Beef/Forage Update

Well, it’s mid summer and we probably need to update…..

IRM: The IRM committee is continuing efforts from the Beef Summit that occurred in September. An action list was sent out to the participants for their prioritization. These priority lists were received and the IRM committee met in March to develop the new Plan of Action. This Plan of Action was sent out to the participants for their review. New programs developed include Master Grazer, Advanced Master Cattleman’s, Master Cattleman “Hot Topics” and On-Farm Demonstrations. The leadership group that organizes Grazing School developed a plan for the establishment of a Master Grazer Program. The Master Grazer Program will take Grazing School to groups similar to Master Cattleman. The Master Grazer Program also includes field demonstrations to enhance the lecture component.

Another new program developed from the Beef Summit is Advanced Master Cattleman’s. The current concept for the Advanced Master Cattleman Program is groups of cattle managers with common interest would form management clubs to take the information that they were taught in Master Cattleman sessions and then work together to find ways to put it into practice, solve practical management problems and to further their learning. This approach follows the successful marketing club model used in Kansas. These groups could be organized on a county or multi-county basis, and could even be split by core interest (such as beginning producers, fall calvers, etc.).

County agents would serve as organizers and facilitators. Kansas experience suggests that the groups are most successful if the are led by one of their own farmer members. Specialists would develop a cafeteria of resources for the groups to access. They could also utilize other resources, such as local bankers, order buyers, veterinarians, and NRCS staff.

Master Cattleman “Hot Topics” is another new program developed from the Beef Summit. Each year on the Thursday before the KCA convention, UK Specialists and outside speakers will address the most recent developments in beef production. These sessions will be free to all Master Cattleman participants.

The final new program developed from the Beef Summit is the new On-farm Demonstration Program. Specialists have developed short-, medium-, and long-term on-farm demonstrations for agents to incorporate into their educational program. Topics include crossbreeding, heifer development, shortening the calving season, rotational grazing, among others. Once a topic is chosen, interested parties would sign Memorandums of Agreement and the projects would be established.

These new programs, Advanced Master Cattleman, Hot Topics, Master Grazer, and On-farm Demonstrations were all included in the KBN proposal to the Agriculture Development Board for funding this spring. We should know in September if the proposal will be funded.
For more information, contact either Les Anderson (859-257-2856; landerso@uky.edu) or Roy Burris (270-365-7541 ext 208; rburris@uky.edu).

**IRM Calendars:** Ag Distribution has run out of IRM calendars. We printed about 6,000 this year and we have no more. If you need more calendars, please contact Laurentia Van Rensburg (859-278-0899; ljvanr2@uky.edu) before February 14th. We will then print enough calendars to meet the demand.

**Kentucky Beef Book (Volume 2):** The newest version on the Kentucky Beef Book should be available by the next Beef/Forage Update. It has been revised and we are awaiting printing. For more information about the new Kentucky Beef Book contact Roy Burris (270-365-7541 ext 208; rburris@uky.edu).

**New FCS Beef Training Program:** A new beef training program for FCS agents was developed by the IRM committee. Cristy Honaker, FCS agent in Pike County, has led the committee consisting primarily of FCS agents, FCS Specialists, and Beef Specialists. The training was held on June 8-9 in Lexington and was attended by 23 agents. The training will be outstanding. For more information contact Cristy Honaker (606-432-2534; chonaker@uky.edu) or Benjy Mikel (859-257-7550; wmikel@uky.edu)

**Cow College:** Cow College 2005 kicks off this week in Lexington. The cost of Cow College is $250. To enroll in Cow College or for more information, contact either Les Anderson (859-257-2856; landerso@uky.edu) or Jim Akers (859-278-0899; jakers@uky.edu).

**Master Cattleman Program:** January brought the 2004 Master Cattleman class to a close and ushered in the 2005 sessions around the state. Four hundred sixty-two Master Cattleman graduates were recognized on Saturday, January 8 at the Kentucky Cattlemen's Association Annual Convention in Owensboro. The 2004 participants represented 81 counties among 17 different groups. Participants completing the program attended at least 8 of 10 four-hour sessions and were Beef Quality Assurance certified.

