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FEEDER INFORMATION HIGHLIGHTS

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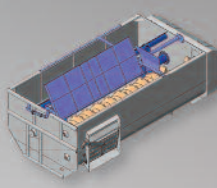
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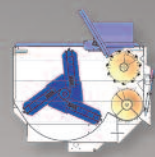
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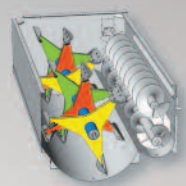
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FEATURES

FEEDLOT FOCUS

Retained ownership still pays	6
Hear Warren Weibert's take on retained ownership	
Safety training retains employees	8
Employee turnover is costly	

STOCKER SPECIAL

Stockers rise above commodity roots	12
Operators are buying with the consumer in mind	

COW CALF CORNER

Importance of breeding soundness exams	14
Several factors are important for bull fertility	

MANAGEMENT

What is a whole pond test?	16
Discover what is behind this lagoon test	
Rethinking labor costs	18
Creative ways to reduce labor	

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HEALTHY INCONSISTENCIES

Unless you live under a rock, you've seen that the rumor mill about the proposed dietary guidelines was true – they recommend less red meat in a "healthy" diet. This has multiple livestock associations up in arms, and rightfully so. There are multiple issues with the recommendations.

First, they are inconsistent. In the report, the Dietary Guidelines Committee endorsed a Mediterranean style diet, which includes higher levels of red meat consumption than currently consumed in the U.S. However, in the same report, the Committee eliminated lean meat from the list of foods they consider to be part of a healthy dietary pattern.

NCBA's Dr. Shalene McNeill, a registered dietitian and nutrition scientist, says the recommendation that a healthy diet should be lower in red meat is contrary to scientific evidence and is unsound dietary advice. "Lean meat is red meat," she said. "Today's beef supply is leaner than ever before with more than 30 cuts of beef recognized as lean

by government standards."

McNeill said the advisory committee failed to consider much of the recent "gold standard" nutritional research, which includes the BOLD study (Beef in an Optimum Lean Diet). The study confirms the vital role of lean beef in a healthy diet.

What is even more disturbing, is the group of "nutrition experts" then went on to advise people they should consider the environment when deciding what people should eat. Dr. Richard Thorpe, a physician and Texas cattleman said in a recent interview that these are supposed to be nutrition experts, not sustainability or environmental experts.

Pete Bonds, president of the Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association (TSCRA) said, "Keeping beef in your diet is a good practice, and the federal government shouldn't be encouraging Americans to remove an important source of protein and vitamins from their plates."

He went on to say, "The federal government should be promoting all nutritious food sources in

their recommendations, not just the ones they feel like fit their political agenda."

Now that the guidelines are out, the public has until April 8, 2015 to provide written comments on the recommendations before they are published in the Federal Register. The public will also have the opportunity to attend a public meeting to hear or provide oral comments on March 24, 2015. The location of the meeting was not available on the government website, health.gov, however those who wish to attend must register by March 9, and can do so on the website.

NCBA has set up a direct link from their home page (www.beefusa.org) for written comments for those who wish to contribute. It's very simple – just go to their home page and click on the link. Many meat and cattle associations indicate they will be commenting on the report. TSCRA also encourages ranchers and consumers to contact their elected officials to voice their concerns. You can find contact information for your local congressman at www.contactingthecongress.org/

If there was ever a time to utilize your political pen, this is it. Although Feed•Lot magazine rarely comments on political issues, we urge readers to take a stand. Producers can not stand by and let the government suggest to Americans that beef is not healthy and not sustainable. Beef production's carbon footprint is smaller now than ever before, and the American Heart Association just recently certified multiple cuts of beef as part of a heart-healthy diet (see pg 21).

