Beef Tips

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Upcoming Events

Land EKG™ Workshops
Sept. 22 Sun City
Sept. 29, Beloit
See details on page 5

Stocker Field Day
Oct. 2, 2008
Manhattan, KS
Details on page 4

COW Meeting (Cow over the winter)
Oct. 13, 2008
Dighton, KS
620-397-2806

Applied Reproductive Strategies in Beef Cattle
Dec. 2-3, 2008
Fort Collins, CO
http://westcentral.unl.edu/beefrepro/

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Meeting participants produce COOL compliance documents

A variety of industry organizations participated in an unprecedented meeting last week to develop universally accepted procedures for meeting the requirements of mandatory country-of-origin labeling (mCOOL). Representatives of more than 30 livestock, meat processing, food and retail organizations and companies met in Kansas City on August 26 to form consensus for compliance on the rule, which takes effect September 30.

The principal objective was to reach agreement on language for affidavits and/or declarations that would substantiate claims along the livestock chain of ownership so beef can be accurately labeled at supermarkets. Industry participants sought to develop the simplest, most cost-effective means of implementation.

Documents developed by the group are under final review by the meeting participants. Once approved, these forms will be distributed throughout the livestock marketing chain, including to auction facilities, producer trade associations and purchasers. Although there currently is no final rule from USDA, the consensus of the group is these documents will be all that is necessary to implement mCOOL and comply with the rule.

Wildcat Steer Futurity

This fall Kansas State University will offer Kansas beef cattle producers the opportunity to experience the cattle feeding industry and obtain performance and carcass data from their cattle through the Wildcat Steer Futurity. This educational program allows cattle producers to place a minimum of 5 steers (450 -850 lbs) in a commercial cattle feeding facility. No entry fee is required. Producers are responsible for all charges incurred during the feeding period. A series of field days will be held in conjunction with the program. Entries are due October 17th, 2008. For more information please contact:

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Evaluate cows at pregnancy diagnosis to optimize returns

Larry Hollis, D.V.M., M.Ag., extension beef veterinarian

Now is the time to put together your plan to determine which cows you are going to carry through the winter. With supplemental feed resources at all time high prices, you cannot afford to carry a cow through the winter that is either not going to produce a calf or do a good job of raising one next year. The following checklist will help producers do a more complete assessment of the cow herd at pregnancy check time.

- Review your records before you start pregnancy checking. Are there cows that show up as problem animals that should not be kept even if found to be pregnant? To make significant herd improvement, you need to get rid of the bottom producers in your herd each year.

- Does the cow have a history of weaning one or more light calves, even though the calves were born during the first half of the calving season?

- Does the cow always calve late in the calving season? Remember, it costs just as much to feed a late-calving cow through the winter as an early-calving cow, but the late-calving cow will rarely produce as many pounds of live calf.

- Are any cows old enough that you need to look closely at their teeth while you have them in the chute for pregnancy testing?

- Have any cows had recurring calving difficulty problems?

- Examine the cows physically before putting them through the chute. Are there cows that have udder problems, eye problems, lameness problems, or are in poor body condition that may interfere with their ability to winter well and calve easily next spring? If so, there is no reason to run them through the chute unless you want to try to sell them as a bred cow (assuming they are found to be pregnant).

- Pregnancy check the cows. Ask your veterinarian to age the pregnancies. If there are cows that will calve late in the spring, you may want to sell them as bred cows. By selling off the late calvers, you can tighten up your calving and subsequent breeding seasons. This should also increase the average calf sale weight for all cows that you carry through the winter.

- Vaccinate and deworm/delouse cows that are pregnant and otherwise fit your requirements for them to stay in the herd. Vaccines to be used in the fall should be based on herd needs and diseases that might result in pregnancy wastage prior to calving next spring.

- Weigh calves as they are separated from the cows. Compare weights to the calf's birthdate/days of age. Are they gaining as well as the balance of your herd on a daily basis? If not, is there a logical explanation? Is the explanation something that will correct itself in the future, or is it a problem with the cow?

Removing open cows from the herd always pays dividends. Additional profit can also be generated by culling lower-performing or later-calving cows. With current feed costs, you want to maximize returns from any cows that you carry through the winter!

Body condition scoring reduces feed costs and improves reproduction

Karl Harborth, livestock specialist

"Body condition scoring is an objective visual assessment of the herd's nutritional status"

Cow-calf producers across the state have faced significant increases in feed and other input costs the last 12 months. Most producers constantly search for the cheapest way to feed or supplement herds. However, producers may need to look at improving other management practices in order to save on input costs.

