

Livestock & Natural Resources Newsletter

DECEMBER 2009

Texas AgriLife Extension Service– Bexar County Office

3355 Cherry Ridge, Suite 212

San Antonio, Texas 78230

(210) 467-6575

<http://bexar-tx.tamu.edu>



2010 Annual South Texas Beef Cattle Shortcourse

Palo Alto College, Fine Arts Bldg. Rm 109
1400 W. Villaret Blvd., San Antonio, TX
Registration 6:00 pm - Programs Begin
Promptly at 6:30 pm Each Evening

Thursday, January 7

**Restocking Your Herd After A Drought
Getting 'Em Ready at the Ranch**

Speaker: Dr. Rick Machen, Extension Livestock
Specialist - Uvalde

Thursday, January 14

**Overview of Where the Cattle Industry is
Headed & How Should We Sell Our Cattle –
Sale Barn or Internet** Speaker: Homero Recio,
Pres. of Agri-West International, Inc., San Antonio

Legal Issues Affecting Homeowners

Speaker: Charles Gilliland, Helen and O.N.
Mitchell of Real Estate Research Economist, Real
Estate Center, Mays Business School, Texas A&M

Thursday, January 21

**Overgrazed Pastures–What Can We Do
About It?** Speaker: Dr. Bob Lyons,

Extension Range Specialist, Uvalde

**Wildlife Management: Managing Cattle and
Wildlife in One System** - Speaker: Dr. Jim
Gallagher, Extension Wildlife Specialist, Uvalde

Sponsor All Sessions: Palo Alto College –
Agriculture Department and Texas/Mexico
Border Coalition

Two (2) CEU's Offered Per Session
RSVP to Annette at (210) 467-6575 for
Session 1, 2 and/or 3

Multi-County Agriculture Conference

Our Lady of Grace Parish
15825 Bexar St., La Coste, Texas

Tuesday, January 19, 2010

AGENDA

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| 8:30 to 9:00 am | Registration |
| 9:00 to 9:15 am | Welcome & Program Overview |
| 9:15 to 9:30 am | Water Law |
| 9:30 to 10:10 am | Dealing with Spider Mites |
| 10:10 to 10:50 am | Alternative Crops & Their Management |
| 10:50 to 11:00 am | Break |
| 11:00 to 11:20 am | Drought Resistant Crop Technology; Where's it at? |
| 11:20 to 12:00 pm | Deficit Irrigation & Yield Implications |
| 12:00 to 1:00 pm | Catered Lunch |
| 1:00 to 1:40 pm | Dealing with Corn Disease Pathogens |
| 1:40 to 2:40 pm | Pesticide Laws & Regulations |
| 2:40 to 3:00 pm | Questions & Answers / Evaluations |

Five (5) CEU's Will Be Given

RSVP to Annette at (210) 467-6575 by January 14

The cost of the event is \$10.00 early registration
\$15.00 at the Door.

Please make your check payable to:

Bexar County Agricultural Committee and mail to:
Multi-County Ag Conference, 3355 Cherry Ridge
Dr., Suite 212, San Antonio, TX 78230

Basketball Strategy for Cow-Calf Producers

Cow-Calf producers like most in the cattle industry, have been on the defensive for the past three years. First buffeted by unprecedented high feed and other input costs in 2007 and early 2008, profitability remained weak as cattle prices collapsed under the weight of the recession and poor beef demand this past year. Poor profitability stalled out the fledging cow herd expansion that began in 2005 and by 2007 the cow herd was declining.

That sets up the situation in late 2009. Beef production is decreasing and projected to continue decreasing for a couple more years. Several macroeconomic indicators suggest that the worst of the recession is behind us and that we should see recovery that leads to improved beef demand in the next few months. The timing is, of course, uncertain. The macroeconomic signals are a mixed bag right now. The stock market has made a significant recovery from the low in early 2009. GDP growth was positive in the third quarter is likely to show growth, albeit modest growth in 2010. However, unemployment is still rising and likely has not peaked yet. Consumer spending remains limited as consumers work to repair their balance sheets. Recovery of beef demand depends on consumers having the financial ability to purchase more beef, along with other things. The good news is that beef demand is fundamentally sound. Consumers still want to purchase and eat beef and they will as soon as they can afford to. That will lead to higher prices and the incentive for the beef industry to expand production when it occurs. This scenario is likely to kick in sometime in 2010 and could be relatively strong in the last part of the year.

What does all this have to do with basketball? Basketball is full of transitions from defense to offensive and vice versa. The key to transitioning into offense is anticipating it and how you play out the final stages of the defensive phase. This is similar to the situation for cow-calf producers. Cattle industry expansion begins with cow herd expansion and cow-calf producers have an opportunity now to think about



positioning themselves to be ahead of the game when it comes time to be on the offense. Decisions to expand in 2010 or at least building the flexibility to begin expansion mostly need to be made in the first few months of the year before summer grazing. This might involve returning cow numbers to normal if they are currently low or it might involve

saving a few more heifers to set up herd growth in the next 12-18 months or it might involve producing replacement heifers that may get to be in strong demand in late 2010 or in 2011. Producers should think about how they can be prepared for a more aggressive production plan and what signals will trigger them to act ahead of the pack and perhaps a full year ahead of the industry in capitalizing on beef market opportunities that could break out quite dramatically when they happen.

