procedures available to synchronize estrus and ovulation, and the proper application of these systems. They will also focus on improving participants' understanding of methods to assess male fertility and how it affects the success of AI programs.

Interested persons can check the Web site <http://westcentral.unl.edu/beefrepro/> for links to all three meetings.