There are very few management practices that do not require some sort of monetary input. Evaluating a herd's nutritional status by using the nine-point body condition score (**BCS**) system is one. The system may be more than most want to take time to do, but simply categorizing cows into four groups (thin, borderline, moderate and heavy condition) could aid in reducing inputs.

While BCS should be conducted every couple of months, there are certain times of the year that are more crucial for management decisions. The most important time during a cow's production cycle to evaluate BCS is at weaning, especially for spring-calving herds. Other key times of the year to assess BCS include 30 days prior to breeding, 90 days post-breeding, 100 days prior to calving, and at calving. Managing the herd by BCS can reduce feed inputs and improve subsequent reproductive performance.

Body condition scoring is an objective visual assessment of the herd's nutritional status. It is the easiest and cheapest way to evaluate how much a cowherd has left in the "gas tank". Standard body condition scores for beef cattle range from 1 (emaciated) to 9 (obese), with a BCS of 5 considered optimum in most operations.

Cows considered thin and borderline (BCS 3 to 4) will be more angular in appearance, with the spine and the last three to five ribs slightly visible. This group will require the most attention due to the need for increased feed and are at the highest risk of reduced reproductive performance. Cows in really good condition are squarer and smoother in appearance, with the ribs and spine not showing. Cows beyond the optimum BCS will start to show much more deposition of fat over the ribs and spine extending to the brisket and flank, with extremely heavy condition cows starting to deposit fat around the tailhead and udder area.

The importance of evaluating a cowherd's BCS is that it can affect a producer's bottom line in many ways. It takes about 80 to 90 pounds of weight gain to increase a cow one body condition score. The best time to add weight to a cow is when her nutrient requirements are the lowest. This time frame typically is the first 60 days post-weaning, as lactation requirements have ended and pregnancy demands will be relatively low.

Assessing BCS at weaning in a spring-calving herd can save you money in supplemental costs as well as improving subsequent reproductive performance. For example, sorting the herd into groups of thin and optimum BCS at weaning will allow cows requiring extra nutrients to be fed in a group by themselves. If the whole herd is fed together, there is no guarantee the thin cows will be consuming the needed nutrients or that heavier conditioned cows will only get their share.

Making sure cows are in proper condition entering the calving season is a must. For example, if a cow is in thin condition (BCS 3) at calving and will be bred in 80 days, she will need to gain two BCS scores by breeding time, or 160 pounds. Expecting two pounds of gain a day during lactation in late winter to early spring will not be feasible in most cases. The longer producers wait to evaluate BCS after calving, the harder it will be to achieve the desired BCS at breeding. There have been many studies that have evaluated the effects of BCS at calving on subsequent reproductive performance. A study done at Colorado State University showed fewer thin (BCS 4 or less) than moderate (BCS 5 and 6) cows cycling by

*see **Body Condition** on page 4*

Body Condition continued from page 3

60 days post-calving. By 90 days post-calving only 66 percent of thin cows were cycling compared to 92 percent of moderate cows.

A 2003 Kansas State University study summarized data from over 3,200 cows with BCS taken just prior to breeding. The proportion of cows cycling prior to the start of the breeding season was 42, 59 and 80 percent for cows with condition scores of 4, 5 and 6, respectively. Cows that are not cycling at the beginning of the breeding season will calve later and wean lighter weight calves the following year if they conceive at all.

The optimum BCS for each individual operation is dependent on the overall production goals. Managing cows to be in good to moderate condition at key times of the year will set up a scenario in which less feed may be required and nutrition should not affect the reproductive efficiency of the herd. Body condition scoring is a low input tool that is simple to use and can produce significant returns.

Beef stocker field day to address changes in industry

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Thursday, Oct. 2 has been set for Kansas State University's Beef Stocker Field Day 2008.

The event, designed to give producers the latest practical information to help them adapt to recent significant changes in the beef industry, starts with registration at 9:30 a.m. and the program beginning at 10:15 a.m. at K-State's Beef Stocker Unit. The unit is just west of Manhattan on west Marlatt Ave.

Wes Ishmael, of BEEF Magazine will give a presentation on "Key Findings From the National Stocker Survey" and Denny Hausmann of Alpharma Animal Health will speak on "Current Concepts in Medicated Feed Additives."