The program will continue in 2005 among 17 different groups around the state including: Buffalo Trace - Mason, Bracken, Robertson, Fleming, Lewis; Center of Kentucky - Adair, Green, Taylor; Clark, Fayette, Madison Counties; Gateway Region - Bath, Menifee, Montgomery, Powell; Grayson and Breckenridge Counties; Green River Area - Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, Webster; Highlands Beef Association - Boyd and Lawrence; Kentucky Heartland - Hardin, Larue, Meade; Kentucky River - Anderson, Franklin, Jessamine, Mercer, Scott, Woodford; Louisville - Henry, Oldham, Shelby, Trimble; Mammoth Cave - Barren, Hart, Metcalfe; Northern Kentucky - Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, Owen, Pendleton; Pennyrile Area - Caldwell, Christian, Crittenden, Hopkins, Livingston, Lyon, Muhlenberg, Todd, Trigg; Purchase Area - McCracken, Graves, Ballard, Calloway, Carlisle, Marshall, Fulton, Hickman; Southern District 5 - Casey, Clinton, Pulaski, Russell, Wayne; Tri-County Louisville Area - Bullitt, Jefferson, Spencer; Wilderness Trail Area - Bell, Clay, Harlan, Jackson, Knox, Laurel, Rockcastle, Whitley.

Eight of the 2005 groups have started and there will be twelve up and running by the end of February. If you have producers interested in Master Cattleman but are not hosting a session this year, please contact a neighboring county to see if they have openings or contact Jerene Kunkler (859-278-0899; jerene.kunkler@uky.edu) for more information on a specific group.
**Record Keeping:** About 400 people are using CHAPS on their own and 45 herds are using custom processing. We have roughly 250 beginner Cow/Calf books left and 70 backgrounding books. The IRM committee decided to print full SPA books instead of the shorter beginner version currently available. The Fall and Spring State Databases are nearly complete. The IRM group is examining the database information to prepare it for publication. For more information on our record-keeping system contact Laurentia Van Rensburg (859-278-0899; ljvanr2@uky.edu).

**Animal Health:** Craig Carter, DVM, PhD, a nationally-known veterinary epidemiologist will be joining the College of Agriculture's Livestock Disease Diagnostic Center (LDDC) on February 1, 2005 to establish a laboratory based contemporary animal disease surveillance system. Prior to joining the LDDC, Dr. Carter was Head, Department of Epidemiology and Informatics at The Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratories, Texas A&M University. Dr. Carter has a wealth of experience, spanning more than 23 years, in veterinary epidemiology and disease investigation. We are extremely fortunate to have attracted a professional with the unique background and high reputation that Dr. Carter has obtained to fill this special new position. For more information contact Dr. Patty Scharko (859-253-0571; pscharko@uky.edu).

**BQA:** A new BQA video tape has been produced to replace the 2001 video and sent to each county office. It includes the why, how, and what of BQA to certify or re-certify producers. Remember that certification is good for 3 years. BQA producer certification is required for CPH sales and it is simply a good idea to participate! For more information contact Dr. Patty Scharko (859-253-0571; pscharko@uky.edu).

**Genetics:** The Kentucky Beef Improvement Association Performance Bull Sale will be March 28, 2005 (6:30 pm CST) at the Barren River Regional Livestock Center in Bowling Green. Approximately 40 bulls have been consigned to the sale including: Angus, Hereford, Gelbvieh and Maine-Anjou. The bulls will be developed on-farm and must meet certain health and performance requirements. Contact Darrh Bullock (859-257-7514; dbullock@uky.edu) for information or a listing of the bulls.