We urge you to contact your legislative officials, and utilize the NCBA's link to comment directly on the recommendations. **FL**

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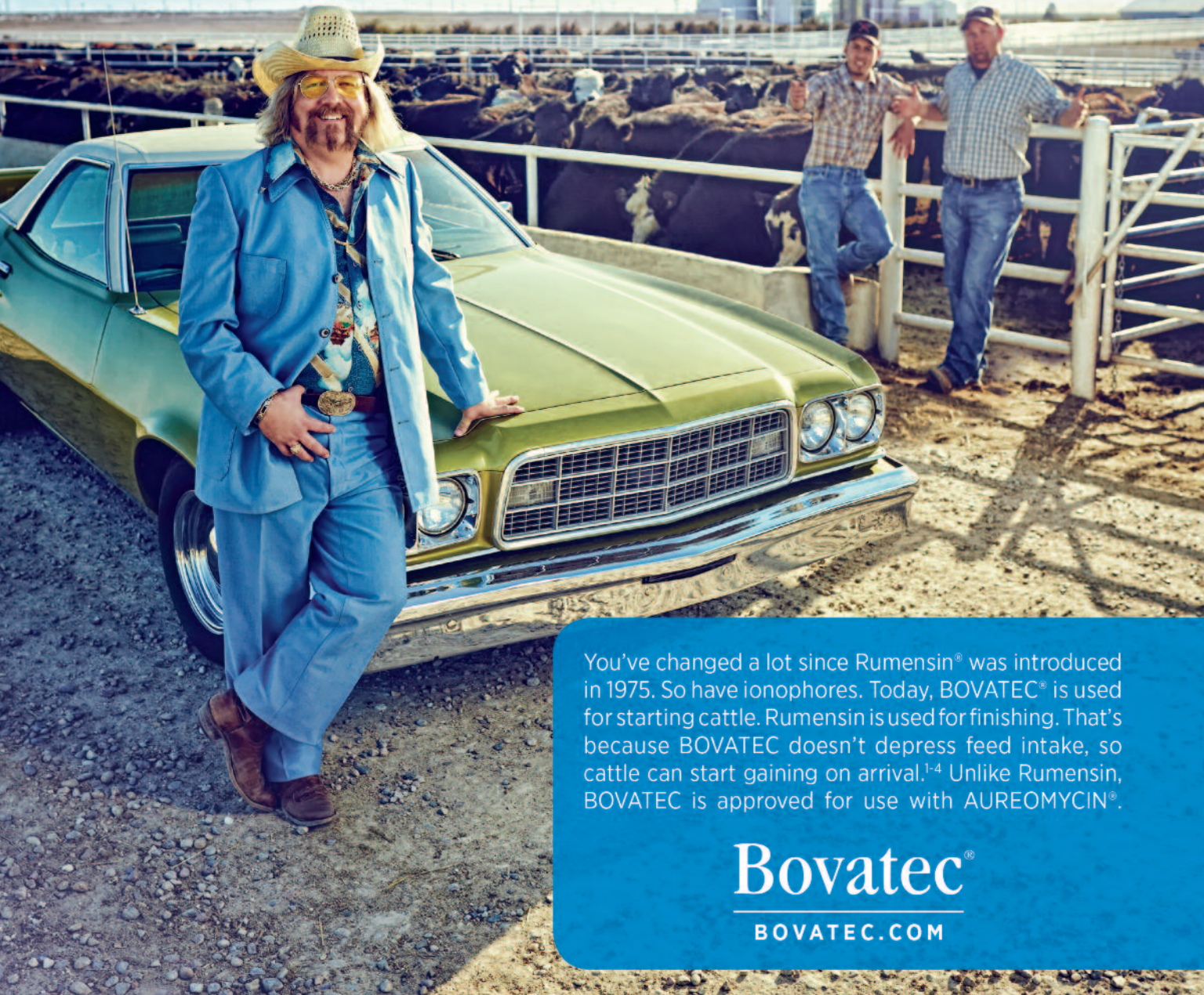
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35 Years Later

Retained Ownership Still Pays



For three and a half decades, the Decatur County Feedyard near Oberlin, Kansas, has told the story of benefits garnered by retained ownership.

“Retained ownership prompts genetic improvements,” says former feedyard owner Warren Weibert. Weibert, and his wife Carol, sold the feedyard in September 2014, but he still espouses the benefits of the arrangement, most recently at the Iowa Cattle Industry Convention in December.

Weibert began in the cattle-feeding business in 1977 and adopted the retained ownership approach in 1980, “because I wanted to work with good cattle.” Indeed, he says he gets “the best” from the nearly 500 ranches that have participated.

Retained ownership, and the performance data that comes with it, allows for feedback back to the ranch, and that allows for better

breeding decisions. Using the AccuTrack system, the feedlot provides producers with 22 columns of data tracking carcass and feedlot performance.

All cattle are handled the same. They are processed in through a series of five stations that record baseline weight and ultrasound data; and grown on the same feeding program. It’s about constants,” says Weibert, “year after year. The only real variable is the weather.”

