What's Inside

Page 8 - NCBA 2015 Young Cattlemen Conference

Page 20 - 21 2015 Virginia Cattle and Dairy Expo Field Day - VCA Anual Meeting

Page 27 - Have You Had a Check Up Lately? 

Page 34 - Plenty Grass and Short Supplies Push Feeder Cattle Higher

Page 37 - Increasing Producer Profits With Cattle Handling Technique
Opportunities

By: Jason Carter

Summer is finally officially here and the contrasts of the season have already shown themselves across the Commonwealth. In most of the Shenandoah Valley and across central Virginia, there has been moisture that encouraged grass and made haymaking a dance with Mother Nature, even with the growing predominance of wet wrapping of bales. When I grew up the hay we made was exclusively dry hay in small square bales. My grandfather exclusively used the hay baler and trade has especially emerged in our modern world as a big cog in our wheel.

Finally, I encourage you once more to please mark your calendar to join us and fellow cattle producers at Virginia Tech’s Kentland research farm on July 17th for the Virginia Cattle Industry and Dairy Expo. This will be an informal and informative day to visit, network and celebrate the importance of the Virginia cattle business. Please find the details in the center section of the paper and plan to come. Other than getting there, it is no cost to attend and we are certain the return you see on your time will be nearly priceless as you see old friends, make new ones and see some of the academic and historical significance Virginia Tech has at Kentland.

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Virginia’s Weekly Market Reports

May 28, 2015
State Graded Feeder Steers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 240.00-279.00, mostly 269.00-279.00, average 269.45
500-600 lbs 245.00-258.00, average 252.54
600-700 lbs 227.50-249.50, average 236.68
700-800 lbs 202.50-220.50, average 218.52
State Graded Feeder Heifers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 255.00-261.00, average 260.03
500-600 lbs 217.00-239.50, average 227.10
600-700 lbs 187.50-221.50, mostly 216.00-221.50, average 215.41
700-800 lbs 178.00-203.00, mostly 178.00-198.00, average 196.92
Slaughter Cows Boning, 800-1200 lbs, 97.00-120.00, average 107.96
Breakers, 1200-1600 lbs, 99.00-120.00, average 109.88

June 11, 2015
State Graded Feeder Steers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 271.00-293.50, average 283.99
500-600 lbs 190.00-267.00, mostly 241.00-267.00, average 258.56
600-700 lbs 206.00-247.00, mostly 228.00-247.00, average 240.14
700-800 lbs 186.00-229.50, 500-600 lbs 219.00-266.00, mostly 258.00-266.00, average 256.55
600-700 lbs 212.50-238.00, mostly 220.00-238.00, average 233.08
600-700 lbs 190.50-222.00, mostly 201.00-221.00, average 214.93
700-800 lbs 199.00
Slaughter Cows Boning, 800-1200 lbs, 87.00-132.50, average 104.25
Breakers, 1200-1600 lbs, 90.00-122.00, average 106.21
State Graded Feeder Heifers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 204.00-262.50, mostly 254.75-265.50, average 256.70
500-600 lbs 220.00-238.00, average 232.88
600-700 lbs 170.00-225.00, mostly 200.00-225.00, average 215.86
700-800 lbs 184.00-205.00, average 193.29
Slaughter Cows Boning, 800-1200 lbs, 88.00-112.50, average 101.65
Breakers, 1200-1600 lbs, 94.00-113.00, average 104.63

June 18, 2015
State Graded Feeder Steers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 234.00-291.00, mostly 279.00-291.00, average 283.99
500-600 lbs 190.00-267.00, mostly 241.00-267.00, average 258.56
600-700 lbs 206.00-247.00, mostly 228.00-247.00, average 240.14
700-800 lbs 186.00-229.50, 500-600 lbs 219.00-266.00, mostly 250.00-266.00, average 256.55

Slaughter Cows Boning, 800-1200 lbs, 88.00-108.50, average 98.94
Breakers, 1200-1600 lbs, 100.00-115.00, average 106.88

Virginia Cattlemen's Association
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Check our website at www.vacattlemen.org for updates

CONTACT LIVESTOCK MARKETS OR VCA STAFF FOR QUESTIONS
VCA 540-992-1009   Butch Foster 423-360-0434   Troy Lawson 540-430-0042

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New Dietary Guidelines Cut Back Beef

Where’s the beef? It may not be on our plates if the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans has any influence. Expected to be released later this year, the guidelines include a controversial recommendation to eat less red meat. Previous versions had encouraged lean meats but did not single out red meats, such as beef and pork, to avoid. In light of recent scientific studies showing that our saturated fat intake likely isn’t the culprit in our rising obesity and health issues, why is red meat a target in the 2015 Dietary Guidelines? Part of it has to do with sustainability issues. This is the first time the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee has looked at the environmental effects of the foods we produce instead of just nutrition. It takes more resources to produce one pound of beef than it does to produce one pound of vegetables. No one argues with this fact, but there’s more to the story. Beef raised now compared to 30 years ago use 19 percent less feed, 33 percent less land, 12 percent less water and 9 percent less fossil fuel, according to FactsAboutBeef.com. In addition, ExploreBeef.org reports there are 30 percent fewer animals being raised for food now, yet they yield 13 percent more beef. We also should consider the nutritional aspects for a moment. One pound of beef is not nutritionally equal to one pound of vegetables. A pound of beef provides 1,036 calories, is an excellent source of protein, zinc, B12, B6, niacin and selenium, and is a good source for phosphorous, choline, iron and riboflavin. You’d have to eat nearly seven pounds of broccoli to equal the calories, and you’d still not meet your nutritional requirements for protein, iron, zinc or B vitamins. True, the beef does have fat, but it isn’t all bad fat. Half of the fat in beef is monounsaturated fat, the same type of fat found in olive oil, and four percent of the fat is polyunsaturated. The remaining 45 percent of the fat is saturated, but one-third of that is in the form of stearic acid — the same saturated fat in chocolate that is hailed as heart healthy because it does not raise LDL cholesterol levels.

We actually eat less meat than we have in the past decades. Americans average 5.1 ounces of protein daily from all sources, according to the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. From beef, the average is just 1.7 ounces. Some 70 percent of our calories currently come from plant sources, and 90 percent of the saturated fat in our diet isn’t coming from meat but from sweets, snacks, desserts and choose, reports the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. This organization also reports the top five sources of saturated fat in our diet are cheese (8.5%), pizza (5.9%), grain-based desserts (5.8%), dairy desserts (5.6%), and chicken/chicken dishes (5.5%). The first beef mentioned is burgers, accounting for 4.4 percent of saturated fat in our diet. The Iowa Beef Industry Council reports the meat you buy at the retail level is 80 percent leaner than it was 20 years ago, in part due to trimming practices and the way we raise and finish our beef today. In fact, there are 30 cuts of beef that meet the guidelines for lean meat. The Dietary Guidelines committee may have overstepped their boundaries this year by delving into environmental concerns. Eliminating a certain food never works as planned because the substitutes are often less nutritious.
Meat of the Matter: Walmart Move Poses the ‘Big Question’

By: Dan Murphy, Drovers Network

Put aside the controversies over sub-therapeutic use of antibiotics in production. Instead, ask yourself: Is there more to be gained by fighting the activists, or getting ahead of the issue? Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is “pressing meat, seafood, dairy and egg suppliers to reduce the use of antibiotics,” according to a story late last week from Reuters. Only that’s not the way some of the media viewed the news.

“Walmart take stand against animal cruelty and overuse of antibiotics on farms” was the way The Verge website, owned by Vox Media, headlined it. “WalMart openly opposes excessive use of antibiotics in livestock,” was the NYC Today headline. Even the Los Angeles Times chimed in by openly signaled its stance on the issue, fitting its story, “Wal-Mart urges suppliers to curb antibiotics, treat animals better.”

The mega-chain’s voluntary guideline, which were released May 22 — the Friday before the holiday weekend, a favorite trick of politicians who need to take a stand but don’t want to broadcast their position — would limit suppliers to using antibiotics only for disease prevention and treatment, not for promoting growth. Of course, the fact that low-level antibiotics usage also prevents disease is never mentioned. Instead, the connection of animal antibiotics to “drug-resistant superbugs, endangering human health,” as Reuters phrased it, is always front and center.

Walmart, which operates approximately 5,200 Walmart and Sam’s Club stores in the United States — who can maintain an exact count with that many stores? — is also urging its meat suppliers “not to raise livestock in gestation crates or in other conditions considered inhumane,” requesting that suppliers publicly disclose their antibiotics usage and animal handling standards on an annual basis. “As the nation’s largest grocer, Walmart is committed to using our strengths to drive transparency and improvement across the supply chain,” Kathleen McLaughlin, senior vice president of Walmart sustainability, said in a statement. Walmart accounts for nearly 25 percent of the total U.S. grocery market, so its “request” will affect everyone in the entire processing and distribution chain.

