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Volume XXV Number 3

April/May 2017



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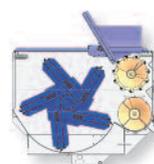
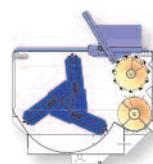


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Hell on Earth

The next 12 hours were spent fighting the fire with water-filled cattle sprayers and bull dozers. The unrelenting winds – sustained at 40 mph with gusts at 60 to 70 mph – created a dust and ash storm like the firefighters had never seen. The heat of the fire had consumed every inch of organic matter that grew from the ground, and the winds

whisked the remains away. All that was left was burned sand, which gleaned like crystals in the palm of your hand. The charred pastures were not black, but instead revealed an eerie brown moonscape. It was like the ranch had disappeared.

Dozens of friends and neighbors came to our aid that day, herding

cattle away from the flames and rescuing baby calves that were just days old. We watched as cows ran directly into the fire to find their newborn babies, and they escaped with only minor injuries. A few young calves suffered burned ears or tails...

In 2009, my family suffered through a wildfire on our ranch in Texas. The paragraphs above are from an article I wrote after the experience. Nearly all of the acreage of our land was burned, and our home sustained almost \$85,000 in damage. Fences were destroyed – even those with t-posts and barbed wire because the heat of the fire left the wire brittle and untrustworthy.

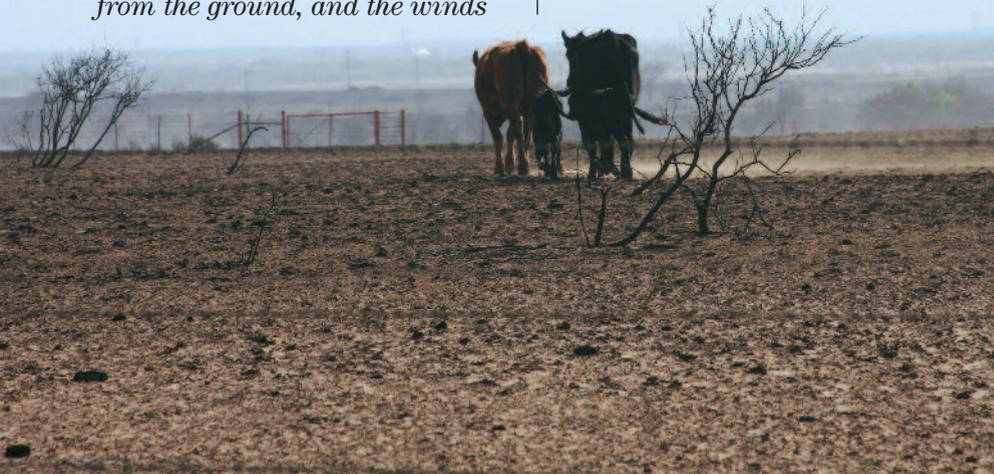
We were fortunate. No human lives were lost. Only a few cows fell victim, and spring rains started almost immediately. Within weeks I had a 1,000 acre green “backyard” as far as I could see.

The ranchers in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas and Colorado experienced their own “hell on earth” in March. My own memories flooded back as I read agriculture news reports and saw videos of the damage. In the last several weeks, the agricultural community has rallied to support their own in only a way our community could. Truck loads of hay, fencing supplies, food, water and volunteer labor have deployed to these areas.

It makes me swell with pride knowing how tight-knit our industry is. When our friends need help, we respond. It's that simple. Stories on the news or Facebook show convoys of hay and fencing supplies traveling to the scarred land.

For those hundreds of land owners affected by the fires, it is far from over. Recent rains will help heal their land, but it will take several months for the grass to return to a graze-worthy state.

If you are compelled to help, several organizations have set up monetary donation and supply donation areas. Here are links to two websites with more information: www.beefusa.org/firereliefresources.aspx and <http://wrca.org/> 

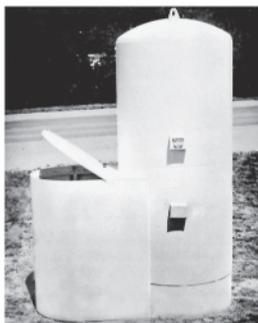


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Consumer demand drives fed Holstein market

According to an Agri News report out of Minnesota, at a recent livestock auction at Central Livestock in Zumbrota, Minnesota, fed Holstein steers sold for about \$30 less than fed beef steers.

Similar reports emerged throughout the region, as Tyson Foods ceased buying Holstein cattle, leaving two plants, American Foods and JBS Packer Land, to absorb the intake in an area of Minnesota and Northwest Iowa known for a high volume of dairy-influenced beef.

Tyson Public Relations External Communications Spokesman Caroline Ahn says of the move, "We continue to harvest Holstein cattle from existing long term supply agreements. Meanwhile, customer

demand continues to drive the direction of our procurement needs."

Kevin Good, Senior Market Analyst with Cattle-Fax, says the move is likely part of a trend toward more retail shelf space dedicated to branded product. "Where we are in the cattle cycle and the big picture economic factors are driving the behavior of the major packers," says Good. Tight supply brought more dairy cattle into the market to utilize capacity and meet demand. Now, with supplies expanding, Good says, "There is more to choose from as packers meet the demands of their retail contracts."

He cites numbers that put dairy cattle breeds at 15 percent of the

fed marketings from 2000-2010. As the beef herd declined in number from 2006-2014, dairy slaughter numbers increased to fill the gap peaking at around 21 percent in 2015 before reversing.

Cary Wimmer is a cattle feeder in Deerfield, Kansas. Deerfield Feeders' 15,000 head dairy heifer development arm funnels a substantial number of Holstein calves into the feedlot, which sells them to the Tyson plant five miles away. "We always have heifers that won't breed, whose only purpose in life is to become a hamburger [or steak]," says Wimmer.