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

Raising Beef Cattle Naturally An Option

The need for more return per calf has beef cattle producers looking at alternative production practices.

"Raising cattle naturally is a method that has attracted consumer demand," says Karl Hoppe, North Dakota State University Extension Service area livestock specialist at the Carrington Research Extension Center. "Not to be confused with organic beef production, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has specific standards for raising cattle naturally."

The "naturally raised claim for livestock" standard was published in the Federal Register in January 2009. The USDA's naturally raised claim can be used for meat produced from livestock that meet the following conditions:

- * No growth-promoting products were administered to the animals.
- * No antibiotics (other than ionospheres used to prevent parasitism) were administered to the animals.
- * No animal byproducts were fed to the animals.

Thus, to be considered as raised naturally, calves cannot be implanted with ear implants that stimulate growth via hormones or fed a beta agonist such as ractopamine or clenbuterol. Calves also cannot be treated with antibiotics individually or as a group via the feed or water.

If a calf is sick, it should be identified and separated from the naturally raised calves and treated with antibiotics or other appropriate therapy. But once the sick calf is treated with antibiotics, it no longer is considered to be naturally raised and cannot be sold as such.

Vaccinations (immunizations) that prevent disease and sickness are allowed and encouraged for naturally raised calves.

The type of feed program, such as grass, corn, hay or silage rations, does not affect the naturally raised claim. However, feeds that contain animal byproducts are not allowed. Animal byproducts can come from a variety of sources, including a commercial protein supplement, mineral mix or animal fat. Most feed manufacturers have products that are identified as natural for use in raising cattle naturally.

During the summer, cows usually are provided a mineral mix while grazing pasture. If the mineral mix contains steamed bone meal as a calcium and phosphorous source, these calves no longer will be considered naturally raised since they had access to an animal byproduct while grazing with the cows.

Providing an ionophore to improve feed efficiency also is not allowed. Most creep feeds would have an ionophore included to help control bloat and improve feed efficiency, so calves eating a creep feed with an ionophore are disqualified from being classified as naturally raised.

"Most North Dakota-born calves are raised naturally up to weaning," Hoppe says. "With careful attention to guidelines, these calves may be continued to be raised as 'natural.'"

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Raising cattle naturally is a lifetime claim. Therefore, producers need to keep records of treating sick calves at birth or early in life so that at weaning, those calves cannot be sold as naturally raised.

"Natural beef programs have been increasing in popularity, and calves that qualify may bring premium prices," says Tim Petry, NDSU Extension Service livestock economist. "However, cow-calf producers sometimes become disenchanted with value-added programs, including natural beef, because premiums are not consistent from one sale to another."

A first step for producers considering marketing natural calves would be to talk to the market where calves usually are sold, he advises. The market can contact buyers and other producers who also may be marketing natural calves so that a sufficient number is available to encourage natural buyer attendance at a sale. Some markets hold special sales where natural calves are featured.

"Only one natural buyer at a sale may result in little or no premium, but several buyers can create the competition necessary for significant premiums," Petry says.

Premiums for raising calves naturally may not offset the loss in growth by not using ionophores, implants and other growth-promoting products, Hoppe cautions. Producers need to carefully consider the costs and benefits of changing their management systems. However, a producer who already is managing the calves naturally may receive a higher selling price by making sure that the calves continue to be raised naturally.

"While raising calves naturally is not for everyone, those who can do it should seek out market channels to receive the extra premium," Hoppe says.

Source: North Dakota State University Agriculture Communication

FARM PONDS

By Bryan Davis, Natural Resources Agent, Bexar County

Farm ponds represent tremendous fishing potential in Texas. Besides fishing, ponds provide many important and practical benefits: erosion control, fire control, livestock watering, irrigation, swimming, picnicking and wildlife management.



Unfortunately, many Texas ponds do not provide the kind of fishing they're capable of producing. Good fishing doesn't just happen. It's the result of proper fish

management. By managing your pond wisely, you can look forward to many enjoyable hours of good fishing.

Our office receives many phone calls and inquires about pond management, especially around March and April. We are organizing a seminar to provide the technical and legal advice for people that are interested.

Program goal: To provide timely research-based information for all Bexar County citizens on pond management.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

By Bryan Davis, Natural Resources Agent, Bexar County



As Texas becomes increasingly urban, the need for nature in our cities becomes more and more critical. Over 80% of the Texas population lives in urban areas. The six largest cities combined total over 30% of the state's population. Habitat fragmentation, habitat alteration, and the process of urbanization are major issues facing wildlife populations in urban areas.