Of course, the company’s message is phrased in the form of a request, not a demand, which didn’t please some in the activist community. “Walmart wants to present its announcement as a step forward on responsible antibiotics usage,” the National Resources Defense Council wrote in response to the news release titled, “Walmart’s antibiotic use announcement: Less than meets the eye.” “Unfortunately, the steps Walmart put forward won’t deliver on responsible use of antibiotics.”

Of course, the largest retail and foodservice operators have the leverage to demand all sorts of compliance measures from its suppliers. When they do, the new policy rolled out at a splashy media-fest touting what outstanding corporate citizens they are. And it’s usually painless for the people making the announcement. Other companies have to jump through the hoops, not Walmart or McDonald’s. That’s a function of the size and scale of these consumer-facing mega-firms.

But here’s my question: Even though announcements such as Walmart’s antibiotic statement usually arrive with enough wiggle room to drive a delivery truck through, has the time come for the production side of the industry to voluntarily phase out growth promotants? Would it be to everyone’s benefit to neutralize the fraction anti-industry types continually generate from flogging the antibiotics issue?

In its statement, Walmart noted that “an internal study” showed that 77 percent of its customers would increase their trust in a retailer operating standards from its suppliers, which didn’t please some in the activist community. “As the nation’s largest grocer, Walmart is committed to using our strengths to drive transparency and improvement across the supply chain,” Kathleen McLaughlin, senior vice president of Walmart sustainability, said in a statement. Walmart accounts for nearly 25 percent of the total U.S. grocery market, so its “request” will affect everyone in the entire processing and distribution chain.

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Over 50 cattle producers from across the country and across the industry participated in the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association’s 2015 Young Cattlemen’s Conference including one from the Virginia Cattlemen’s Association. Representing the Virginia Cattlemen’s Association was Jared Burner. Jared was born and raised in Luray, VA which is located within the Shenandoah Valley, an area rich in agricultural history. After high school, he attended Virginia Tech to earn a bachelor’s degree in both Animal and Poultry Sciences and Agricultural and Applied Economics. While at Virginia Tech, Jared was a member of both Alpha Gamma Rho and Block and Bridle. After earning his bachelor’s degree, he pursued and completed a master’s degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics with a focus on inventory management of the beef carcass as it relates to consumer demand. After college, Jared returned to the family farm to work beside his dad and granddad. Together, they own and operate Trio Farms, Inc., a registered Simmental and SimAngus farm. They participate in all segments of the producer production chain. They maintain roughly 200 cow/calf pairs, which allow them to market replacement heifers and breeding age bulls. The bought cattle are primarily from our longtime bull buyers. In addition to the cattle, they raise corn, soybeans, barley and hay for both personal feed use and additional income. Jared also operates Skyline Premium Meats, LLC; a direct marketing company for their beef. Jared markets primarily through farmers’ markets, restaurants and the local school system. In addition to the farm, he takes time to work with local and state organizations. He is currently the chairman of the Luray/Page Chamber of Commerce in addition to sitting on both the Virginia Cattlemen’s Associations Policy and Industry Advocacy Board and the Virginia Simmental Associations Board of Directors.

The aim of the NCBA’s YCC program is to give these young leaders an understanding of all aspects of the beef industry from grass to plate, and showcase issues management, research, education and marketing. Beginning in Colorado, the group got an inside look at many of the issues affecting the beef industry and the work being done on both the state and national level to address these issues on behalf of our membership. While in Denver, CattleFax provided a comprehensive overview of the current cattle market and emerging trends. At Safeway, the participants received a first-hand account of the retail perspective of the beef business and then toured the JBS Five Rivers’ Kuner feedyard, one of the largest in the nation, and the JBS Greeley packing and processing plant.

From Denver, the group traveled to Chicago where they were able to visit the Chicago Board of Trade, learning about risk-management and mitigation tools available to the cattle industry. In Chicago, they also visited McDonald’s Campus and OSI, one of the nation’s premiere beef patty producers. After the brief stop in Chicago, the group concluded their trip in Washington D.C. for an issue briefing on current policy priorities; including trade and Country-of-Origin Labeling and ample opportunity to visit with their congressional representatives.

With the beef industry changing rapidly, identifying and educating leaders has never been so important. As a grassroots trade association representing the beef industry the NCBA is proud to play a role in that process and its future success. Over 1,000 cattlemen and women have graduated from the YCC program since its inception in 1980. Many of these alumni have gone to serve in state and national committees, councils and boards. YCC is the cornerstone of leadership training in the cattle industry.
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While few global markets have remained completely closed to U.S. beef since the December 2003 BSE case, BSE-related product and cattle age restrictions are still fairly common. However, the U.S. industry recently made further progress in eliminating more of these barriers, and U.S. beef has gained greater access to Vietnam and Singapore. Vietnam removed all cattle age and product restrictions on U.S. beef and beef products, provided these items are derived from cattle slaughtered on or after March 27, 2015. With this change, the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Export Verification (EV) program is no longer required for these products. “U.S. packers and processors won’t have to segregate over 30-month cattle from under 30-month cattle, so that reduces costs associated with serving this market by a pretty substantial margin,” explains Travis Arp, U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) technical services manager. “We also have some U.S. companies that specialize in processing over 30-month cattle that will now have access to Vietnam.”

Last year, U.S. beef and beef variety meat exports to Vietnam totaled 2,869 metric tons (mt) valued at $22.1 million. The market has gained momentum this year, with exports through April reaching nearly $10 million. Removal of cattle age and product restrictions is a positive development, especially in a market that is relatively price sensitive. “It is encouraging whenever a trading partner removes BSE-related restrictions and grants full access to its market,” says Thad Lively, USMEF senior vice president for trade access. This indicates that the ongoing educational efforts of our U.S. trade officials are paying dividends, as well as the negligible BSE risk status granted to the U.S. by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) in May of 2013.” Lively also notes that since Vietnam is a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) participant, having access for a full range of beef products puts the U.S. industry in a better position to capitalize on any market access gains resulting from the TPP.

Singapore recently removed most – but not all – cattle age and product restrictions for U.S. beef. Some requirements unique to Singapore were maintained, so U.S. slaughter and processing establishments are required to leave their Singapore EV programs in place. Beef from cattle imported from Canada for direct slaughter in the U.S. can only be boneless cuts from animals less than 30 months of age, and beef from cattle imported from Mexico for direct slaughter in the U.S. remains ineligible. Though not related to BSE, Singapore also limits the use of pathogen reduction technologies (PRTs) to a greater degree than most other beef-importing countries.

Singapore is a small destination for U.S. beef, with exports in 2014 totaling 1,561 mt valued at just under $17 million, but it is a market of regional importance because culinary trends in Singapore carry significant influence in neighboring markets. Last year, Singapore’s total beef imports were valued at $233 million, with Australia, Brazil and New Zealand being the leading suppliers. While Singapore does not require halal certification for imported beef, halal beef is preferred by many of its importers and distributors. The country has a sizeable Muslim population and a growing number of tourists from the Middle East, so many foodservice outlets choose to serve halal beef to accommodate these customers.

China is the only major beef-importing country that still blocks all access of U.S. beef due to BSE, but other markets that remain closed since 2003 include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Israel, Morocco and South Africa. Saudi Arabia reopened to U.S. beef in mid-2004, and developed into a $30-million-per-year market by 2011. But access to Saudi Arabia was lost again due to the BSE case detected in California in April 2012, and it remains closed to U.S. beef today. Arp and Lively recently met with Saudi officials to discuss this situation, and feel the meeting was very productive. “Resumption of U.S. beef exports to Saudi Arabia will require further technical discussions between the U.S. and Saudi governments, but a solution may be close at hand,” Lively says. “Regaining access to all markets that still impose BSE-related restrictions is a top priority for the U.S. industry because it is essential to maintaining our ability to compete in the global marketplace. Moreover, Saudi Arabia was an important market for several U.S. companies, and they are certainly anxious for the opportunity to win back their customers.”
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A Dirt Road Diary
- Freedom

By Steve Lucas
Ace and Jack were sitting on the porch as twilight turned to night. Lightning flashes from a distant storm lit up the horizon, and lightning bugs seemed to flash in unison in the trees in the yard around them. Their wives had taken the kids to town to watch the 4th of July fireworks. The guys had begged off with the excuse that they had to figure out why Ace’s truck was running rough. A dirty filter fixed the truck problem. Now they were absorbing the coolness of the night, listening to the approaching storm.

“Man, this is the life,” declared Ace. “Freedom sure is nice, but it sure is expensive.”

“You are right,” Jack agreed. “Our Founding Fathers put everything they had on the line. They risked their fortunes, their land and their lives to make our country free. They went into debt, and we sure owe them a debt of gratitude for the freedom we have today. If it hadn’t been for George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and….”

“Yeah, I agree,” interrupted Ace. “But I was thinking more about the here and now. I mean look how much our freedom cost us today.”

“Yes, indeed,” Jack concurred. “The daily struggle to keep our freedom has a tremendous price. The cost of maintaining our government, defending our borders and protecting our individual rights has a huge price tag. Not just in terms of money, but in terms of commitment, time, and human lives.”