He's one of those long-term contract holders still supplying the animals to Tyson. He says he's had no

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notification of that changing, but he is looking down the road at changes that may come. He can't buck consumer trends.

"If the day comes when I can't sell to Tyson, we'll just have to look for different markets," says Wimmer. "We won't quit raising Holsteins. There will just be one less player in the game." He sold to others before Tyson became his neighbor and is confident "some competitor will pick them up." He's quick to note "probably cheaper."

Wimmer's optimism stems from the U.S. cattle herd numbers, still small in comparison to herd numbers of a decade or two ago.

Things are shifting. But it will still require cattle with a dairy influence to meet domestic and export demand. "Someone will feed them," says Wimmer, "but they will have to do profitably."

Every link of the beef production chain needs its profit, and Good

says the change in Tyson's buying practices could open up opportunities for regional packing plants.

"These cattle will remain part of the picture and someone will need to harvest them," says Good, who says he has seen interest grow in the Eastern Corn Belt, and expects California and Arizona with their heavy dairy numbers to respond.

Dairy cattle do have a consumer market. "If you take a Holstein calf at 300 pounds and feed it out on corn for a year, there is nothing better to eat," says Wimmer.

Dairy cattle tend to grade a higher percentage of Choice and Prime than the beef category, according to Good. Their disadvantage is in dressing percentage, and a smaller and flatter ribeye and loin.

"If you've eaten at a steakhouse that features an 8 or 10 ounce ribeye, you've probably eaten a Holstein," adds Wimmer

Not only have dairy cattle found

a home in the domestic market, but they fit the demands of many export markets as well.

"We're going to see continued demand for more branded product," says Good, "and that is going to continue to influence some buyers. But dairy cattle will still be part of the picture."

Although, he adds, that picture could change. To stay competitive, he sees dairy calf producers using more sexed semen and more beef semen in their breeding strategies. He also expects to see more mega dairies increase vertical integration by retaining ownership.

The summation, according to Wimmer, lands on the bottom line, and he still sees one for his Holsteins. "There's still a profit opportunity there. It might be with a new buyer after a different end product. But there will still be a market and plants that want them." **FL**



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QUALITY BEEF GRADE, DRESSING PERCENTAGE AND GRIDS

The average cattle feeder wants to be rewarded for above-average beef quality, and many have turned to some type of value-based “grid” marketing to earn premiums. After selling a few pens on a packer grid, some feeders lament it’s less about quality and more about dressing percent, the whole-carcass yield of beef, including bones in those cuts.

Taking a closer look, Paul Dykstra, beef cattle specialist with the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB®) brand, admits that number is important.

“Falling below the industry standard of 63.5% dressed weight means we start out on the grid several dollars behind the alternative live-weight sale price,” he says “Cattle that hang more pounds of saleable carcass weight as a percentage of live weight obviously put us at an advantage.”

The rest of the grid proposition plays out through premiums and discounts based on carcass quality grade, including CAB brand premiums, along with yield grade (lean-to-fat ratio) and “outs” due to nonconformance.

Quality and yield grades drive dollars, and the illustrations show how those numbers add up (\$/hundredweight/head), comparing industry-average cattle to those of high quality grade.

The tables apply a fairly representative set of grid premiums and discounts to the two pens of steers,” Dykstra says. “We can banter about what the grade percentages should be on high-marbling cattle, but these figures are well below the extremes we’ve seen. Our math includes the 2016 average Choice-Select spread of \$9.37/cwt., much wider than the current spread. As some cattle of higher

Industry Average Pen		
Category	%	\$ / Cwt. Impact
Prime	5%	\$ 1.00
CAB®	17%	\$ 0.85
Choice	75%	\$ 2.11
Select	20%	(\$ 1.87)
QG Total		\$ 2.08
YG 1	5%	\$ 0.20
YG 2	30%	\$ 0.60
YG 4	15%	(\$ 1.05)
YG 5	0%	\$ 0.00
YG Total		(\$ 0.25)
Premium / Cwt.		\$ 1.83
Premium / Head		\$16.31

High Quality Pen		
Category	%	\$ / Cwt. Impact
Prime	15%	\$ 3.00
CAB®	55%	\$ 2.75
Choice	85%	\$ 2.39
Select	0%	(\$ 0.00)
QG Total		\$ 8.14
YG 1	0%	\$ 0.00
YG 2	20%	\$ 0.40
YG 4	25%	(\$ 1.75)
YG 5	0%	\$ 0.00
YG Total		(\$ 1.35)
Premium / Cwt.		\$ 6.79
Premium / Head		\$60.36

Live Weight	Dressing %	Hot Carcass Weight	Weight Difference	\$ Per Head Difference
1400 lb.	62.5%	875	14 lb.	\$27.30
	63.5%	889		

quality grade tend toward higher yield grade as well, the high-marbling pen shows the disadvantage of more Yield Grade 4 discounts, for argument’s sake.”

Results for this comparison show a \$6.79/cwt. premium for the high-marbling pen over the cash market, a \$44.05/head advantage over the industry average pen.

“In contrast, if we focus strictly on dressing percent, a fairly

common 1-point difference above or below industry average creates a \$27.30/head impact with a base price of \$195/cwt. and live weight of 1,400 lb.,” Dykstra notes. “Ideally, we’d own multi-faceted cattle that give up nothing in dressing percent and simply capture further premiums. This example just shows quality drivers can overcome the dressed-yield driver in some pens.”



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Brazil could be a game changer

Brazil is in the middle of an investigation with regards to the “tainted meat scandal.” Most importers of Brazilian beef have suspended imports. China is the main importer of Brazilian beef and is encouraging Brazil to hand out harsh punishments to those involved. China does not appreciate their food supply being put at risk and tends to turn their back on suppliers for lengthy periods of time. This story is evolving and it is suspected that the consequences will be long lasting and shift the import/export picture as we know it.