They are sold on the same grid to the same packer, and are shipped out every other Friday. “Cattle are sold when their performance dictates they are ready,” says Weibert. Tracking of cattle marketed by two-week periods reveals a typical bell curve, with 10 percent ready for market in the first and ninth weeks, and 40 percent heading to slaughter in week five.

The consistency makes it

possible to make genetic comparisons animal to animal, pen to pen, and ranch to ranch. Number of days on feed, average daily gain, and feed efficiency are included in the data provided for each animal. “It’s a report card on your cattle’s performance. Market return is not a theoretical number.”

In the early days, Decatur County saw a \$300 difference in value between the best and worst animals in the pen. Today, due to market inflation, that is about \$800.

“People are sending us the best they have,” says Weibert, “and we still see that kind of difference from bottom to top.” He adds the data tells producers why animals are good at the top and bad at the bottom. “The idea is for both to get better.”

Weibert uses the example of LU Ranch in Worland, Wyoming, where ranch owner Mike Healy

raises cattle in the challenging high desert environment. He likes black hides and weans and backgrounds on the ranch. Calves are delivered to the Decatur County Feedyard in December and harvested in the spring.

In 2009, Healy's cattle showed an average ribeye area (REA) of 12.5 inches, Yield Grade (YG) of 2.8, Hot Carcass Weight (HCW) of 816 pounds, Average Daily Gain (ADG) of 3.67 pounds and Feed Efficiency (FE) of 5.41.

By 2013, those numbers had improved significantly to: REA 13.4; YG 2.8; HCW 862; ADG 3.78; FE 4.87. The average harvest date had moved from June 4 to May 16.

A breeding program focused on improving the production data created a \$118 per head increase in value (based on current market prices). The cattle cost \$9 per head less to feed, added 11 percent Quality Grade (Choice or higher) and increased Yield Grade 1s and 2s by

3 percent. "That's a tremendous improvement in profitability," says Weibert, "all due to genetics."

Weibert says the approach enables producers to know the true value of a bull (Buying a bull is more important than sorting off bottom cows, says Weibert) and the true value of cattle they produce; then

make decisions accordingly. "We're familiar with precision ag in crop farming, why is it hard to believe we can do the same thing with cattle?"

He advocates the precision approach in all aspects of cattle management, including market-

ing timing. "Market timing is the best hedge against market volatility," says Weibert.

He says the retained ownership is most attractive to those who wean early and send calves straight to the feedyard, with the idea of selling as soon as possible. In most years, April presents the best opportunities with late summer the worst. Although this past year has

been anything but typical.

That target can be difficult to hit with spring-born calves, and Weibert says, "The best ways to improve your chances are improved management and improved genetics."

And, according to Weibert, that requires data that track animal performance from birth to the consumer's plate.

"You cannot manage what you do not measure. How else do you know what changes to make?" **FL**

"We're familiar with precision ag in crop farming, why is it hard to believe we can do the same thing with cattle?"
—Warren Weibert

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INDICATIONS

ZACTRAN is indicated for the treatment of bovine respiratory disease (BRD) associated with *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Pasteurella multocida*, *Histophilus somni* and *Mycoplasma bovis* in beef and non-lactating dairy cattle. ZACTRAN is also indicated for the control of respiratory disease in beef and non-lactating dairy cattle at high risk of developing BRD associated with *Mannheimia haemolytica* and *Pasteurella multocida*.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

As with all drugs, the use of ZACTRAN is contraindicated in animals previously found to be hypersensitive to this drug.

WARNING: FOR USE IN CATTLE ONLY. NOT FOR USE IN HUMANS. KEEP THIS AND ALL DRUGS OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN. NOT FOR USE IN CHICKENS OR TURKEYS.

The material safety data sheet (MSDS) contains more detailed occupational safety information. To report adverse effects, obtain an MSDS or for assistance, contact Merial at 1-888-637-4251.

RESIDUE WARNINGS: Do not treat cattle within 35 days of slaughter. Because a discard time in milk has not been established, do not use in female dairy cattle 20 months of age or older. A withdrawal period has not been established for this product in pre-ruminating calves. Do not use in calves to be processed for veal.