“That’s true, Ace said. “But look at us. We’re just two old cowboys, sittin’ on the porch, watchin’ Ol’ Mother Nature’s fireworks. The cows are bedded down, we’ve got no one around to tell us what to do. We are totally free. All it cost us was all the cash we had in our wallets to send the wives and kids to town.

“I see your point,” Jack replied. “Freedom is expensive.”

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Hay Bale Heaven: Move Bales Faster With Less Labor and Equipment

By Del Williams

Next generation self-loading/unloading hay trailers promise to improve farm and ranch productivity. Whether farmers and ranchers are hauling hay bales to storage or moving them to pasture to feed cattle in winter, how efficiently they do so has a big impact on productivity and profits. While conventional hay trailers have been around for a hundred years, a new generation of self-loading/unloading trailer will offer a sort of hay bale heaven, enabling farmers and ranchers to move bales faster with less labor and equipment. The technology, in fact, promises to reduce hay waste as well as improve productivity and profits for years to come.

Reduce Hay Waste

Until recently, “bad side” hay waste has been a costly, unavoidable expense to farmers and ranchers, caused in part by a production equipment bottleneck that leaves bales exposed to moisture in the field. When baled hay sits in the field for days or weeks before it is hauled to storage, the bottom picks up moisture and mildew, creating an inedible “bad side” that’s wasted. The longer baled hay sits before it is moved, the more becomes unusable. Most ranchers do not realize how much money is lost as a result of these bad spots. But consider this scenario: If a rancher has 300 head of cattle, he will need about three bales per head for the winter, which adds up to approximately 1,000 bales. If 10% is wasted and the bales average 1,000 lbs. each, that is 100,000 lbs. of hay wasted. If a rancher uses the right type of hay hauling equipment to minimize this type of waste, at $40 per bale that is $4,000 or 100 bales per year he does not need to buy or produce. One way to accomplish this is with the latest generation of self-loading/unloading trailers. Unlike conventional hay trailers that must be loaded and unloaded with a tractor, this type of trailer utilizes hydraulic controls to lift bales and set them down where needed. Because the rails slide under the bales, even old and misshapen bales can be lifted and transported with no further damage. This speeds the loading, transporting and then unloading of bales to storage areas or to remote fields.

Better yet, some models can be hitched to a standard pickup truck, not just a tractor. This is a benefit as tractors are often already being used for more critical operations such as baling. Therefore additional waste is created, even in well-prepared, uncovered storage lots.

Self-loading/unloading trailers do not roll the bales off to unload. For instance, a new trailer slated to be released by GoBob this summer, called the Bale Beast, picks up bales and can set them straight down where needed. Only the original side ever contacts the ground so no new bad sides are created.

Wasteful Hay

Since conventional hay trailers “dump” the hay while unloading, causing the bales to roll, they seldom end up on the original bad side. Therefore additional waste is created, even in well-prepared, uncovered storage lots. Winter Feeding

While loading, moving, and unloading an entire trailer is efficient when bringing the hay bales in for storage, it is not when feeding cattle in winter. Because cattle are usually scattered in different pastures at this time, only a bale or two is usually placed in each location to prevent waste. With conventional hay trailers, however, the entire load must dumped all at once. Ranchers have traditionally dealt with this issue by making excessive trips from the hay lot to the pasture, taking one or two bales at a time with a tractor or a pickup equipped with a special hay bed. But more trips to the fields requires more time, fuel, wear and tear, plus soil compaction, which reduces forage growth for later feeding.

To avoid this problem, self-loading/unloading trailers such as the GoBob Bale Beast allow a rancher to make a trip with up to ten bales, unloading a single bale or as many as necessary at a time. Based on feedback from ranchers, the new trailer has an additional design modification that allows it to be loaded from the front or the back. Conventional trailer modification that allows it to be loaded from the front or the back. Conventional
The Virginia Tech Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center 2015 Field Day will be held on Wednesday, August 5, 2015. Registration will start at 12:00 noon and the program will start at 1:00 pm. During the Field Day, researchers will be on-hand to discuss ongoing research projects being conducted at the Shenandoah Valley AREC. This will be an excellent educational program, especially for producers interested in forage production, grazing, and forest management. We are asking persons interested in attending the Field Day to contact the Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center at (540) 377-2255 on or before July 31st to register.

Field Day Program
Shenandoah Valley Agricultural Research and Extension Center
Wednesday, August 5, 2015

- Establishing Silvopasture: A Mid-way Progress Assessment – Adam Downing, Virginia Cooperative Extension and Dr. John Fike, Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech
- New Legume Crop for Virginia: Mungbean Adaptation and Cultural Practices – Dr. Ozzie Abaye, Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech
- Summer Annual Options for Grazing, Hay, or Cut & Wilt Ensiling – Matt Booher, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Augusta County
- Mob Grazing Research Update – Dr. Ben Tracy, Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech
- Does Land Application of Biosolids Pose Health Concerns for Grazing Livestock? – Dr. Greg Evanylo, Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech
- A Review of Artificial Insemination Synchronization Protocols and Synchronization Injection Sites for Beef Cattle – Dr Terry Swecker, VA-MD Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, Virginia Tech
- Phosphorus Supplementation for Beef Cattle – Dr. Mark McCann, Department of Animal and Poultry Sciences, Virginia Tech
- Summer Stockpiling Fescue for Late-summer Pasture – Matt Booher, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Augusta County and John Benner, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Augusta County
- Managing Tall Fescue with Alternative Legumes – Dr. Ben Tracy, Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, Virginia Tech
- Fescue Genetics - Is the Solution in Selection? – Dr. Brian Campbell and Dr. Chris Teutsch, Virginia Tech Southern Piedmont Agricultural Research & Extension Center

Dinner will be served at the conclusion of the program

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services, or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact David Fiske or Amanda Kirby at (540) 377-2255 during business hours (M-F: 8:00 am to 5:00 pm) five days prior to the event to discuss those accommodations.

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540-968-1987

Kaitlin Smith - Vice President
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Lexington, VA 24333
540-463-6778

Deidre Harmon - Secretary
1445 Pipers Gap Road
Galax, VA 24333
276-233-8852

Walt Winkler - Treasurer
124 Kindig Road
Waynesboro, VA 22980
540-943-6144

Rob Farmer - Past President
8030 Greenwich Road
Catlett, VA 20119
540-270-3886

Chad Joines - Southwest Director
Junior Advisor
Virginia Tech Dept Animal & Poultry Science
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-557-7263

We would like to invite anyone interested in becoming a member of our association to call one of the officers listed above.

Our Next Sale, 15th Fall Herd Improvement Sale, at Virginia Tech, November 7, 2015 @ 1:00pm

It is not too early to begin lining up consignments for our November Fall Sale. We already have new consigners asking to enter cattle in the sale. We are working on our sales manager and hope to have him lined up soon. In the meantime, please feel free to contact Bill Thompson 540-968-1987 or at mountainmeadows@highlandscomputers.com

Keep our military and veterans in your prayers. Here is to hoping you have a great 4th. Be safe and be thankful for our United States.

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hay trailers only load or unload from the back, which is more difficult and time-consuming. While tractors are equipped with hydraulics, most pickup trucks are not unless they already have a bale bed. To make the benefits of this new generation of self-loading/unloading trailers more widely available, some like GoBob, offer portable hydraulics for use with pickup trucks.

Built Farm-Tough

Because hay trailers are pulled over rough terrain, including areas with ruts, berms, or potholes, carrying very heavy loads, the trailer itself must be built to withstand the abuse. For farmers and ranchers that move a large quantity of heavy bales each year, that means purchasing a heavy-duty trailer. Trailers in this class, for instance, include the GoBob Red Rhino, which uses reinforced steel and can haul 10 bales, or the Red Ox, which is even stouter and built to handle 2,500 lbs. silage bales.

“We have to go over some rough ground in the pastures with ruts and potholes, and I can’t risk breakdowns when there is hay to be hauled in,” says Wade Penn, who moves about 5,000 hay bales a year for 650 head of cattle on his 5,000 acre Cross B Ranch in Byars, OK.

“In the five years we’ve used GoBob Red Rhinos and Red Ox hay trailers, we haven’t had a single problem with them and they have performed well for us,” adds Penn. “In fact, the first year when everyone told us it would take a week to haul in 4,500 bales from the fields, we moved the bales in a weekend.”

A new entry into the heavy-duty hay trailer class is the double-wide trailer, which has recently been allowed on public roads. Some of these, like the GoBob Better Built Double Wide, can hold up to 14 bales and come with double jacks and a breakaway kit for safety. When hauling fewer than 500 bales a year, farmers and ranchers may want to look for a hay trailer that’s built to be cost-effective, yet reliable, such as the GoBob Competitor, so named because of its competitive price.

Whether farmers and ranchers take advantage of next generation self-loading/unloading hay trailers to improve their productivity, or rely on the most reliable methods to move bales with the least downtime, it is time to reexamine how they operate to get the best results.