This could be a game changer as the Brazil story comes at a time when export demand is on the increase out of the US. China has been active in capturing supply from Australia. Chinas middle class is growing and when economies improve, there is usually an increase in demand of higher forms of protein. If you consider the earlier problems with bird flu and now tainted meat out of

Brazil, the possible shifts in exports as the world attempts to secure safe meat products becomes complex. Tight supplies in the US, Australia and Canada (the main exporters other than Brazil) causes a situation where exports have to be shuffled to meet increasing demand. If China absorbs all of Australia’s exportable beef then less is available for the US, Japan and South Korea. Stay tuned to this story as it plays out and possibly forces prices higher as exports are shifted from country to country.

Producers focus currently seems to be the June through August timeframe.

As this rally matures, producers will likely be given an opportunity to hedge cattle and feeder cattle at higher prices. However, markets are not likely to go up forever so latch on to those hedges on rallies as you can.

Grain input costs seem to be cheap at the moment. The planting intentions report at the end of the month may have some surprises in it as producers shift acres

Stay tuned to this story as it plays out and possibly forces prices higher as exports are shifted from country to country.

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from corn to soybeans. Analysts at the present see corn acres being reduced some 3.4 million acres on average. A reduction of this magnitude and trend line yields would reduce carryover. Then the marketplace will worry over weather all spring which would likely produce a rally in the corn market. Suggested is buy corn calls on the current pull back and cover those feed costs.

It seems there is a general bullishness in most markets. The new administration seems to be doing the things needed to get our economy to improve. If the US economy does improve as thought, inflation may begin to increase giving commodities a boost. The new administration has only been in office a little over two months so patience is required as it starts to turn around. **FL**

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U.S. Beef Industry to President Trump: Please Help Get U.S. Beef Back into China

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association sent a coalition letter to President Donald Trump, urging him to raise the restoration of U.S. beef access to China when he meets with Chinese President Xi Jinping in April. Leaders from the U.S. Meat Export Federation and the North American Meat Institute also signed the letter.

American beef producers have been denied access to China – a \$2.6 billion import market – since 2003. Last fall China announced that it had lifted its ban on imports of U.S. beef, but attempts since then to negotiate the technical terms of access have been unsuccessful.

“We believe that access to the large and growing Chinese beef market is essential to the future health of the U.S. beef industry,” read the letter, which was signed by NCBA's CEO, Kendal Frazier. “We understand that you have many important issues to discuss with President Xi, but we strongly encourage you to take this important opportunity to convey the urgent need for China to reopen its market to U.S. beef.”

In 2016, American beef producers sold \$6.3 billion worth of U.S. beef to customers around the world, with three of the industry's top foreign markets located in Asia. **FL**

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Sticky Fingers

It seems to be getting more common. A few cows end up missing from someone's pasture. A trailer disappears in the middle of the night. Or even loads of yearlings are shuffled around only to leave someone 100 head short at shipping. Livestock and livestock-related thefts are a century-old problem, but it seems like there are more and more stories on the news.

Some thefts are elaborate schemes that bilk thousands of dollars from an unsuspecting victim while others are a crime of opportunity. The Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association employs Special Rangers who are law enforcement officers that fight livestock and agriculture-related theft. One ranger, Scott Williamson of Seymour, Texas, said one way to reduce your chance of becoming a victim is employing common sense.

"It's the old adage, if it's too good to be true, it likely

is," he said. "If you don't know who you're dealing with, make sure to get some references."

Livestock theft can happen any time, but Williamson said cattle transactions, especially those over the phone or over the Internet, can be problematic if you don't know the other individual involved in the sale.

"As people are trying to restock cows, we are running into problems where they are buying cattle over the internet, agreeing to take delivery based on photos. Then either the cattle are not represented accurately, or they are never delivered."

Williamson said it's the buyer's responsibility to make sure you know what you're buying. "Be diligent. Inspect those cattle, or have an agent you can trust to do that for you."

So much of business in agriculture is done on a hand shake, he said. "Agriculture is still an integrity-based business. Don't get caught up in what you always did, because times have changed." Williamson encouraged cattlemen to take more caution in dealing with people, and be very, very careful in dealing with someone you don't know.

When it comes to general livestock or property theft, he said to have a crime watch mentality. "Everyone of us have cell phones. We can recognize when something isn't right. If a strange truck is in the pasture, or gates don't look like they should, immediately take the time to pick up the phone and make sure it's okay."

He said tips or little things people notice or recognize as irregularities all help in an investigation. "All the little pieces of information are required to make a criminal case," he explained.

Other theft prevention tips from the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association include:

- Lock gates.
- Brand cattle and horses. Make sure the brand is recorded with the county clerk.
- Put driver's license number on all saddles, tack and equipment.
- Video horses and tack. Keep complete and accurate descriptions on file. Establish an organized, easy-to-find proof of ownership file to save valuable time in recovery process.
- Count cattle regularly.
- Don't establish a routine when feeding. Vary the times you feed.
- Be cautious about who gets keys and combinations.
- If possible, park trailers and equipment where they are out of view from the roadway.
- Keep tack rooms and saddle compartments on trailers locked.
- Don't feed in pens.
- Participate in neighborhood Crime Watch programs.
- Don't build pens close to a roadway.
- Never leave keys in tractors or other equipment. 

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FEEDYARD BUDGETING: Start with the Basics...Start with a Plan



In North Dakota, the cattle feeding business is growing.

Many producers entering or expanding cattle feeding operations are inspired by young folks, a great sign, according to John Dhuyvetter, Extension Livestock Specialist with North Dakota State University's North Central Research Extension Center, who

says adding a feedyard of the 1,000-head type is often the expansion an operation needs to provide income for a second family. New, younger producers are interested in cattle, and NRCS programs like EQIP help overcome the beginner's lack of capital.