**Forage:** The 25th Kentucky Alfalfa Conference will be held February 24, 2005 at the Cave City Convention Center. Our keynote speaker will be Mr. Warren Thompson who has been “Mr. Alfalfa” in Kentucky for the past 63 years. Featured out-of-state speakers include: Dr. Neal Martin, Director of the Dairy Forage Research Center in Madison, Wisconsin; Dr. Mark McCaslin, President, Forage Genetics Research Station, West Salem, Wisconsin; and Dr. Don Ball, Extension Agronomist, Auburn University. Mr. Lee Robey, Robey Farms in Logan County will discuss the role of alfalfa in their dairy operation. In addition to the above five additional speakers will present the latest information on alfalfa diseases, alfalfa impact, alfalfa hay for horses, and advances in alfalfa seed coating. Since this is our 25th Anniversary Program, I expect a full house in the exhibit area along with our largest silent auction and a wonderful meal provided by the Cave City staff. Alfalfa Awards will be presented at noon. For further information, visit our website at [http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage](http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage).

**Animal Identification:** Since November we have been under increasing pressure to provide and validate data associated with our cattle in verifiable programs, especially CPH 45. The real change is in the seriousness with which the buyers are demanding the information and the credibility of the system that is required to back it up. Gone are the days when we can say that
all the producers have signed a CPH 45 form. By making claims like we do, we are entering into an auditable source/process verification system that means something.

The drive behind this is clear. The negotiations to reopen trade with foreign customers of beef, specifically Japan, have given rise to a new program and set of guidelines out of USDA known as BEV (Beef Export Verification). This is a set of standardized protocols and procedures for documenting the claims that would allow meat to move into the Japanese market once it reopens. Recognizing the importance of that market, many in the feeding and packing industry are scrambling to position themselves to have animals ready to harvest when that time comes.

The biggest change for our producers is a demand that we be able to verify the age of the animals. This creates panic when you first hear it, but in reality the requirements are very flexible. As they exist right now the BEV requirement for birth date verification offers producers three options:

1. Use individual ID and record the birth of every animal
2. Use individual ID and record the date of bull turn out for each breeding season. Under this option the bull turn out date + 286 days will be used as the oldest possible birth date of all the animals in that crop.
3. Use individual ID and record the date of the first and last calf born in a season. This allows us to bookend the ages and then we have to assume that all the animals were born on the earliest date.

One other definition that the BEV requirements give us is that Source Verification means that the animal can be traced to the farm of birth. We have distinguished here between Source and Origin verification, with origin meaning the farm of birth. The market is saying there is no value in any degree of traceability other than farm of birth.

We are not suggesting that producers be required to report their birth dates to us. However, when we make a claim in the market on birth information and back that up with a signed affidavit from the producer, which is what we have been doing in CPH 45, the producer must understand that if we were to ever be audited it is not outside the realm of possibility that they could be asked to produce records to prove they can support their claim.

We all recognize that the buyers asking for this information are the very ones that we have fought so hard to get into our programs. They are tuned in to premium systems, recognize the value of better cattle and better management and give more money for them. It is very important that we are progressive enough to evolve and meet this demand.

The system that we have in place with the Kentucky Beef Network is becoming widely accepted as a good way of collecting, protecting and appropriately sharing this type of verification information. We are very fortunate to have this system already in place so that we can take advantage of the market opportunity that exists in this early stage of the voluntary National Animal Identification System. For more information regarding these new developments in animal identification contact our IRM coordinator Jim Akers (859-278-0899; jakers@uky.edu).

**Beef Management Tips**
Nutrition

Due to all of the rainfall, 2004 was a great year for producing forage. Pasture yields were greater than they have been for some time in most parts of the state. However, for the same reason, high rainfall especially in the spring, hay quality is very poor. If hay was cut at the proper stage of maturity, it generally got wet before baling and if producers waited for dry times, most forages were past their optimum maturity for harvest. Consequently, most of the hay being fed is nutrient deficient.

Spring calving herds have either started calving or soon will. This means that the nutrient needs of the cow are increasing and will reach a peak within 60 days after calving. This peak need will happen before pasture becomes a sufficient source of nutrients. If low quality hay is the only source of nutrients, the cow will lose body condition trying to meet the nutrient demand for milk production. Even for cows calving in good body condition, a rapid loss of condition for the first few weeks after calving will greatly prolong the return to estrus and can result in late bred cows or more failing to breed, especially the younger cows.