For more info, call 1-866-532-9123 or visit www.gobobpipe.com.
Picking Up After the Storm On Pasture-Based Livestock Farms

Matt Poore,  
Extension Beef Specialist,  
NCUS Department of Animal Science

Pasture-based beef, dairy, sheep and goat farmers need to be diligent in checking livestock, repairing damaged infrastructure, and looking for possible hazards in pastures caused by storm damage. Whether the storm was a severe thunderstorm, a hurricane, or a tornado, storm damage can cause acute injury and further damage to livestock if tending to animals and pastures is made a low priority in the recovery process. At a time when there often is damage to personal property including dwellings, outbuildings, and other non-livestock facilities, sometimes the livestock and the pastures take a lower priority. The health and well-being of livestock should be the second priority after the health and well-being of farmers and their families.

Immediately after the storm subsides, producers should assess damage both to their infrastructure and their livestock. After they are sure friends and family are out of peril, they should check their pasture infrastructure to make sure that cattle or other livestock are in the pastures they were in before the storm, and that none of the animals are injured. If animals were injured by flying debris, the farmer should contact a veterinarian immediately if the injuries were severe. If conditions are so bad that livestock need to be evacuated, producers should contact their local extension agent, veterinarian, or emergency management officials.

Next, they should check to make sure waterers are operational and that fences are up and intact. If livestock are watered in a pressurized system and power is out, the producer should make haste to use a generator to restore power to the well system, or to provide another source of water (whether that be creating an emergency opening in the fence into a pond or stream, or by hauling water to the animals).

If hauling water, make sure the amount delivered to the animals is adequate. Adult lactating beef cows of average size need to be provided at least 25 gallons per day of fresh water, while dairy cattle would require more. Mature sheep and goats will need 1-3 gallons per day (depending on their size). Cattle in particular may be dangerous when very thirsty. If cattle have been deprived of water for 24 hours or more, producers should take great care when filling water tanks or restoring water flow to small tanks. Cows are likely to fight aggressively to get to the water source, and the cattle or even the farmer may be injured in the struggle.

If electric fencing is in use, producers need to check the power level to make sure the system is operational, and if the power is out, they should restore emergency power to the fence energizer. The perimeter fence should be checked to make sure fallen trees or branches have not dawned the fence. If fence damage has occurred, farmers should make every effort to get trees or branches off the fence and should make temporary repairs to keep livestock from wandering out of the pasture. More permanent repairs can be made later in the recovery process. If the system is electric, putting up temporary polywire and temporary posts may be the quickest way to restore the perimeter.

After assessing damage to the livestock and infrastructure, producers should assess other potential hazards caused by storm damage. Debris blown into pastures such as insulation and other building materials (common following tornadoes) may be eaten by livestock, leading to digestive upset and possibly death. As producers check pasture infrastructure and scout for debris, they should also look for downed wild cherry tree limbs (or fallen wild cherry trees) and immediately either fence them away from livestock or remove them from pastures before livestock consume them. PRUSSIC ACID POISONING FROM CONSUMING WILTED CHERRY LEAVES FOLLOWING STORM DAMAGE IS A VERY COMMON CAUSE OF DEATH IN CATTLE, SHEEP AND GOATS. This is an especially great hazard if pastures are short and livestock are hungry, because they may rapidly consume a large amount of the toxic material. Another potential poisoning that may result from late summer or fall storm damage is acorn poisoning. If there are oak trees in pastures and storms knock many of the green acorns down at one time, livestock may consume enough to be poisoned. As producers scout pastures for damage, they also should be aware of the potential for acorn poisoning. They should note which pastures have the highest levels of acorns, then take steps to keep animals away from them. As with cherry tree poisoning, the greatest risk is when livestock are hungry and pastures are grazed short.

Finally, farmers should make sure livestock have adequate forage or feed, and should check mineral feeders to ensure animals have access to dry mineral (and are consuming the targeted amount). When farmers are hit by storm damage, there is much to think about and sometimes farmers neglect to follow normal management practices once they see that livestock are not injured and that infrastructure is intact. It is very important for animals to continue to have access to adequate forage and mineral supplement. If there is extensive damage to infrastructure, it may be most convenient to confine livestock to one pasture and feed hay until repairs can be made.

After Hurricane Floyd hit the east coast in 1999, livestock specialists and veterinarians received numerous reports of livestock with various health problems for several months after the storm. Investigations of these situations by local livestock agents did not reveal specific issues caused directly by the storm, but rather that some livestock were undernourished because farmers had so many other problems to deal with. In a great many cases, the livestock had no access to a mineral supplement and were suffering from deficiencies. Many mineral feeders had been blown all the way out of pastures, the mineral present was soaked and hardened so that livestock were not consuming it, or minerals had simply not been put out. Trace minerals (including zinc, copper and selenium) are deficient in many areas of the country and are important for the animal to be able to deal with stress and immune challenge.

Storms are an inevitable part of life, and managing damage means more than just cutting trees off fences and making sure livestock are not injured. Immediately following the storm the safety and health of you and your family comes first, but remember to continue to protect the safety and health of the animals you care for as part of your livelihood.
Hay and Forage Field Day
Southwest Agriculture Research and Extension Center
Glade Spring, Virginia
July 20, 2015

Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Virginia Agriculture Experiment Station, the Smyth/Washington Cattleman’s Association, and the Virginia Forage and Grasslands Council will conduct a Hay and Forage Field Day at the Southwest AREC in Glade Spring, Virginia on July 20, 2015. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. and the program will end by 4:00 p.m. Dr. Dan Undersander from the University of Wisconsin will be the featured speaker. This program promises to be an excellent opportunity to learn techniques to hone your hay-making and forage management skills. Participants will hear presentations on machinery adjustment, harvest and curing management, making high quality baleage, fertility, and using summer annuals such as millet, forage sorghum, sorghum/sudan, and sudangrass for forage, as a drought risk management tool, and for soil management. Participants will be able to view the summer annual plots planted at the station. There are 15 different varieties/types planted for the field day. In addition local John Deere, Kubota, and Ford New Holland equipment dealers will be on hand to demonstrate equipment. The cost of the program will be $5.00 per person. Those interested are asked to pre-register by sending payment to the Washington County Extension Office, 234 W. Valley St., Suite B, Abingdon, VA 24210. Make checks payable to the Smyth/Washington Cattleman’s Association. For more information call 276-676-6309 or 276-608-6545.

House Passes TPA But implementation Still Uncertain

Although the U.S. House narrowly passed the Trade Promotion Authority bill 219-211 on Friday June 12, 2015, an essential precursor to its implementation was soundly defeated. The TPA bill would give Congress the power to vote on the Trans-Pacific Partnership but deny legislators the opportunity to amend it. The TPA bill would give Congress the power to vote on the Trans-Pacific Partnership but deny legislators the opportunity to amend it. The vote followed a House defeat (302-126) of the White House-backed Trade Adjustment Assistance program, which would provide training and other assistance to American workers whose jobs are displaced by international trade. The defeat of the assistance program makes for an uncertain future of the TPA.

TPA clarifies trade agreement objectives and priorities and sets consultation and notification requirements that the president follows during negotiations. Supporters say it is essential to finalizing critical free trade agreements, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership. In 2014, agricultural exports totaled more than $150 billion, and for many products, foreign markets represent half or more of total sales. “Without TPA, our trading partners won’t take us seriously and the U.S. risks critical trade agreements that hold enormous potential just for companies that export, and for our economy as a whole,” North American Meat Institute President and CEO Barry Carpenter said. TPA gives authority to the president of the United States to negotiate international trade agreements that Congress can approve or disapprove but cannot amend or filibuster. Once trade negotiators finalize a deal, Congress gets to review it and vote. Congress has granted TPA to every president since 1974, with the most recent law being approved in August 2002 and expiring June 30, 2007.
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Help Beef Cattle Beat the Heat with These Summer Management Tips

By: Kim Mullenix, Auburn University, Southeast Farm Press

As we move into warmer days, here are a few quick tips to keep in mind to help your beef cattle beat the heat.

Water, Water, Water

When was the last time you thought about HOW MUCH water your cattle need on a daily basis? You might be surprised about how much this need increases during the summer months. Water is one of the five basic classes of nutrients required for all stages of beef cattle, and makes up about 98 percent of all molecules in the body. It is critical for a range of beef cattle body functions including growth, reproduction, lactation, digestion, temperature regulation, and waste removal.

Daily animal water requirements are dependent on the stage of production, physical activity, type of diet, feed intake and the environment. There is nothing like a cold drink of water on a hot day, and water intake is often greatest during the summer months for beef cattle. Water requirements roughly double as the temperature increases from 50 to 95°F. In general, as the temperature increases requirements roughly double.

Water needs are greatest during the summer months for beef cattle. Water intake is often greatest during this time of year when it comes to the hay business, but forage maturity at harvest is extremely important for producing high-quality hay.