To help those young producers, North Dakota State offers a Feedlot School each January, a two-day conference aimed at beginning cattlemen. "We have 25 slots and they fill quickly," says Dhuyvetter, a presenter at this year's event. His "Budgets for Different Production Scenarios" presentation walks the feedlot producer through the calculations needed for a profitable venture. "They're young, just starting to fill their role in generational turn-over, and the gender breakdown is about 50-50. It's our goal to give them the information and discipline to make decisions."

Younger producers are looking at many options beyond the traditional feedyard. Custom feeding fits some scenarios. Heifer development is popular, as is back-grounding, and finishing cull cows.

All types of cattle feeding require exact budgeting in an in-exact

business.

To help young producers develop a budget, Dhuyvetter breaks expenses down to three main items: cattle, feed, and yardage.

"First you have to buy the cattle, enough to keep the pens full, and at a price where they can be sold for a profit," says Dhuyvetter. That's, of course, not as easy as it sounds. Dhuyvetter says each producer must develop his or her own strategy. Some will buy mismanaged cattle at the bottom of the market, that maybe haven't been preconditioned or well fed, and make the added effort to bring them up to a productive level. While others will buy top-of-the-line genetics to score on the grid.

Either way, he says it helps to hedge or explore contracting deals to lock in prices.

That's not to say every asset has a set price. Dhuyvetter also stresses the feedlot owner and manager need a good relationship with the local veterinarian to develop receiving and treatment protocols, as well as feed rations.

"Feed is the biggest single cost," says Dhuyvetter. In North Dakota,



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producers are often able to raise some of the needed feed. The area has ample supply of corn, distiller's by-product, soy meal, and beet pulp. Still, ration is crucial, and the number one concern he hears from producers as an extension agent. He advises feeders not to wait for ideal purchasing circumstances. "If corn is \$3 and you can afford that, buy now," he says. "Don't wait for \$2.50, or \$4."

He stresses feed prices, like selling price, "won't be the same a month from now. So, when you can lock something in, do it."

The third major expense for any feedlot operation is yardage. "Utilities, labor, and long term expenses like repair and replacement of fixtures and equipment can take its toll on the budget," says Dhuyvetter, who adds fuel and debt service to the list. "Most new producers just going in don't know the full cost of all these things," he says. Labor may be mostly family but is that enough? Can a fuel contract lock in prices? Is Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) worth the cost?

"LRP might be worth it to secure your position with your banker," says Dhuyvetter. "Lenders in this part of the country are conservative." Unlike areas where lenders look to cattle feeding as a way to preserve feed equity, northern bankers tend to rely on land and a young producer's family to provide the stability and equity for feedyard financing. "It can be challenging for the young producer," he adds. "It's important to have a good business plan that outlines how you intend to use the bank's money."

Dhuyvetter makes the case that anyone can buy cattle, but feeding and selling them at a profit requires a long-term vision and exact calculation, and possibly a large-scale approach to make any real money.

"You need to know your cost of gain, value of gain, feed cost of gain, total cost of gain – and know the difference." Dhuyvetter and his team at North Dakota State have developed software that helps.

CalfWEB provides a breakeven calculator and a closeout analyzer. CowBytes is an easy to use beef ration balancing software package.

Dhuyvetter says if the feeder can average \$30 per head eight out of nine years, they can consider their business marginally positive.

To help with long-term decisions, young producers need to acquaint themselves with the industry and various options. What markets

are available? Is it better for a cow/calf operation to feed their own or buy? Is it more important to buy calves with feeder calf verification, or to be sure and get them from a known source?

"Be imaginative and always keep an eye out for better options," says Dhuyvetter. "Then, with the numbers in front of you, you can make good decisions and realize profits." **FL**



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¹ Production Best Practices (PBP) to Aid in the Control of Foodborne Pathogens in Groups of Cattle. Beef Industry Food Safety Council Subcommittee on Pre-Harvest, Spring 2015. Accessed March 19, 2015.
² Tabe ES, Oloya J, Doekott DK, Bauer ML, Gibbs PS, Khaitsa ML. Comparative effect of direct-fed microbials on fecal shedding of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 and *Salmonella* in naturally infected feedlot cattle. *J. Food Prot.* May 2008; 31(7): 539-544.
³ Lallemand Animal Nutrition. Unpublished, United States, 1996.
⁴ Hutcheson D and Lallemand Animal Nutrition. Unpublished, United States, 1986.

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Low Feedlot Cost of Gain Making an Impact in Stocker Cattle Decisions

The current feeder market appears to be fully reflecting low feedlot cost of gain, which in turn is squeezing stocker cattle margins and changing the signals for stocker production.

“While broader supply and demand forces determine what gets produced and how much is produced, the question of how to produce is particularly tricky in the cattle industry,” said Derrell Peel, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension livestock marketing specialist.

Basically, the ruminant biology of cattle provides tremendous flexibility in how animals are produced but also means lots of challenges to figure out how to produce cattle most competitively.

In the complex, multi-sector world of cattle production, this coordination is directed by dynamic market signals driving stocker and feedlot production adjustments in the face of changing feed resource values.

“Feed grain prices dictate feedlot cost of gain, which drives feedlot demand for feeder cattle of various weights,” Peel said. As feedlots determine whether they would rather buy lighter weight animals and add weight in the feedlot or buy livestock with more weight, the resulting feeder price relationships across weights will change and provide the corresponding signal for stocker or backgrounding producers.”

Ultimately, the market is trying

to figure out which sector can add weight to feeder cattle most cost effectively. Over time and on average, feeder cattle price relationships reflect feedlot cost of gain as the value of gain for stocker cattle. However, cattle producers need to be aware that, at times, feeder markets will be out of equilibrium for a few weeks to a few months.