If producers have not had a forage test conducted yet, it is still not too late. Producers must know the level of nutrient content in their forage to know the most limiting nutrient and level of supplementation needed. With most Kentucky hays, energy is much more limiting than protein. However, this year it is not unusual to see forage tests with both limiting.

Producers should sort cows with newborns away from the remaining pregnant cows as soon as possible after calving. They need the very best forage available and in many cases, supplemental feeding as well. Protein needs of the lactating cow are not high, 10 or 11% of the total ration will be sufficient. Hay tests that show inadequate energy levels may require 5 to 10 pounds of supplement depending on how low the actual analysis is. The best supplement to feed with hay will be low in starch. This means something like soybean hulls, corn gluten feed or a combination of both. Corn grain is high in starch and would not make the optimum supplement. Protein supplements such as blocks, tubs or lick tanks are also not optimum if energy is the most limiting nutrient. Cattle cannot generally eat enough of these to meet their energy needs. They will be useful in combination with an energy supplement when both energy and protein are limiting.

Reproduction

Late winter is an important time in reproductive management. Many cows are nearing calving and preparations must be made. Following are several specific things a producer can do to have a successful calving season:

- Separate first calf heifers from mature cows. This allows producers to concentrate their efforts on the group of females that experience the highest incidence of calving problems.
- Provide a clean area for calving
- Be familiar with the signs of calving
- Check cows frequently; observe 3-4 times daily.
- Intervene early if calving difficulty is evident. Intervention is justified when 1.5-2 hours have passed without delivery of the calf. Early assistance aids the cow in recovery and they begin estrous cycles earlier after calving.
- Be sure the calf is breathing normally
- Be sure the calf consumes colostrum. To ensure good health, calves need to consume colostrums (first milk) within 4 hours after calving.
- Increase feed after calving (see Nutrition tips)
Later winter is also the ideal time to prepare for the breeding season. Mark on your IRM calendar the dates you will turn in and remove your bulls from the herd. If AI is to be used, contact your technician to set up the dates and order semen and other supplies. Contact your local veterinarian to set up a date for a breeding soundness exam for your herd sires. Remember, every bull needs to be subjected to a breeding soundness exam about 30 days before the breeding season. One infertile cow means one fewer calf at weaning while one infertile bull means zero calves at weaning.

**Genetics**

Many producers are currently looking for herd sires. Selecting a herd sire is one of the most important decisions a producer can make since the bull contributes one-half the genetics to each calf. The first decision to make is what breed of bull you should use. Select a breed or combination of breeds based upon the following:

- Goals of your operation
- Marketability in your area
- Cost and availability of good seedstock
- Climate
- How the breeds complement each other
- Personal preference

Once a breed is selected, it is time to select an individual bull for purchase. Five criteria should be used to select a bull. First, a bull must be reproductively sound. All bulls should pass a breeding soundness exam at least 30 days prior to the breeding season. Also, select bulls with a large scrotal circumference. Bulls with a larger scrotal circumference produce more semen or higher quality and can service more cows. Serving capacity is not limited in bulls with a yearling scrotal circumference of 35 or more centimeters. Second, a bull must be physically sound. Bull with poor feet and leg structure have a more difficult time servicing cows. Third, the bull must have EPD’s (expected progeny difference) that fit your marketing and production system. Fourth, the bull should be visually inspected for capacity, muscling, and disposition. The last criterion used to select a bull is price. It is to your advantage to comparison shop and select bulls that will work from many different seedstock dealers. Chose the bull that best fits your production needs and your budget.

**Record Keeping Tips:**

- Record January 1 inventory of cow-calf and backgrounding herd.
- Record January 1 inventory of stored feed
- Record winter feed usage for SPA records
- Complete 2004 SPA workbook and return for processing.
- Record calf data for CHAPS: birth date, birth weight, ID and sex.
- Fall calving herd: collect and submit weaning data for CHAPS
- Spring calving herd: Update calf data worksheets
The Beef/Forage Update is organized and distributed by Dr. Les Anderson. To include material in the next issue of the Beef/Forage Update, feel free to contact him by phone (859-257-2856) or email (landerso@uky.edu).

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