PRECAUTIONS

The effects of ZACTRAN on bovine reproductive performance, pregnancy, and lactation have not been determined. Subcutaneous injection of ZACTRAN may cause a transient local tissue reaction in some cattle that may result in trim loss of edible tissues at slaughter.

ADVERSE REACTIONS

Transient animal discomfort and mild to moderate injection site swelling may be seen in cattle treated with ZACTRAN.

EFFECTIVENESS

The effectiveness of ZACTRAN for the treatment of BRD associated with *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Pasteurella multocida* and *Histophilus somni* was demonstrated in a field study conducted at four geographic locations in the United States. A total of 497 cattle exhibiting clinical signs of BRD were enrolled in the study. Cattle were administered ZACTRAN (6 mg/kg BW) or an equivalent volume of sterile saline as a subcutaneous injection once on Day 0. Cattle were observed daily for clinical signs of BRD and were evaluated for clinical success on Day 10. The percentage of successes in cattle treated with ZACTRAN (58%) was statistically significantly higher ($p < 0.05$) than the percentage of successes in the cattle treated with saline (19%).

The effectiveness of ZACTRAN for the treatment of BRD associated with *M. bovis* was demonstrated independently at two U.S. study sites. A total of 502 cattle exhibiting clinical signs of BRD were enrolled in the studies. Cattle were administered ZACTRAN (6 mg/kg BW) or an equivalent volume of sterile saline as a subcutaneous injection once on Day 0. At each site, the percentage of successes in cattle treated with ZACTRAN on Day 10 was statistically significantly higher than the percentage of successes in the cattle treated with saline (74.4% vs. 24% [$p < 0.001$], and 67.4% vs. 46.2% [$p = 0.002$]). In addition, in the group of calves treated with gamithromycin that were confirmed positive for *M. bovis* (pre-treatment nasopharyngeal swabs), there were more calves at each site (45 of 57 calves, and 5 of 6 calves) classified as successes than as failures.

The effectiveness of ZACTRAN for the control of respiratory disease in cattle at high risk of developing BRD associated with *Mannheimia haemolytica* and *Pasteurella multocida* was demonstrated in two independent studies conducted in the United States. A total of 467 crossbred beef cattle at high risk of developing BRD were enrolled in the study. ZACTRAN (6 mg/kg BW) or an equivalent volume of sterile saline was administered as a single subcutaneous injection within one day after arrival. Cattle were observed daily for clinical signs of BRD and were evaluated for clinical success on Day 10 post-treatment. In each of the two studies, the percentage of successes in the cattle treated with ZACTRAN (86% and 78%) was statistically significantly higher ($p = 0.0019$ and $p = 0.0016$) than the percentage of successes in the cattle treated with saline (36% and 58%).

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SAFETY TRAINING HELPS RETAIN FEEDLOT EMPLOYEES

Employee turnover is costly, costing feedlots time and money to find and train new employees, which is why retaining good employees is a top priority. While keeping employees happy with their jobs is a mixed bag of factors for each individual employee, safety training can make the difference between having a happy employee or a frustrated one.

The International Society for Agricultural Safety and Health reports that agriculture related jobs rank the highest of any industry in injury and fatality rates, resulting in 479 fatalities in 2013. Accidents are also costly to employers. According to workers' compensation statistics animal handling injuries range from \$41,000 to \$100,000 per accident.

While we know that working in a feedlot is always potentially hazardous, especially when you consider that you are working with live animals that have minds of their own, injury rates have repeatedly proven that experience and training are vital components for a safe workplace.

"All the research I've read shows that a good safety program helps retain employees and makes them better at their job," said Brady Miller Regulatory Manager of the Texas Cattle Feeders Association (TCFA). "When employees feel that their employer cares about them, they will do a better job."

For the last 25 years, TCFA has offered Safety Made Simple, a hands on interactive safety training program specifically designed for feedlots. The program offers training in several areas including con-

finied space, lockout-tagout, cow-boy training, personal protective equipment, oxy-fuels training, machine guarding, emergency action plans, mobile equipment, fire extinguisher and haz-com training.

The unique program gives managers the opportunity to watch and track their employees' performance during the training.

"Most accidents in a feedyard occur when handling cattle because of frustration, complacency and not paying attention or by being in a hurry," said Miller. "While there are no easy answers to preventing all accidents it all comes back to proper safety training."

TCFA also offers seminars where they bring in experts to teach cattle handling.