“Record feed grain supplies and low feed prices were not fully reflected in lightweight feeder cattle prices in the second half of 2016 and into early 2017,” Peel said. “However, feeder prices in the past month or so have increasingly adjusted to reflect the continued reduction in feedlot cost of gain.”

As recently as the third week of January, the price of 500-pound Number 1 steers in Oklahoma was about \$162 per hundredweight or \$810 per head while 800-pound steers were priced at \$132 per hundredweight or \$1,058/head. This implied a value of gain of 82 cents per pound for 300 pounds of weight gain.

In contrast, for the week ending March 3, 500-pound steers in Oklahoma were priced at \$164 per hundredweight or \$822 per head while 800-pound steers were priced at \$125 per hundredweight or \$997 per head, leading to a value of gain of 58 cents per pound for 300 pounds of gain.

“Cheap feed grain ultimately means feedlots want to put more weight on cattle in the feedlot

compared to buying that weight and implies increased feedlot demand for lighter weight animals relative to heavy feeders,” Peel said. “In short, we’re talking low feedlot cost of gain. Cheap grain results in stocker production incentives to utilize lighter weight stockers and turn them over more quickly by selling at lighter feeder weights.”

This is in sharp contrast to much of the past few months when there were strong market signals to add weight in producer operations and take stockers to heavier weights before marketing.

“Stocker producers grazing out wheat or looking ahead to summer stocker grazing should carefully evaluate production and marketing plans with respect to purchase weight, enterprise length and sale weight of stocker cattle,” said Trent Milacek, OSU Cooperative Extension area agricultural economist headquartered in the state’s Northwest District.

Milacek believes low feedlot cost of gain will likely continue throughout the summer, given that large grain stocks have ensured supplies of feed grain will be present for the near future. Analysts and producers alike will get a better sense for the outlook on 2018 feed grain prices as summer weather events present themselves across the U.S. Corn Belt.

“As always, producers must focus on maximizing gains while doing their best to navigate markets,” he said. “To take advantage of increased value-of-gain, a producer must have pounds to sell. In addition, some form of price protection is required to lock-in that price to protect against market fluctuations.”

In the end, Milacek cautions, producers should focus on efficiency. If production suffers when modifying their operation to accommodate various weights of cattle, overall profitability may not increase. **FL**





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BY DON TYLER

ATV Safety for Feedlots

According to the **United States Consumer Product Safety Commission**, around 150,000 people go to the emergency room every year for ATV-related injuries. Too often, these victims are children. Of the 350 or so ATV fatalities that occur annually, 3 out of 5 of them occur on farms. That's an ATV fatality on a farm every other day.

Some of the most serious non-fatal ATV injuries include traumatic brain injury (TBI), permanent concussions, neurologic injuries, spinal cord injuries, neck fractures, broken bones and dislocations in addition to chest and abdominal injuries. Rollovers and crashing into trees, feed bunks, gates, fences, equipment or other vehicles can cause TBI. Initially, the victim may not even appear to be injured so examination by a medical professional is always recommended.

ATV's are deceptively dangerous, in part because they are incredibly useful on feedlots and, let's face it,



they are fun to operate. We have the added challenge that cattle are unpredictable. Some feedlots have gone away from horses to ATV's only to realize that the ATV lacks a few layers of security—the brain, agility and reaction time of a horse. It's something to consider when reviewing these options for your operation.

Protect Yourself

Riding ATV's for work or pleasure exposes us to hazards that can be minimized with the right personal protective equipment (PPE):

- **Helmet**—ALWAYS wear a DOT-rated helmet when operating an ATV. No exceptions. Be sure that it fits correctly and the straps are secure.
- **Eye Protection**—Face shields or safety glasses are essential to protect from bugs, dirt, dust, mud, branches, etc.
- **Clothing**—Long sleeved shirts and full-length pants are needed to protect from airborne hazards, wires, protrusions, fencing, hot areas of the ATV, etc. They should not be loose or baggy.
- **Boots**—Be sure that your footwear protects you from the hazards you will encounter and the conditions you will be working in that day. The laces on your boots should not be too loose or hang in a way that could get caught in moving parts of the vehicle or hazards outside the ATV.
- **Gloves**—Gloves are essential to protect you from hazards you are exposed to during operation and normal contact with handle grips.

Safe Operation

- **Train**—No one should operate an ATV in your business until they are trained. You need a specific training checklist that must be passed to ensure they know how to work safely and effectively.
- **Maintain**—Any equipment that is poorly maintained has the potential to be unsafe. Be sure that guards, foot rests, handle bars, lights, brakes, gauges, racks,

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throttle and other controls all operate as designed. Ensure that mud or other debris is removed from all surfaces and controls to ensure safe operation.

- **Operate**—Avoid driving around hillsides with slopes greater than 15 degrees. Be sure to drive straight up or down the hill in these situations. Keep all four wheels on the ground at all times, drive at the appropriate speed, and watch for loose soil, slippery surfaces and uneven terrain.

- **Balance**—Keep your center of gravity positioned appropriately for the conditions, avoid quick turns and keep loads tied down so they cannot shift or injure you. When towing, use only the hitch provided and tow less than the maximum allowed weight. Drive slower, make wider turns and brake cautiously.
- **Road Surface**—Additional caution is needed when driving from an unpaved to a paved surface. The traction changes suddenly and handling adjustments are necessary. Follow regular highway driving rules when on roads with other vehicles. Be sure brake, tail, head lights and turn signals are all operational.
- **Be Sober**—Alcohol and certain prescription drugs can affect your reflexes. These don't mix with driving an ATV.