Conduct a forage analysis to know if supplementation will be needed this winter to meet animal nutrient requirements. Supplemental feed prices are generally quite high in the winter months, and it is advantageous to plan now for expected feed needs when a lower price point may be observed.

The lowest prices of commonly used sources such as corn gluten feed and soy hulls are usually seen from early May to early July. After this, prices begin to increase through the winter months. The best way to save on feed costs is to watch prices and have an adequate storage facility to capitalize on low prices and store feed until your time of need.

The most effective managers balance their day-to-day tasks while planning for the future. By using these practices into our management systems, we can beat the heat and push through the dog days of summer!

### Management Tips

#### Table: Daily Water Requirements for Cattle when the Daily High Temperature is 90°F

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Cattle</th>
<th>Daily gallons required per 100 lbs of body weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Growing/Finishing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry Cow</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cow-Calf Pair</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2015 Virginia Cattle & Dairy Expo Field Day

July 17, 2015 at Kentland Farm

Join cattle producers at Virginia Tech’s Kentland research farm near Blacksburg, VA for a day of fellowship, education, good food, exhibits and the Virginia Cattlemen’s Association annual business meeting.

Agenda

10:00 AM  Registration, Exhibits, and Equipment Trade Show Open

10:30 AM  Continuous educational tours begin with transportation between sites provided

- **Dairy Science facility:** see the newly completed Dairy Center for Virginia Tech along with a guided tour of the infrastructure
- **Animal Science Beef feedlot & reproductive center:** Animal Science department faculty will show folks around the facility as well as discuss current basic research in the department
- **Aerospace & Ocean Engineering Drone Airport:** one of six drone airports nationwide, see how drone technology and how it is supporting agricultural research
- **Kentland Plantation home:** the history of Kentland Plantation is rich and an interpretive tour of the manor home and farm’s history will be offered

11:30 AM  Continuous free BBQ lunch served by the Virginia Tech Block & Bridle Club

*Please RSVP for lunch by calling the VCA office at 540-992-1009 or emailing Jacquelyn Davis at jdavis@vacattlemen.org*

Noon  Remarks from Governor Terry McAuliffe and Virginia Tech President Dr. Timothy Sands as well as others invited officials and guests to honor the Virginia cattle business and dedicate the newly constructed Virginia Tech Dairy Center

2:30 PM  Virginia Cattlemen’s Association annual business meeting

3:00 PM  Adjournment and end of day

**Directions to Kentland Farm:** drive west from the Town of Blacksburg and past Blacksburg High School on Prices Fork Road approximately 2 miles, turn right onto McCoy Road (Route 652) and travel just over 3 miles to a left on Whitethorne Road (Route 623) and Kentland Farm entrance will be at the end on right. Follow signs on gravel drive to meeting headquarters near drone airport.
Virginia Cattlemen’s Association Annual Business Meeting

Friday July 17, 2015 at 2:30 PM

There will be several items of business requiring VCA membership approval and participation slated for the business meeting. Below is a summary of the action items for the meeting. Please review these carefully and be prepared to vote accordingly that day. All supporting official VCA documents cited can be found on the Virginia Cattlemen’s Association website at www.vacattlemen.org

Feeder Council Issues and Recommendations

- Proposal of the following addition to the Standard Operating Procedures for Feeder Cattle Sales,
  - “All cattle handled sold a Virginia Cattlemen’s Association sponsored sale shall have that transaction handled by a bonded dealer, marketing agency or packer.”
- Proposal to increase marketing fees on a per head basis for VCA sponsored sales. The proportional increase of marketing fees will be designated 100% to a reserve fund created for the purpose of meeting VCA employee obligations of accrued vacation and other benefits associated with employee retirement or separation from VCA or other financial situations deemed critical by the VCA Executive Committee. The minimum amount to be maintained in this fund will be $100,000 and 25% of the marketing fee increase will be designated to this reserve fund perpetually after the $100,000 minimum is attained. Fee increases proposed are as follows:
  - Tel O Auction fee increase from $4.00 to $5.00 per head
  - Board Sale fee increase from $1.75 to $2.75 per head
  - In Barn Sale fee increase from $1.75 to $2.00 per head
- Proposal for the following Feeder Council Director recommendations,
  - Region 1: currently Glenn Wheeler has completed one three year term and is eligible for second consecutive term
  - Region 7: currently Lin Jones has completed one three year term and is eligible for second consecutive term
  - County Cattlemen: this is a Director position that has never been officially defined in the VCA by Laws. To affirm this position the Feeder Council recommends: “Replace current County Cattlemen Director with At Large voting Director on the VCA Feeder Council with eligibility for At Large Director to come from any VCA affiliated local marketing association and Director selection determined by vote of the Feeder Council membership”

Policy & Industry Advocacy Board

- Approval of VCA 2015 Policy on State Issues
  - Entire policy can be viewed at http://vacattlemen.org/by_laws.php
- Caucusing and report of six VCA Policy Districts
  - District 1: Joey Davenport first term expires
  - District 2: Steve Furrow first term expires, Bill McDonald resigning with two years remaining on first term. Resigning due to being appointed to the Cattlemen’s Beef Board
  - District 4: Jared Burner first term expires
  - District 6: Mike Henry first term expires
Barack Obama’s Water War

By: Jenny Hopkinson, POLITICO

The Obama administration announced new protections May 27th for thousands of waterways and wetlands, pushing ahead despite a fierce counterattack from powerhouse industries like agriculture, oil and home-building — and their supporters in Congress.

On its face, the Waters of the United States rule is largely a technical document, defining which rivers, streams, lakes and marshes fall under the jurisdiction of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers. But opponents condemn it as a massive power grab by Washington, saying it will give bureaucrats carte blanche to swoop in and penalize landowners every time a cow walks through a ditch. And it comes amid years of complaints from Republicans about President Barack Obama’s regulatory agenda, which has encompassed everything from power plants and health insurers to Internet providers and for-profit colleges. Critics are already fighting back: The House voted earlier in May to block the rule, with support from both Republicans and some farm- and energy-state Democrats, and similar legislation is moving through the Senate. Opponents are also preparing lawsuits that will add to an already long trail of litigation over the government’s powers to regulate water — an issue the Supreme Court has taken up twice, with confusing results, since 2001.

Obama was quick to add his personal endorsement to the rule, saying the measure is needed to protect vulnerable waterways and drinking water and to keep the economy going. “This rule will provide the clarity and certainty businesses and industry need about which waters are protected by the Clean Water Act, and it will ensure polluters who knowingly threaten our waters can be held accountable,” Obama said in a statement after the EPA released a final version of the rule. “My administration has made historic commitments to clean water, from restoring iconic watersheds like the Chesapeake Bay and the Great Lakes to preserving more than a thousand miles of rivers and other waters for future generations. With today’s rule, we take another step towards protecting the waters that belong to all of us.”

But House Speaker John Boehner accused the president of delivering yet another devastating blow to the economy. “The administration’s decree to unilaterally expand federal authority is a raw and tyrannical power grab that will crush jobs,” the Ohio Republican said in a statement. “[T]he rule is being shoved down the throats of hardworking people with no input, and places landowners, small businesses, farmers and manufacturers on the road to a regulatory and economic hell.”

The agencies and their supporters say the safety of drinking water and stream health are threatened because of weak state and local regulation and a lack of enforcement. The rule is meant to make it clearer which waterways EPA and the Corps of Engineers can oversee under the 43-year-old Clean Water Act, which covers “navigable waters” such as the Mississippi River and Lake Erie but is vague on how far upstream protections must go to keep those water bodies clean. In essence, the rule would establish whether antipollution laws are triggered if a farmer blocks a stream to make a pond for livestock, a developer fills in part of a wetland to put up a house or an oil pipeline has to cross a creek. The only people with reason to oppose the rule are polluters who threaten our clean water,” senior White House adviser Brian Deese told reporters during a conference call. He added that the rule “is based on common sense. … The status quo is rife with unsustainable confusion over what’s protected and what’s not.”

The final rule ensures protections for tributaries that have physical signs of flowing water, even if they don’t run all year round, and ditches that “look and act” like tributaries, said Jo-Ellen Darcy, the assistant secretary of the Army for civil works. The rule also limits EPA regulatory oversight to any body of water within 1,500 feet of another water body already covered by the rule, unless they have a surface water connection.. EPA and the corps also decided to extend protections to regional water features, like prairie potholes and coastal bays in the Delmarva Peninsula and the Carolinas, on a case by case basis. EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy said the rule maintains long-held exemptions for agriculture and does not cover features like tile drainage systems, regular farm activities or the moving of livestock.