When safety is made part of a feedlots operational culture and part of the daily routine the chances of accidents are dramatically reduced. This begins with management. No feedlot manager would ask an inexperienced employee to load a \$180,000 feed truck with a \$250,000 payloader due to the potential financial consequences. Yet the same manager often overlooks the costs that arise when an employee isn't properly trained, especially when it comes to animal handling.

Training allows an employee to learn to be proactive in times of risk or danger instead of reactive and prepares them for the day-to-day expectations that management counts on, said Miller. "They are better prepared to manage issues and problems that arise." Competent and satisfied ►

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¹ Sifferman RL, Wolff FW, Holste JE, et al. Field efficacy evaluation of gamithromycin for treatment of bovine respiratory disease in cattle at feedlots. *Intern J Appl Res Vet Med.* 2011;9(2):171-180.

² Lechtenberg K, Daniels CS, Royer GC, et al. Field efficacy study of gamithromycin for the control of bovine respiratory disease in cattle at high risk of developing the disease. *Intern J Appl Res Vet Med.* 2011;9(2):189-197.

³ ZACTRAN product label.

⁴ Kahn, CM. *Merck Veterinary Manual*. 10th edition. 2010:1319.

⁵ Van Donkersgoed J, Merrill JK. A comparison of tilmosin to gamithromycin for on-arrival treatment of bovine respiratory disease in feeder steers. *Bovine Practitioner.* 2012;46(1):46-51.



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Safety Training... from previous page

employees also create a positive work environment. It's fun to work with others who love what they do and do it well.

Managers should not overlook their own influences. An employee's relationship with management is also a determining factor in whether or not employees stay engaged and committed to their job. It's important for management to demonstrate a positive attitude toward safety to help eliminate the chance that employees could be put in danger.

A Florida State University study found that ninety percent of employees don't really understand what is expected of them at work and even if they do they don't know why. When an employee isn't sure what is expected of them the results can't be positive, especially when the lives of animals are at stake and the pace of change is taken into



Injury rates have repeatedly proven that experience and training are vital components for a safe workplace.

consideration. How motivated can you be to do something when you don't know why you're doing it?

The study stated that "these findings cost American organizations, hundreds of millions of dol-

lars each year in both direct and indirect cost." All the more reason to hire the right people to start with, employees who fit the requirements of the job and have basic agricultural skills including

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animal handling, equipment operation and maintenance.

“When an employee doesn’t know how to properly meet the needs of the cattle or know how to use the equipment they get frustrated and that’s when accidents happen,” he said. “Training helps keep employees calm, cool and collected. A frustrated employee is not going to stick around very long.”

Most employees in the study cited management’s failure to be transparent and communicate as the cause of their lack of understanding. Having systems in place for employees to give feedback and not just once a year in an annual performance review will help managers provide better direction. Asking employees what works and what doesn’t also creates more satisfied employees.

Regular and accessible training offers opportunities for employees to gain new skills and personal development which motivate them to be better at their jobs and can make all the difference between a thriving vs. surviving feedlot and its bottom line.

“The employees really like the system and the specialized training. We get very positive feedback about the program,” said Miller.

For more information about Safety Made Simple call TCFA at (806)358-3681. **FL**



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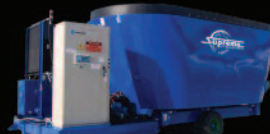
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Stockers rise above commodity roots

Tradition says the stocker business is simply about pounds of commodity feeder cattle, that stockers and quality are like oil and water. But ignoring today's market demand for superior quality could mean less weight in your wallet.

Although margins are often tight in the stocker business, the higher dollar risk of recent years points to a need to think beyond buying low and light and selling high and heavy. Seasoned stockers like Mark Yazel, who operates along the border from Kiowa, Kan., to northeastern Oklahoma, know there is more to it than weight. Higher quality always pays more.

"You can buy the (lightest) steer in the world and have the most condition in the world but if he doesn't have any potential to gain anything and grade, he's not going to," Yazel says. "The least-cost deal is not always your best cost. You can spend a little more at the front end and stay ahead more than if you just went out and bought the cheapest thing you could."

For Yazel, sourcing stockers on gain and quality go hand in hand. He doesn't buy calves that aren't at least 60% black-hided, as an indicator of Angus influence.

"If you worry about gain and not quality, that's kind of an oxymoron as far as I'm concerned," he says. "If you don't have quality, you're not going to get the gains."