ATV's can be fun, but the joy is gone forever if you or a family member is seriously injured while driving for pleasure or as a part of regular work duties. These simple tips can save a life and prevent debilitating injuries that shatter a person's quality of life, security and future earnings. **FL**

Don Tyler is the owner of Tyler & Associates management coaching and President of Good Day's Work safety training. For more information on these and other employee management topics, contact him at 765-490-0353 or don@gooddayswork.ag



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A Sustainable Future

Stakeholders share what the buzzword means to them, announce pilot project at Noble Foundation event

Today's consumers demand more from their food than ever before. High on their list of priorities? Sustainability. But just what does that commonly used phrase mean? What will it mean for cattlemen going forward? The Noble Foundation addressed this and more at its Texoma Cattlemen's Conference: The Future of Sustainable Beef, held February 24 in Ardmore, Okla.

Stakeholders representing various levels of the supply chain — cow-calf, feeding, packing and foodservice — each spoke on the importance of raising and marketing a product that satisfies consumers' growing demands without giving up its economic viability.

John Butler, who serves as chief executive officer of Manhattan, Kan.-based Beef Marketing Group and feeds cattle in Kansas and Nebraska, said there are many definitions of sustainability, but to him it's about always striving to improve.

"I'm a third-generation cattle producer," Butler said. "And I've heard, 'Well, I am a third-generation cattleman so, in fact, I am sustainable. That may be one definition. But that is not how I look at it or how we look at it. For us, sustainability is about continual improvement. It is about identifying the resources that we use and figuring out ways that we can use them better.'"

Butler said the United States Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, a group he serves as chairman of, defines sustainability through their vision statement: "The U.S. beef value chain is the trusted global leader in environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable beef."

"Now, as a cattle producer, I am interested in all three of those," Butler said. "But No. 1 for me, let there be no mistake, is the third one. It has to be economically viable."

He said cattlemen should embrace the opportunity to join the sustainability conversation.

"We can't afford to sit on the sidelines," he said. "This could be driven for us, or we can help drive it."

Butler said the roundtable initially identified 123 indicators of sustainability but funneled those down to six to focus on: animal care, efficiency of yield, water resources, land resources, greenhouse emissions and employee safety and well-being.

"I'm telling you, ladies and gentleman, they are harmless," Butler said. "There is nothing about these that we should be fearful of or any kind of concern about. These are things we are managing anyway."

For example, one of the metrics of animal care is becoming Beef Quality Assurance certified.

"We didn't want to build indicators

that would be way out here and have vast measurements," he said. "We wanted to walk before we run. But if we cannot at least become BQA certified, then we are not being responsible stewards of these animals."

Townsend Bailey is no stranger to sustainability buzz — it's even part of his job title. The director of supply chain sustainability for McDonald's said for the fast food chain, it's a matter of assured supply and risk management.

"To McDonald's," Bailey said, "Sustainability is the ability to keep doing what we're doing. That means beef in our restaurants, for our customers, any time they want it."

But they don't want to just keep on doing what they're doing. They want to do it better and better.

"It's not just about being able to keep selling hamburgers," Bailey said. "It's about our role in the world." He explained the company has more than 36,000 restaurants all over the globe. They serve about 70 million people per day.

"That's a tremendous responsibility, and it's also a tremendous opportunity," Bailey said. "Each one of those touchpoints is an opportunity to have a positive impact on those customers and it's also an opportunity to have a positive impact throughout our supply chain as well." 

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Heifers That Don't... from previous page

He said though he's not a cattle producer, he understands their concerns.

"One of the fears is, 'What is it going to cost me?' I can assure you it is the same for us," Bailey says. "We don't want to add cost. We want to identify opportunities for cost savings so we can all be more competitive."

Connecting the dots

During the conference, a pilot

research project with a goal to improve sustainability in the U.S. beef industry was announced. Butler explained the pilot project, launched by a national coalition of McDonald's USA, Tyson Foods, Noble Foundation, Beef Marketing Group and Golden State Foods, would be an effort to take the indicators outlined by the United States Roundtable for Sustainable Beef one step further.

"We've taken the concepts established by the roundtable and said, 'We want to try this,'" Butler said. "If we connect the dots, how much can we learn?"

The Noble Foundation will coordinate and provide project management services for the overall project.

"Our efforts will examine every step of beef production from the ranch to the consumer's plate," said Dr. Billy Cook, director of the Noble Foundation's agricultural division. "For generations, agricultural producers have found ways to increase production through more efficient practices and responsible land stewardship. This project translates this approach of continuous improvement into a real-world, systems-wide application that holds the potential to someday benefit producers and customers around the globe."

The cattle for the pilot project will be raised by ranchers who are a part of the Noble Foundation's Integrity Beef Alliance. Beef Marketing Group will feed the cattle in one of their feedyards in Kansas.

"Each of our collaborating organizations actively seeks new methods and innovations that ultimately lead to increased sustainability," Butler said. "Imagine what will happen when you bring all five organizations together to examine the entire process. The possibilities of additional knowledge, improved efficiencies and new ideas are almost limitless."

Beef Marketing Group will send the cattle to Tyson Foods for harvesting. Some of the meat will then go to Golden State Foods, which supplies McDonald's with some of the 100 percent beef patties served at its restaurants.

"Consumers asked the agriculture and food production sectors to be more sustainable, and we have responded," Bill Buckner, president and CEO of the Noble Foundation, said. "This research project is a reflection of our dedication to the agriculture industry and its current consumers as well as those who we hope to serve in the future."



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DON'T LET COWS FALL VICTIM TO THE SPRING NUTRIENT GAP

Short Grass Can Shortchange Freshly Calved Cows at Their Time of Greatest Need.

Fresh green grass is a welcome sight come spring. However, early spring grass with limited growth or volume should be approached with caution when it's used as the sole source of nutrition for recently calved cows. With limited grass volume, cows can expend more protein and energy than they are taking in and lose body condition.

“Cows are also coming out of gestation and into their time of

highest nutritional requirement,” says Lee Dickerson, Ph.D. and senior cattle consultant with Purina Animal Nutrition. “While it can be lucrative to turn cows out on pasture at the first sign of grass, short grass won't supply the nutrients a cow needs to perform her best.”