Despite the changes, McCarthy added that the new rule would expand the reach of the Clean Water Act by only about 3 percent. The measure is expected to take effect 60 days after it’s published in the Federal Register. Defining where a navigable waterway begins and ends has long spurred disputes among the government, environmentalists and industry. Supreme Court rulings in 2001 and 2006 added to the confusion, imposing a less-than-clear requirement that upstream water must have a “significant nexus” to a navigable waterway to fall under the federal government’s jurisdiction. Groups that back the rule, such as the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, Environment America and fishing organizations, want the definition to be as broad as possible, saying you can’t protect major lakes and rivers unless you protect their sources upstream. And they say the federal government needs an oversight role, argued that states lack the financial resources and manpower to keep water from becoming polluted. “Small streams and wetlands provide drinking water to roughly 1 in 3 Americans and they must be protected from pollution at the source,” said Sen. Barbara Boxer of California, the top Democrat on the Environment and Public Works Committee, in a statement.

Continued on Page 22.
On the other side are Republicans and some of the biggest spenders in Washington. “The administration’s cavalier attitude toward expanding the federal government’s authority into our backyards is absolutely outrageous,” said Sen. David Vitter (R-La.). “Not only were small businesses — who will be dramatically impacted by expanding of the definition of ‘waters of the United States’ — inappropriately excluded from the rule-making process, but the federal government shouldn’t be regulating puddles on private property in the first place.”

The Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers have joined the American Farm Bureau Federation, Dairy Farmers of America, pesticide manufacturers, mining companies, home builders, state and local governments, water utilities, flood control districts, the timber industry, railroads, real estate developers and even golf course operators among the more than 230 organizations and companies that have listed “Waters of the United States” on federal lobbying disclosures since the administration proposed the rule in March 2014.

The lobbying effort has already had some success. In May, the House passed a bill from Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) that would force EPA and the Army Corps to kick their rule back to the drawing board and consult with states and industry before writing a new proposal. The 261-155 vote included yes votes from 24 Democrats, of whom eight sit on the House Agriculture Committee and two sit on Energy and Commerce. Four of the Democrats are from energy-heavy Texas. The Senate followed suit in a similar measure from Sen. John Barrasso (R-Wyo.) in the Environment and Public Works Committee and has the backing of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. Other supporters include three Democrats on the Agriculture Committee: Joe Donnelly of Illinois, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota and Joe Manchin of West Virginia. Barrasso’s measure includes more detailed consultation requirements than the House version and sets a Dec. 31, 2016, goal for EPA to finish a revised rule. The White House has threatened to veto Shuster’s bill, arguing that it would “derail current efforts to clarify the scope of the CWA, hamstring future regulatory efforts and deny businesses and communities the regulatory certainty needed to invest in projects that rely on clean water.”

However, that won’t stop the agriculture industry and other opponents from suing. Among other objections, the suits are likely to debate whether the agencies violated the Administrative Procedure Act when trying to garner support for the measure and in reviewing comments, whether the rule-making violated federal protections for small businesses, and whether the rule’s expanded oversight of waterways falls outside what Congress intended when it wrote the Clean Water Act.

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Beef Council Update

Mission: To effectively maintain and build beef demand in Virginia for beef and beef products that satisfy consumer preferences through market development programs (consumer information, promotion, research, and industry information), thereby increasing the opportunity for the cattle industry to earn an adequate return on investment.

Think Beef Doesn’t Fit On Your Plate? Think Again.

Excerpt from FactsAboutBeef.com

Myth: Beef doesn’t have a place on my plate as part of a healthy diet.

Fact: Beef still has a place on your plate, and you can feel confident that there are a variety of ways to include beef on your plate as part of a healthy diet.

Leading experts agree that when it comes to a healthy diet, one size does not fit all. In fact, some of the nation’s foremost health and nutrition experts including Dr. Penny Kris-Etherton, a leading researcher in cardiovascular nutrition, and Dr. Brian Wansink, former executive director of the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion in Washington D.C. who led the development of the United States Department of Agriculture’s 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, recently reviewed some of the most popular diets and rated them as part of the annual U.S. News and World Report Best Diets 2015. According to these, and many other experts, there are some primary characteristics to consider when choosing your individual diet and lifestyle:

1- how easy the diet is to follow and commit to long term
2- the ability to produce short, and long-term results
3- the nutritional completeness, such as the right mixture of fat, carbs and protein that are necessary
4- the potential for helping prevent and manage long-term illnesses, such as diabetes and heart disease

While scientists and nutrition experts continue to debate the elusive “perfect diet,” research continues to reinforce the basic principles we’ve known for a long time – there is a flexible range of fat, carbs and protein that people can eat to get the nutrients they need to enjoy good health. Luckily, some of the most popular, easy-to-follow and nutritious diets DO have one thing in common—they ALL can include lean beef.

These diets include the DASH diet (Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension), the Mediterranean Diet, and high protein/low carbohydrate diets.

Team Beef Virginia is seeking new members!

Team Beef Virginia, a project of the Virginia Beef Industry Council, is seeking new athletes to add to our team for the October 1 2015-October 1 2016 year. Team Beef VA aims to promote beef in an active lifestyle through various events and opportunities.

Requirements involve participating in 2 competitions of your sport per sponsorship year and completing a beef nutrition webinar & advocacy workshop.

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For more information or to apply, please visit www.vabeef.org/TEAM or contact the VBIC office:

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Pictured above:
A new retail resource for planning summer grilling promotions and cut specials based on popularity & holiday.
Canada, Mexico Push For $3 Billion In Sanctions Against U.S

By David Ljunggren and David Alire Garcia, Reuters

Canada and Mexico will seek World Trade Organization authorization to impose over $3 billion in sanctions against U.S. exports in retaliation against contentious meat-labeling laws, the two nations said on June 4th. U.S. legislators have signaled they plan to repeal the 2009 laws, which Canada and Mexico says makes their meat products more expensive. In May, the WTO upheld an earlier ruling that country-of-origin labeling (COOL) rules illegally discriminate against imported livestock from Canada and Mexico, rejecting a U.S. appeal. The decision formally allowed the two countries to impose trade sanctions against the United States, which must be approved by the WTO.

The United States saw the annual values as “substantially inflated” and would seek WTO arbitration at the appropriate time, a spokesman for the U.S. Trade Representative said. Mexico and Canada are therefore seeking an extraordinary session of the WTO’s dispute settlement body on June 17 to authorize the punitive measures. “Despite the WTO’s final ruling that U.S. country of origin labeling measures are discriminatory, the United States continues to avoid its international trade obligations,” Canadian Trade Minister Ed Fast said in a statement.

Canada said it wanted to impose just over C$3 billion ($2.4 billion) in sanctions while Mexico is looking for $653 million worth of punitive measures. Ottawa is likely to target beef, pork, California wines, mattresses, cherries and office furniture, Farm Minister Gerry Ritz said. “The governments of Mexico and Canada will keep working closely to resolve this important commercial dispute with the United States, with an aim to defend our farmers and breeders and maintain jobs and economic prosperity in all of North America,” the Mexican economy ministry said in a statement.

In 2009, the United States required that retail outlets use labels such as “Born in Mexico, Raised and Slaughtered in the United States” to give consumers more information about the safety and origin of their food. Consumer groups and some U.S. lawmakers say the rules provide essential information about products for shoppers.

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Don’t forget to mark your calendars for the 2015 Mid-Atlantic Fall Bonanza Sale

November 14, 2015

And These Junior Show Dates:

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June 27-July3........Junior National Hereford Exposition
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November 14.............Mid-Atlantic Fall Round Up Show

Virginia Hereford Association
Have you had a Checkup Lately?

By: David Cuddy, Commercial Ag Loan Officer

Farm Credit of the Virginias

If you’re anything like me, the thought of having to go to the doctor for a checkup is about as appealing as kissing a porcupine. All the poking and prodding tends to make a lot of us uncomfortable, so we will go to great lengths to avoid the appointment. There’s no limit to the number of excuses to get out of it, however, none of them are very good. It’s human nature to avoid things that make us uncomfortable or that we don’t understand very well. The same can be said for many of us when it comes to another type of checkup. In fact, one that I’d much rather talk about, and that’s a financial check-up. Now, if you’re anything like me, it’s a lot easier to go for a health check-up when you know you’ve lost a few pounds. The same thing holds true when looking at our finances as well. It’s much easier to balance the checkbook if you know the balance is going to look good. So rather than waiting until things look bad again, now is a good time to take a few minutes to do a financial checkup on your farming operation.

Now, before you get your nose out of joint and throw this article in file 13, let me assure you that I’m not going to start spewing fancy equations, ratios or statistics. I think too often, when we talk about farm and/or business financials, it’s easy to make it more difficult than it needs to be. Since I’m just a backwoods Southwest Virginia boy, I tend to use the same common sense approach to finance that my daddy taught me to use for most things in life. It’s the substance that matters, not the fluff. The same holds true for your financial statement. You can dress it up, but at the end of the day, you’re left with what was really there all along. My logic says that when things are going pretty good, it might be a good time for a checkup. Maybe it won’t be as tempting to add fluff and be a little easier to get to the important stuff. So, with that fluff out of the way, where do we start? I think the simplest and best place to begin the process is to develop a financial statement for your operation. While it can be somewhat complicated to sort through everything you own and try to put a value on it, I’d suggest a more common sense approach. For the purposes of this discussion, I don’t feel that you need to count sockets in the toolbox or cats in the barn, just make sure you do a reasonably good job of estimating the true value of your assets, and start with the big stuff. It might be a good idea, if you’ve not already done so, to list each piece of your farm equipment, along with the serial number and an estimate of value. While you may not need the serial number to fill out a financial statement, it could sure come in handy if something gets stolen or you have to make an insurance claim. But for smaller items like hand tools, a general (and realistic) lump-sum estimate should be more than adequate. I’m really not sure what to tell you about the barn cats, though.