To assist cities as they strive to enhance the livability of their urban environments, Texas Parks and Wildlife has assigned wildlife biologist to work in each of the largest urban areas. The duties of these "urban biologist" include providing opportunities for urban residents to reconnect with the natural systems, presenting educational programs for adults and students on a variety of habitat/wildlife issues, serving as technical advisors on multi-agency conservation planning initiatives, and assisting landowners with habitat restoration or enhancements.

Our intent is to provide useful information to individuals interested in managing natural resources on their property.



CATTLE REPRODUCTION: ESTRUS SYNCHRONIZATION

Choosing an estrus synchronization system for use with artificial insemination can be difficult. Estrus synchronization systems vary in cost, labor requirements, and effectiveness. Following are some key factors to consider when choosing an estrus synchronization system. 1) Available labor and facilities, 2) Cost, 3) Reproductive state of the females

The first consideration when choosing an estrus synchronization protocol is determining if sufficient labor and facilities are available to successfully implement the protocol and AI. Ask yourself these questions. Do I have adequate facilities (sorting pens, chute, head-catch, etc.)? Do I have enough labor to observe estrus and sort cows two or more times daily or do I need to use timed-insemination? Is a technician available and for how many days? If the facilities are good but labor and technician time is limiting, then chose a system suitable for timed-insemination. If facilities are somewhat limiting but labor and technician is not, then chose an estrus synchronization system that is suitable for insemination after estrus is detected.

For a system to effectively control estrus in all cows, it must: 1) induce regression of the corpus luteum or a decline in progesterone, 2) control follicular growth, and 3) induce estrus and ovulation in cows that are anestrus. The goal, then, is to use a system that can be delivered to all cows and result in a synchronous, fertile estrus and greater than 50% pregnant to AI in 1-4 days regardless of their reproductive state.



Estrus synchronization protocols that incorporate timed-insemination are chosen most often because labor is usually the most limiting factor and those protocols are effective in both anestrus and cyclic cows. Visit the learning module on estrus synchronization for more information regarding estrus synchronization protocols.

Source: <http://cattlenetwork.com>

Jolley: Five Minutes with Troy Hadrick and the Attack on American Agriculture

About 5% of the American populace is involved in farming, leaving 95% who merely enjoy the fruits of agrarian labor without actually getting their hands dirty. A few dozen people, though, none of them even remotely engaged in agriculture, have managed to grab big headlines through attack [journalism](#).

Q. Animal agriculture seems to be under heavy attack lately - Time magazine and the New York Times have run critical articles. Food, Inc. is a movie still making the rounds with a decidedly anti-agriculture message. Jonathon Safran Foer's book, best described as a vegan's manifesto, has just hit the stores and it's being backed by an enormous PR budget. Ellen DeGeneres

gave a copy of the book to everyone in her audience after Foer appeared on her show. Even Martha Stewart allowed him some of his 15 minutes of fame on her show, and then weighed in with harsh words of her own about animal agriculture. What's going on?

A. It seems to me that since we have had a few in the media that become wealthy and famous by scaring people about the food they eat that it has led to others jumping on that bandwagon and trying to get a piece of the pie. And it's been fairly successful because many of our consumers don't have any first hand knowledge of agriculture or even know a real farmer or rancher that they can turn to ask any questions. That's why it's important for those of us in agriculture to make ourselves available to our consumers and the media and be prepared to share the real story of what happens in food production.

Q. There are two common themes to the recent attacks. (1) Animal agriculture, especially as practiced by so called factory farms, is a brutal and unnecessary practice. (2) Modern farming practices are unsustainable and are destroying the planet. What is your response?

A. I think it needs to be pointed out that all of the practices in questions have come about as what works best for raising our food. Obviously if our livestock were suffering because of the situation we put them in, they wouldn't perform to a level capable of keeping us in business. Not only is providing our livestock with the proper care the right thing to do, it's also the necessary thing to do if farmers and rancher want to be profitable.

Many of the farms and ranches in this country have been in the same families for many generations. They wouldn't have made it this far if they weren't worried about taking care of their land and livestock. Just because it isn't the way grandpa did it, doesn't make it unsustainable or wrong.

Q. Animal rights groups have had a field day with undercover videos of animal abuse. They're using the footage as 'proof' that modern animal agriculture is a cruel practice that should be banned. You're much closer to the real truth. Sitting sensationalism aside, do American farmers and ranchers really care for their animals?

A. American farmers and ranchers have no choice but to take care of their animals. If they want their family to continue being in the business they will have to practice the very best in animal husbandry. Some of our detractors claim that the size of the operation determines the level of care. But that is absolutely wrong. Most families grow their farms so the next generation can join them, and nowhere along the way do they stop caring for their livestock. If we didn't care, we wouldn't be in farming and ranching.

Source: <http://www.cattlenetwork.com>



The Bexar Beef Cattle Committee

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