Providing adequate nutrition helps cows stay in condition, which can in turn help cows get rebred. Rebreeding success will

determine the number of calves you'll have the following year and how much those calves weigh.

What are the cow's requirements coming out of gestation and into lactation? How can you ensure you're giving her everything she needs?

Needs by the numbers

“Nutritional requirements climb upward from gestation to the last trimester of pregnancy and are at their highest during lactation,” says Dickerson.

As a cow begins lactation, her protein and phosphorus requirements go up about 60 to 70 percent compared to requirements during the last trimester. Requirements for total digestible nutrients (TDN), or energy, increase by an additional 15 to 25 percent.

These nutrients impact milk production, a cow's ability to get bred back quickly and, ultimately, the resulting calf crop.

“If you only maintain your feeding rate from gestation to lactation, you may start shorting your cows of adequate protein and energy. This gap in nutrition can result in lost body condition and performance,” says Dickerson.

What's at stake?

Research shows that body condition score (BCS) at calving impacts how quickly cows begin cycling and become pregnant. For

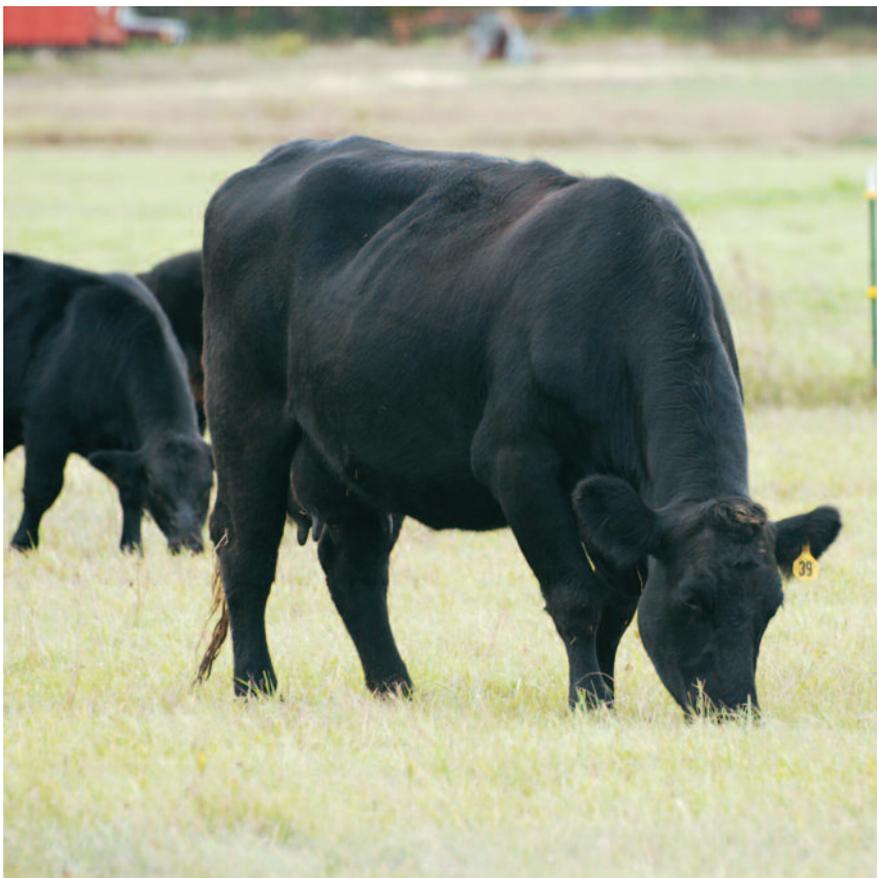


Photo courtesy of Purina

cows that calved in at a body condition score of 6 (ideal), 98 percent showed estrus by day 40 of the breeding season, and 90 percent were confirmed pregnant by day 40. Comparatively, a drop to a BCS 5 resulted in just 80 percent in estrus and 65 percent confirmed pregnant. At BCS 4, only 56 percent were in estrus and 43 percent were confirmed pregnant.

“For every 100 cows, a single point drop from a BCS 6 to a 5 at breeding could equate to roughly 25 calves that are either born later or are not born at all because nutrition slipped post-calving,” says Dickerson. “Calves born later result in less weaning weight.”

The amount of energy provided to a cow also influences her milk production and lactation length, which impacts nutrition available for her calf.

Research has shown that a cow consuming 170 Kcal per metabolic body weight will maintain peak milk production for approximately 8.3 weeks at 20.2 pounds of milk per day, and will produce 2,726 pounds of milk over the course of 210 days. Providing additional energy, at a level of 290 Kcal per metabolic body weight, resulted in maintaining peak milk production for 10.9 weeks, at 24.2 pounds of milk per day and a total 210-day production of 3,742 pounds.

Set up for spring success

“It’s easy to get excited about a little bit of green grass, but in reality, there may not be enough volume to support a cow’s increasing requirements,” says Dickerson. He emphasizes, “Cows will run for green grass and burn more energy searching for grass than what they’ll consume. The energy deficit can result in lost condition.”

A visual loss in condition often means you’ve already left some performance on the table. Supplements can help regain condition, but playing catch-up typically means feeding large amounts of supplement at a higher cost.

Dickerson recommends providing free-choice hay and supplement early until grass is lush and plentiful.

“Offer hay early and continue feeding it long enough for cows to achieve a BCS 6 at calving and no less than a BCS 5.5 at breeding,” says Dickerson.