Depending on how you do things, this might not include things like your personal bank account, your home, personal vehicles, etc… This could be the case, for example, if you operate your farm as a corporation. If, like the majority of folks, you simply file a schedule F as part of your personal return, and you own the farm assets individually (or together with your spouse), you probably would include personal assets like the family vehicle, your personal residence, etc… There are many places where you can find a blank financial statement, if you want something to go by. Most financial institutions can provide a copy of a blank statement or they are available through many sources online, or through your extension office. It’s perfectly fine, though, to use a legal pad, or even a brown paper bag, if that’s what works for you. Again, it’s not the fluff that matters, just the substance. Getting the information and putting it to use is far more important than the package it’s in.

Most, if not all templates you’ll run across will generally divide assets up into three separate categories. The first class of assets we call “Current Assets”. As the name implies, these are assets which either are cash or can be converted to cash very quickly. Examples of current assets include, of course, cash, including checking and savings accounts, short term CD’s and even that money you hid in the mattress last fall. Other, less obvious examples of current assets include market livestock (calves, lambs, pigs, maybe those cats in the barn, etc…); basically these are animals that will not be on your place for more than a typical operating season. Here, we also include feed inventory, accounts receivable, investment in growing crops (What did you spend to get that corn you just put in the ground?), prepaid fertilizer or feed and stocks and bonds. Basically anything that you can either spend quickly, convert to cash quickly or that’s not going... 

Continued on Page 31

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EPA In Hot WOTUS Water

By Seymour Klierly

As much as farmers and ranchers would like to put the Environmental Protection Agency behind bars for all of the overregulation the agency gets away with, some retribution might really be happening. In the May 26, 2015 New York Times, a story was published by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Eric Lipton, calling into question the lawfulness of EPA’s solicitation of public comments for the proposed “Waters of the U.S.” rule, which is currently being reviewed at the White House Office of Management and Budget and is expected to be released any day now. The story—titled “Critics Hear E.P.A.’s Voice in ‘Public Comments’”— shed light on the suspicious (in the least) tactics the agency used during the WOTUS public comment period.

Lipton writes: The purpose of the “public comment” period is so the agency can objectively measure public opinion on policy that will affect many people. Keyword: objectively. In March, EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy testified before the Senate Environment & Public Works Committee that 90 percent of the more than 1 million comments were supportive of the rule. However, EPA conveniently left out the agency had a heavy hand in those positive comments.

It was also pretty perfect timing the story broke the same morning as the same committee held another hearing on EPA’s WOTUS rule. At the hearing, Chairman Jim Inhofe, R-OK, said, “EPA claims that they conducted ‘unprecedented outreach’ after they issued their proposed ‘Waters of the United States’ rule. What they actually conducted was an unprecedented grassroots lobbying campaign, which may violate federal law. I have already asked the Government Accountability Office to look into this matter.”

Perhaps the most controversial tool EPA used during the comment period was Thunderclap, a social media service where supporters of an issue pledge to have their social media following donated toward the cause. At a specific, predetermined time, that message of support or call to action is posted all at once across all supporters’ social media channels, amplifying the message. According to Lipton, under federal law, the president and political appointees (like McCarthy) may support or oppose pending legislation. However, several Justice Department legal opinions have warned federal agencies not to employ extensive grassroots lobbying—which is exactly what EPA did.

Let’s call a spade a spade here: EPA broke the law by exaggerating support of the WOTUS rule through public lobbying. If I worked for EPA, I’d be shaking in my boots. But of course, much like how EPA bulldozed its way through the rulemaking process—ignoring agriculture’s many outspoken concerns—the agency is showing its hard-headedness again by insisting it is in the right. EPA staffer Tom Reynolds said, “We are well within our authority to educate the American people about the importance of what EPA is doing to act on climate change and protect public health. There is a very clear line, and we never, ever cross it.”

Instead of spreading information about the proposed WOTUS rule, EPA spread messages defending and advocating for the proposed rule. I’m not shocked. Are you?
EPA Unveils RFS Projections, Aims for the Middle

The Obama administration handed more disappointing news Friday to the once-powerful corn lobby, giving growers less support than they had wanted in a federal ethanol program that’s under attack from the oil industry, food producers, tea partiers and some green groups. The federal Environmental Protection Agency unveiled its proposed volume requirements under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) program for the years 2014, 2015 and 2016. The EPA’s proposed volumes in three biofuel categories — cellulosic, biomass diesel, and advanced biofuel — are well below those originally mandated in the legislation, but do represent a steady increase in the use of biofuels and ethanol to replace petroleum-based fuels.

The 2014 proposal — originally to have been unveiled 18 months ago — is actual consumption figures, EPA noted in a press release posted on its website. For 2015 and 2016, “After extensive outreach and dialogue with the agricultural community, biofuel producers and the oil and gas industry, EPA is proposing ... standards for 2015 and 2016 (and 2017 for biodiesel) that increase steadily over time.”

EPA’s proposed total renewable fuel levels are 15.93 billion gallons of ethanol-equivalent fuel in 2014; 16.3 billion gallons in 2015, and 17.4 billion gallons in 2016. “This proposal marks an important step forward in making sure the Renewable Fuel Standard program delivers on the Congressional intent to increase biofuel use, lower greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy security,” said Janet McCabe, the acting assistant administrator for EPA’s Office of Air, in the agency’s press release.

“We believe these proposed volume requirements will provide a strong incentive for continued investment and growth in biofuels.”

JPMorgan analyst Ann Duignan calculated in a note to investors that the proposed volumes for the 2015-2016 corn marketing year suggest that about 5 billion bushels of corn will be required for ethanol production in the United States. (USDA earlier forecast a need for 5.2 billion bushels of corn for ethanol.) Duignan figured that about 182 million bushels of corn may be added to 2015-2016’s ending stocks, based on current expectations for yield and production.

The EPA appears it wants to scale back — but not slash — the amount of biofuel that gasoline refiners must blend into the nation’s fuel supply through 2016, under a program that Congress created a decade ago to trim U.S. dependence on Mideast oil. The proposal allows a modest boost for 2016, but falls far short of the ethanol lobby’s hopes for an ever-soaring share of the nation’s fuel supply. And though it also goes against the oil industry’s demand that Washington abolish or make steep cuts to what it calls a wasteful mandate, ethanol advocates were the first to cry foul. “The initial read on EPA’s proposal is they have simply acquiesced to the demands of Big Oil,” said Tom Buis, CEO of the ethanol industry group Growth Energy.

The EPA’s move, which came a year and a half after EPA first proposed cutting the requirement, is the latest twist on a biofuel program that pits powerful industries against each other and crosses party lines. It came shortly after Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton published a newspaper op-ed in corn-rich Iowa that called for putting the mandate “back on track” while making changes that reflect the shifting realities of the energy markets. For the ethanol industry, the news included disappointing numbers for producers of the traditional, corn-based version, who will get to sell 14 billion gallons of their fuel to the gasoline refiners next year. That’s a billion gallons less than Congress had envisioned for 2016 when it created the current version of the ethanol program eight years ago.

Producers of “advanced” biofuel, including cellulosic ethanol made from plants like switchgrass, will be limited to less than half of what lawmakers once anticipated. The disparity reflects the fact that production of cellulosic ethanol has fallen far short of earlier projections. All told, EPA is ordering the petroleum industry to make room for a total of 16.3 billion gallons of biofuel this year and 17.4 billion gallons in 2016. Congress had originally set this year’s target at 20.5 billion gallons, with dreams of ramping that up to 36 billion gallons seven years from now. The agency also retroactively set ethanol mandates on Friday for 2014, a decision that by law it was supposed to have made in November 2013.

The fact that ethanol supporters had to fight so hard even for this outcome is yet another sign that the corn lobby has lost much of its punch in Washington, as many of its lions in Congress have faded away. Even in Iowa, Republican Sen. Joni Ernst won her election handily last year despite the Obama administration’s weakening of the mandate.

Continued on Page 30

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Despite expressing ambivalence about the ethanol program, And Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who is pushing to abolish the mandate, openly defended that stance in March during an appearance at an Iowa agricultural summit—a once-unthinkable step for a presidential hopeful visiting such a crucial caucus state.