He considers consumer demand for beef when sourcing stockers, and his buyers pay attention to it. With fewer and fewer packers and feedlots in the market, Yazel says having an established relationship and reputation for quality calves is good for business.

"More and more, all the time, we're selling cattle on the grid, and basing our business more and more on relationships instead of

individual trade," he adds. "The premiums that are out there now, it's hard not to focus on quality and try for the additional dollars per hundredweight you get on the grid for high-performance cattle."

Yazel is not alone. Harold Wooderson, Blackwell, Okla., says focusing on quality is a necessity for the beef industry. The operator of Wooderson Farms retains ownership on most of his stockers entering feedlots in Kansas and the Texas Panhandle, and always keeps the whole beef supply chain in mind when buying calves.

"We're thinking about the end result. We want something that will make the consumer happy, make the packer more profit, and something that will be a better end product for the ultimate users," he explains.

For him, adding value to the supply chain comes from adding more than weight alone.

"It's not necessarily just the total weight you put on the animal, but the total value you can increase that animal by in your stocker operation," he says. "Just weight alone doesn't mean the maximum amount of profit."

Wooderson knows there is money to be made buying light cattle and adding weight fast, but his experience also lets him know cattle that add weight along with quality are worth more in today's market.

"As a stocker, you can put weight on any cattle, and any color cattle, but when you go to the feedlot, and the packer buys them, the color, breed and genetic make of the cattle makes a difference in what they're willing to pay for them," he says.

Experienced stocker operators don't represent outliers: they are following the market signals for long-term profitability. The margins be-

tween beef and competing proteins in the marketplace continue to widen. As consumers pay more for beef, you can bet they want a better quality eating experience.

When stocker operators think about buying cattle with the consumer in mind, the signals for growth in demand for added value and quality are clear, says a Kansas feeder.

"We've seen a shift over the years to a higher percentage of black-hided cattle," says Allan Sents, co-owner of McPherson County Feeders, Marquette, Kan. "The shift is largely from the quality benefits and premiums available now."

Sents is not directly in that grazing business, but a large share of cattle entering his feedlot are stockers.

"The stocker operators we deal with recognize that the value of finished cattle coming out of the feedlot is going to be greater if they have a higher percentage of black-hided cattle in the mix," he says. "That has influenced the way they have bought their cattle, in recognition of that extra value when we sell them."

It's a trend Sents has noticed over the last 10 years, and one which he sees no suggestion of diminishing.

Stocker production might have little effect on carcass performance, but "pounds only" management can derail quality potential. And sourcing stockers on weight alone affects later demand from feedlots, packers and ultimately the consumer.

Granted, compensatory gains can still make money if the prelude doesn't withhold nutrition calves need. But Yazel and Wooderson say a better strategy in today's market is to focus on the value-added premiums available by thinking ahead to the next buyer, and the buyer after that,

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Importance of Breeding Soundness Examinations for

Many factors play a role in fertility and breeding ability in bulls, including semen quality, soundness, desire to breed cows, etc. It's wise to make sure every bull passes a breeding soundness examination before putting him with cows. This evaluation looks at five things: physical soundness (feet/legs, eyes, etc.), reproductive tract soundness, scrotal circumference that meets minimum requirement, percentage of sperm cells that are normal, and acceptable motility.

Mike Sanderson, Kansas State University explains that the veterinarian palpates the testicles to make sure there is nothing wrong—that they feel normal and can freely move in the scrotum. “We palpate the internal reproductive organs and make sure they seem ok. We also make sure the penis extends and that there is nothing

wrong with it—no adhesions from old injuries.” If an injury has completely healed and the penis is able to extend far enough to breed, the bull will pass the test. Body condition is also assessed.

“We measure scrotal circumference because this is an important indication of how much sperm the bull will produce, and may determine how many cows he can potentially breed. We can't say that if his testicles are a certain size we can put him on “x” number of cows, but the bigger the factory, the more potential. Research has also shown that scrotal circumference is related to age of puberty in the bull's daughters. Bulls with larger testicles tend to have daughters that reach puberty sooner,” says Sanderson.

“If it's a bull that we've tested multiple years, we can look back

and see if scrotal size has stayed the same. Then we know when it starts to decline—when he may start to go downhill in fertility,” he says.