Additional topics will include the following:

- New Realities of Conducting Business in the Stocker Segment;
- What is the Importance of Temperature When Diagnosing Sickness;
- Making Rational Choices for Stocker Therapy;
- Use of Byproducts for Exploiting Efficient Performance;
- What are the Implications of Heavier Cattle Being Fed for Shorter Days;
- A Visual Tour of the Progression of Pneumonia;
- Proper Injection Considerations for the Assurance of Quality Beef; and
- How Much Do Cutting Bulls Really Cost?

The early registration fee is $25 if paid by Sept. 15, and includes a barbecue brisket lunch. A Rocky Mountain Oyster Fry, including Dutch Oven Cowboy Cuisine and Pitchfork Fondue, compliments of Moly Manufacturing will close out the day. Information will be available regarding ultrasound applications for earlier detection of quality cattle; the latest innovation in data collection and scale head technology; and cattle handling facilities.

More information and registration forms are available by contacting Lois Schreiner in the K-State Department of Animal Sciences and Industry at 785-532-1267 or lschrein@ksu.edu. Registration is also available online at http://www.ksubeef.org.

Burn workshops planned

Landowners and producers enrolled in Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts containing the practice "Rare and Declining Habitat" may be required to perform a maintenance burn at least once during the life of the contract. Burning on CRP acreage can be conducted between Feb. 1 and April 15. To help producers be better prepared to comply with those requirements and conduct a safe burn, fifteen burn workshops have been scheduled for October, November and December 2008 in western Kansas. Locations currently scheduled include Oakley, Stockton, Colby, Bazine, Scott City, and Tribune, with additional sites still to be identified. For detailed information about the workshop closest to your location contact your local county KSU Extension office, USDA Service Center, or County Conservation District.

Rangeland monitoring and health workshops set for September

"workshops provide an overview of the ins and outs of land and grazing monitoring,"

"The Kansas Grazing Lands Coalition is pleased to provide two one-day workshops ***Tracking Pasture Health*** for ranchers and land managers led by Charley Orchard, Land EKG, Bozeman, Montana," said Tim Christian. "The workshops are set for September 22 at the Ted Alexander ranch near Sun City and September 29 at the Calvin Adams ranch south of Beloit. Each workshop starts at 8:00 a.m."

Tracking Pasture Health workshops provide an overview of the ins- and outs- of land and grazing monitoring, said Christian. The outdoor, hands-on training focuses on the myths of monitoring, the five most useful monitoring techniques, grazing scoring methods, forage production calculations, understanding transects, production and grazing budgets, rapid ecological assessments, and interpreting the monitoring results to allow for positive actions. The Land EKG technique allows the user to consistently track relative soil and plant community health by assessing four basic ecological components: water cycling, nutrient cycling, energy flow, and biotic state – all depicted on an eco-graph.

The Land EKG technique uses a system of field summaries to document current ecological conditions and leads producers to more profitable, defensible, and sustainable land management decisions, he continued. Producers can expect to optimize profit, help promote land stewardship, better prescribe best land management practices, and be able to document and defend their decisions as it relates to ownership and leases. Alexander has employed Orchard's monitoring techniques for a number of years, and attendees will see the benefits he has derived from the system. Adams ranch has undergone similar monitoring techniques and will prove to be an interesting location for attendees to observe his findings as well.

Orchard is a fourth generation Wyoming rancher who is nationally recognized as a leader in rangeland monitoring and health. He created Land EKG out of necessity to document the effects of management practices on his family's grazing lands. Land EKG is a process that provides land managers with hands-on tools to help analyze the impacts of their management decisions on grazing lands. The processes are simple and easy to understand and quick to apply.

Enrollment for the workshops runs through September 15. The cost is $35 (per workshop) and includes lunch onsite. Each participant will leave the session with a field packet full of information and blank forms to get you started when you get home.

The reasonable costs of registration are due to great support we have from our workshop sponsors, said Christian. They include High Plains Resource Conservation and Development Council, Buffalo, Oklahoma; Kansas Farm Bureau, Kansas Sustainable Agriculture Research Education (SARE) program, Playa Lakes Joint Venture, US Fish and Wildlife Service and Quail Forever.

KGLC was organized in 1991 and as a non-profit its vision is regenerating Kansas grazing lands. The partnership meets its mission to regenerate Kansas grazing land resources through cooperative management, economics, ecology, production, education, and technical assistance programs through a variety of voluntary methods to reach landowners, ranchers, and others making decisions on grazing lands.

For additional information on the range monitoring workshops, contact Tim Christian, coordinator at 620-241-3636, tchristian@kglc.org. You can visit the KGLC web site at www.kglc.org for details as well.