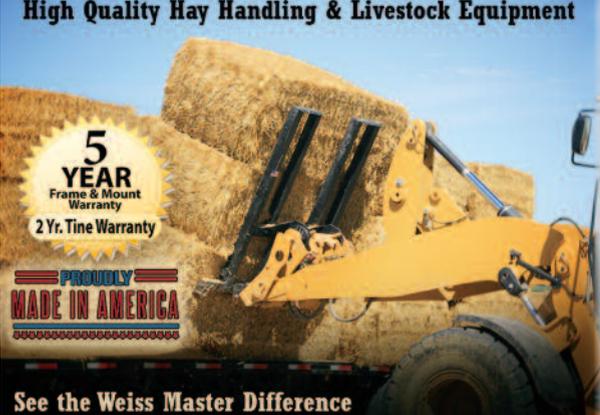
Hay can be complemented with a self-fed supplement containing intake control properties, which allows cattle to decide if they need additional energy and protein. Cows

won’t consume much supplement if forage is meeting their requirements, but will consume more supplement if forage is not meeting requirements.

“Supplementation can help cows maintain body condition through all seasons and can optimize cow performance with existing forage,” concludes Dickerson.

Cover the spring nutrient gap, and set your cows up for greatness. **FL**

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Jaylor Acquires MMI International

Jake Tamminga, President of Jaylor, proudly announced that Jaylor has purchased controlling interest in MMI International Inc. (formerly Morlang). MMI is a leading manufacturer of 4 auger horizontal feed mixers, and manure spreaders, primarily serving the feedlot industry in the USA.

“For decades we’ve been die-hard proponents of the vertical auger, and on most operations it is

the best solution, but there are some commercial applications where the horizontal mixer has proven to be a better fit” Tamminga noted, “The proprietary quad auger design that Dan Powers, and his team at MMI, developed, takes advantage of modern hydrostatic smart controls while still being functionally simple and reliable.”

Jaylor will offer three truck mount models of the Horizontal Quad Auger TMR Mixers: H1650, H1850, and H1950 ranging in capacity from 650cu.ft. (18.4m³) to



950cu.ft. (26.9m³), available today. Simplicity is the keynote, as the entire range has been engineered to be simple yet robust, providing years of trouble free performance. The Hydrostatic Planetary Drive system provides quiet operation with soft-start and variable speed, allowing precise mixing and feed out speeds without revving the engine, while effectively eliminating harmful shock-loads. An intuitive joystick control activates all mixing and feeding functions, allowing operators to concentrate on feed placement without needing to look down at the controls. Improvements in the current industry-leading warranty, are also being offered.

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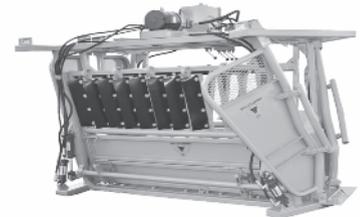
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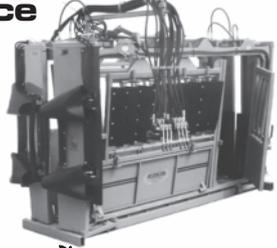
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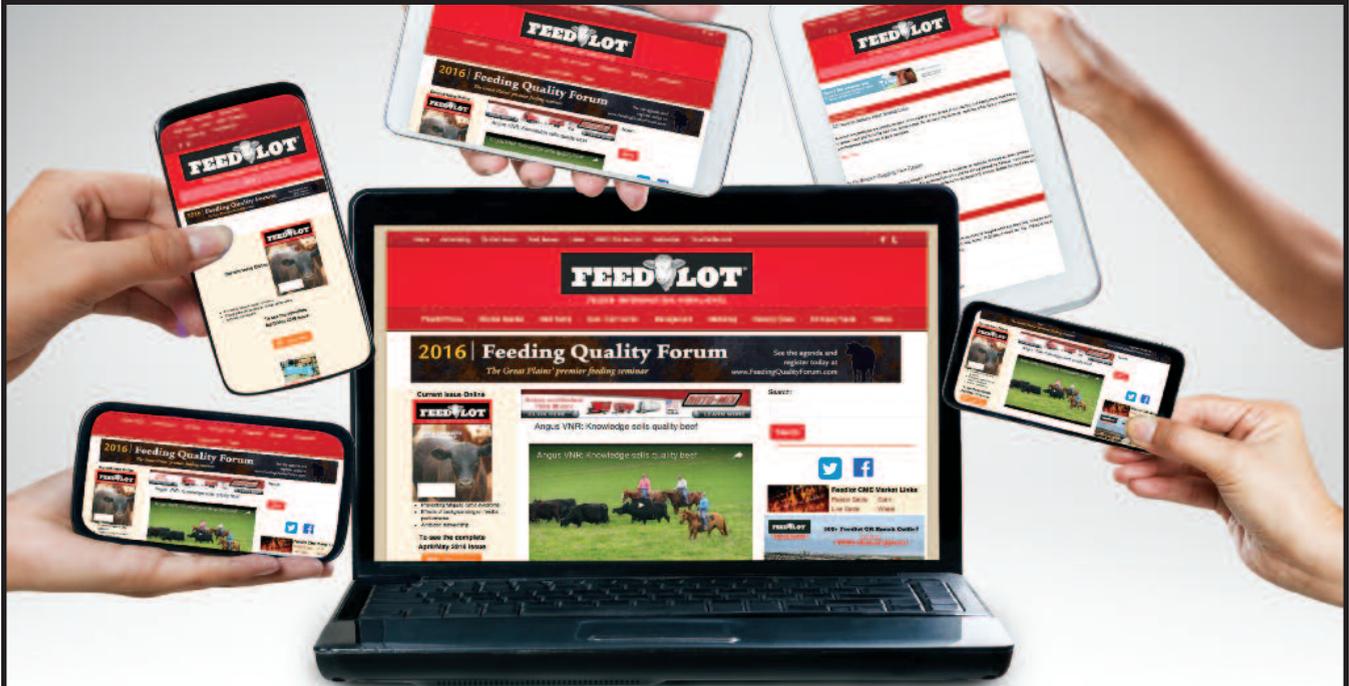
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