“We look at semen motility and how well the sperm swim, and percentage of sperm cells that are normal. We need to know what kind of abnormalities we see. These can be difficult to interpret but sometimes give clues about what might have happened in the past if this bull has a problem, and how likely he is to get over it versus how likely it might be the beginning of infertility,” says Sanderson.

History of the bull and past records can be helpful when assessing him for the next breeding season. “All of those things, more than just the semen check, are very important. There are limitations to the breeding soundness exam/semen check because what we see is what the bull is producing today and that doesn't tell us anything about what the bull will be producing tomorrow or next week,” he explains.

These exams have proven helpful, however. “We can identify bulls that will not do well this breeding season, but it doesn't guarantee that a bull who is in wonderful shape today will be fertile by the time breeding season starts or two weeks into it,” he says.

“We talk about sub-fertile bulls and try not to use the term infertile because very few bulls are actually infertile. A bull may be sub-fertile, however—not as fertile as he needs to be.” He's not paying his way if he only sires a few calves, especially if he's keeping the more timid bulls from breeding.

Morphology and Motility

Duane Mickelsen, DVM, retired from Washington State University, has been doing fertility studies in beef cattle for many years, and performed thousands of breeding

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BY HEATHER SMITH THOMAS

soundness exams. He says morphology (looking at the form and structure of sperm and comparing numbers of normal and abnormal sperm) is probably the most important factor associated with fertility.

Bulls are flunked if they fail on any one of three standards: scrotal circumference less than 30 centimeters, less than 70% morphologic normal sperm, or less than 30% motility under field circumstances. "A bull failing any one of these three standards is reason to flunk that bull. But in field situations it can sometimes be tricky to accurately check motility," says Mickelsen.

"I take a heated box when I do these examinations. Many veterinarians collect a sample and then run from the chute to their vehicle to evaluate semen, and if the slides are cold, motility is hindered. This evaluation may not be accurate. Thus motility is the poorest stan-



dard to go by," he says.

"Some veterinarians go mainly by motility, yet it has the poorest correlation with fertility. If they don't look at morphology (which means counting about 100 sperm and determining percent of normal compared to percent with abnormalities), they may not get an accurate picture of potential fertility. Motility can be so variable that I

don't pay as much attention to that as morphology. A cold slide or other factors can kill all the sperm in a sample, whereas morphology is more accurate and useful. I don't pay any attention to live or dead, just what's normal," he says.

Conducting breeding soundness exams to make sure all bulls are ready for work is key to a successful breeding season and prof-

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typically decreases significantly in a relatively short period of time.

It all sounds simple enough, but, unfortunately, an epidemic of activist driven “environmental paranoia” overwhelmed livestock agriculture in the mid 90’s and resulted in a nearly comprehensive new round of “politically motivated” regulations extending far beyond the above referenced historic, “science based,” and practical protections. Today, most regulators ignore the wealth of knowledge about groundwater protective “in-situ” soil permeability and instead require extensive and expensive soil testing and construction quality control as a condition for approving lagoon permits. Significant up front geotechnical borings, laboratory permeability tests, and follow on

construction compaction testing of selected clay type soils are now required for nearly all lagoons.

In spite of the up front site investigations, testing, and construction quality control, many environmental permitting agencies now also require additional or re-verification of post construction seepage rates. While less expensive stand-pipe tests or soil cores pulled from the lagoon bottom have served to re-verify seepage rates for years, water balance (whole pond test) methods are required with ever increasing frequency. An additional and expanding trend is to now also require seepage rate verification each time that lagoon clean-out is required.

I will discuss the whole pond test in the next issue. **FL**

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RETHINKING LABOR



BY **DON TYLER**

As government regulations, benefit costs and local competition push up labor costs, many produc-

ers are sharpening their pencils and trying to find some areas to trim these costs without discouraging their employees.

The number of employees needed in most ranch and feedlot operations is fairly consistent from year-to-year, and if we add some inventory the extra labor is usually covered with some longer hours, part-time help or scheduling changes. Trimming labor costs can be difficult in this situation. Here are a few ways that some producers have approached this sensitive issue:

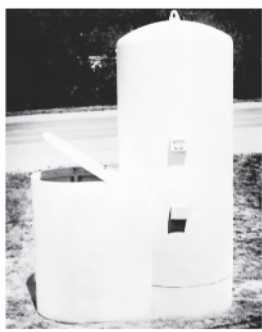
- Reconfigure benefits. The Affordable Care Act has put nearly everyone's health coverage in turmoil, and in most cases those costs have gone up. Nearly all businesses are managing these increases by sharing the extra costs with employees or making significant changes in their coverage. Some are trying to make up the difference in other areas with either more time off or increases in other amenities like meat or clothing allowances.
- Improve Efficiency: Rethink your overall personnel structure. Are there some individuals that could be asked to do more in their current position? Do you have managers that could operate their departments more effi-

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ciently? Does it really take the labor hours that you are paying for to get the jobs done? If an operation with 20 employees can save 3 labor hours per week for each employee—that is 60 hours per week—or the cost of one full time employee. This time can either be eliminated or used more efficiently in another area of the business.

- **Prioritize Repairs:** Some operations have equipment that can be more efficient with better maintenance and attention to detail. Focus on those areas that can be more efficient with minor improvements, such as that chain that keeps coming off the feed truck, the payloader that needs to be jumped anytime it gets below freezing or the pickup that keeps stranding people when they get too far from the shop. We may feel like we don't want to spend the money on the parts to fix them, but our real loss is in the ongoing labor inefficiencies and productivity losses every time this equipment malfunctions.
- **Improve Communication and Preparation:** Many lapses in efficiency come from poor com-

munication and planning. Take time regularly to prioritize your efforts and communicate with your staff. They can be much more efficient, be more productive and have fewer oversights if they know your priorities and your expectations.

- **Be Creative:** Some of my clients can be pretty creative when it comes to offering unique benefits. One of them decided to use a bit of motivation to encourage their employees to get their flu shots. They offered to pay for the shots, to give the employees time off to go and get them, and yet some were still either hesitant or chronic procrastinators. To give them that extra nudge to

get these preventative shots, they modified their policy to offer that anyone who got the flu shot, and still got sick between September and May, would get two extra days of paid sick leave. It worked great because of all the employees who took them up on the new policy in the three years it has been in place, only one has had to use it.

It saved them money in the end because they had fewer people out sick during the worst time of the year to be short-handed—the Holidays and the middle of winter—and they didn't have to pay out the extra sick days. **FL**

Don Tyler is the owner of Tyler & Associates, Clarks Hill, IN. For more information on these and other business or employee management topics, contact



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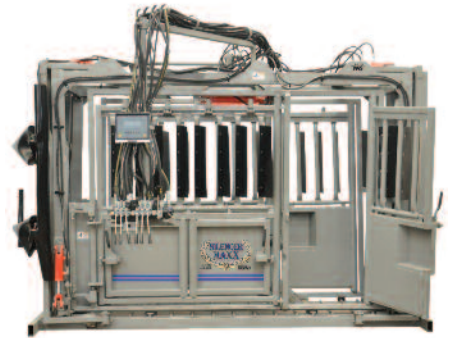
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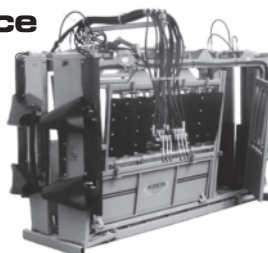


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"Beef has many nutritional benefits and having the American Heart Association certify yet another beef cut empowers consumers to feel good about including beef in their diet, not only for its great taste but for its nutritional value," said Jo Stanko, vice chair of the Checkoff's nutrition and health subcommittee. "Beef farmers and ranchers like myself share a common goal; to help consumers make shopping decisions

to fit their needs and lifestyles by educating them about the health benefits of their food. To this end we will continue to support valid science to show consumers how extra lean beef is part of a healthy diet."

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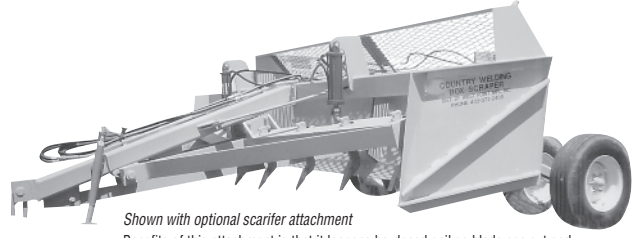


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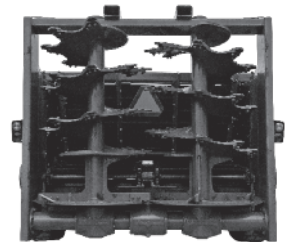
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