It’s a far cry from two decades of incentives that biofuel producers received under political heavyweights like former Senate GOP leader Bob Dole, former House Speaker Dennis Hastert and former Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle, who helped ensure a triple play of incentives for ethanol—the blending mandate, a tax credit and a tariff on ethanol imports. Lawmakers let both the tax credit and tariff expire at the end of 2011. Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman Jim Inhofe (R-Oklahoma) said that Congress needs to do “rigorous oversight” of the mandate in light of EPA’s handling of the issue. “EPA’s announcement adds to the building evidence of how poorly the agency has managed” the program, he said. Still, Congress is unlikely to repeal or tinker with the mandate anytime soon, given the regional divides on ethanol and the remaining strength of Corn Belt lawmakers in both parties. That leaves EPA in the driver’s seat.

In addition to the gallon figures that EPA released Friday, the agency offered a mixed assessment of the oil industry’s arguments that the gasoline supply is running out of room more for ethanol—a phenomenon that the petroleum lobby calls the “blend wall.” Gasoline sold in the U.S. typically contains 10 percent ethanol, a concentration known as E10. Ethanol advocates denounce the blend wall as a myth meant to prevent biofuels from taking an even larger share of the market. They also accuse oil companies of creating obstacles by making it harder for higher-percentage ethanol blends, such as 15 percent, to gain a foothold in the marketplace. “[W]e do not believe that Congress intended the renewable fuels market to be ultimately constrained by the E10 blendwall,” EPA says in the rule notice. But it also says both the oil and biofuels industries could have taken steps to make room for the higher-ethanol blends.
to be around for more than a typical operating cycle. Second, we need to list what are referred to as Intermediate Term or I/T assets. I/T assets include things such as cows, bulls, replacement heifers, vehicles, machinery and equipment. Basically, anything that’s going to be around for a while, that may take a little longer to sell, if you have to. In this category, we’ll also want to include things like retirement accounts, cash value of life insurance (not face value), personal property, such as tools, and fixtures, like cattle handling equipment or dairy equipment. We generally assume that I/T assets have a life span of 5 to 10 years. Finally, list real estate assets and a realistic estimate of value. I probably run across more fudges here than anywhere, when I look at financial statement, although value of cattle might come in a close second. Again, it’s important to be realistic here. We all know that a one acre building lot is going to be worth a whole lot more per acre than a 50 acre field. We also know that a 50 acre field next to the lake is probably worth more than 50 acres on the side of a mountain. If you’re not sure, a good place to start is the county tax assessment. Some counties do a much better job of estimating a true market value than others, so it’s important to at least have a general idea how accurate the tax values are for your area. As a side note, I get a chuckle every now and then, and seems to always happen when the county’s just completed a re-assessment, when the same guy who’s just spent the last 15 minutes telling you about fighting with the assessor’s office because they’ve got his property valued too high, nearly swallows his chew when you ask him if he wants to use the tax value on his financial statement. Invariable, the answer is “heck no, it’s worth way more than that!” I say that to make a point. The work you’re doing here will only be as valuable to you as the quality of the information you put in it. So whether it’s the value of your real estate, machinery or cows, try to be realistic and objective. Now that we’ve come up with a value for each of the three categories of assets, we’re ready to figure up the total, which of course will be reflected at the bottom of the sheet, page or paper bag as your total assets. Next, we’ll do the same thing with debts. The process works basically the same as it did for assets. Start with current debts, including lines of credit, credit cards, current accounts (feed, fertilizer, fuel), accounts payable, property taxes, etc… Then move on to I/T debts. This will include car/vehicle loans, loans for livestock, machinery and equipment, etc… Basically anything with a term longer than 12 months, but less than about 10 years. Generally, we don’t include mortgages here, even if the term is under 10 years, but it certainly won’t hurt for you to do that. The reason I steer away from that, though, is that I like to be able to compare debts vs. assets for each asset class. So, if I list real estate as a long term asset, I like to list it as a long term debt, regardless of the term. That way, I’m comparing the debt to the associated class of asset. And of course, finally, we list all loans against real estate as a long term liability. Again, we total each category, and then add those totals together to come up with a total debt figure. And the moment of truth has arrived… By subtracting total debt from total assets, we arrive at net worth. Now, I can hear some of you saying “why the heck did he need to waste all that ink, just to get me to figure up my net worth? Any chimpanzee with average intelligence can figure that out.” And in some ways, you’re right. It’s not that hard. But I meet with folks all the time who are very successful, but when they sit down with a blank financial statement, are quickly reduced to a confused mess. It gets hard when we try to look at everything all at once. The concept of a financial statement is very simple. The process of actually doing one can be anything but. A very wise man once asked me a question that I thought was completely ridiculous. The question was: “Do you know how to eat an elephant”? Of course I just kind of sat there, thinking where the heck did that come from. So he answered his own question, and it’s one of the best pieces of advice I’ve ever gotten. Obviously, the answer is – just like you eat anything else – one bite at a time. If you are sitting there, fork in hand, looking at the whole elephant, it seems like an impossible task, but if, rather than focus on that huge elephant, we simply take a bite, we’re that much closer to having him eaten. Sorry if I made anyone gag, the analogy may be a little off-the-wall, but the concept is spot on. Talking about creating a personal or farm financial statement may sound like no big deal. Then when you get into it, it can quickly turn into an elephant. Keep it in perspective though. Focus on the big things first, don’t count socket wrenches and be realistic. And if you need some help, talk to your tax professional, your lender or extension agent. If you’ve managed to hammer something out, then congratulations! You’ve just taken the first and most important step in your farm financial setup. The information that you’ve just put together can be an invaluable tool for improving your bottom line, as long as you used good information. There are several more steps, to completing a full check-up and I will address those in articles to come. When I get to meet with you again, we’ll use the financial statement to start identifying how healthy our business really is, while also looking at ways to improve its health if we need to. Until next time… Be sure to drink upstream from the herd and don’t squat on your spurs.
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FDA Will Collect Antibiotics Data By Species

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has proposed a rule that would require animal drug sponsors of all antimicrobials sold or distributed for use in food-producing animals to obtain estimates of sales by major food-producing species — cattle, swine, chickens and turkeys — the federal agency said in a news release posted on its website. The additional data would improve understanding of how antimicrobials are sold or distributed for use in major food-producing animals and help the FDA further target its efforts to make sure that medically important antimicrobials are used judiciously.

"Consistent with data collection objectives outlined in the ... National Strategy for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria, this proposed rule is a step toward providing more detailed information to the FDA and the public on changes in antimicrobial sales and distribution over time," said Michael R. Taylor, deputy commissioner for foods and veterinary medicine for the FDA. "We plan further actions to complete the task."

Current regulatory authority limits the data collection that FDA can mandate to antimicrobial sales and distribution information. While adding species-specific information will help provide a fuller picture, more detailed information is needed about on-farm use practices to adequately understand links between use patterns and trends in resistance, the release said.

The FDA’s species-specific data plans are a “next step” in the goal of sorting out how, or whether, the use of antibiotics in food-producing animals is related to the growing resistance of pathogens to antibiotic medicines that affects human health, says Gail Hansen, senior officer and public health veterinarian for the Pew Charitable Trust. “It gets us another step, and when you mesh that with some of the data collected on antibiotic resistance and some of the data USDA has collected on farms where antibiotics are used, you start getting that picture coming together,” Hansen said. “There’s not going to be a silver bullet piece of data.”

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Plentiful Grass & Short Supplies Push Feeder Cattle Prices Higher

“Feeder cattle buyers continue to battle in the ultra-competitive yearling market, forward-contracting and committing cattle to price grids, or both.”

Yearlings sold steady to $3 per cwt higher. There were instances of $5-$7 higher in the second half of the week, according to AMS.

A narrow and scattered calf offering wobbled ahead unevenly from steady money to $5 higher to $5 lower.

Cash fed cattle prices continued to hover and drift lower in another week of sluggish trade. Live prices were mainly steady to $3 lower at $152-$155 per cwt, according to AMS.

Although prices fizzled later in the week, wholesale beef values eked out week-to-week gains. Choice boxed beef cutout value closed $1.07 per cwt higher week-to-week at $245.72. Select was $2.85 higher at $240.42 as the Choice-Select spread continued to narrow ($5.30 per cwt on Friday).

The trend on the wholesale beef side is very similar to what’s occurring in the live cattle market,” Speer says in this week’s Industry at a Glance. “That is, weekly negotiated sales continue to decline over time. Packers (sellers in this case) and beef buyers are increasingly relying on out-front commitments. As noted in the earlier live cattle discussion, while there’s lots of grumbling about the sufficiency of a true test of the cash market from week to week, seemingly no one wants to step up and establish the market test.”

Although AMS analysts point out that steer and heifer slaughter is 6.7% less through the end of May, it’s also true that more fed cattle continue to trade away from the spot market.

Nevil Speer, BEEF industry analyst, pointed out recently that cattle feeders and packers increasingly rely on formula-based sales, along with technical trade seemed responsible for much of the pushing and pulling of cattle futures this week. Prices also meandered with and against surges and leaks in wholesale beef value.

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Increasing Producer Profits with Cattle Handling Techniques

By: Jennifer Ligon, Animal Science Extension Agent, Buckingham County

Editor’s Note: This is an excellent article written to highlight the low input and high return investment that low stress handling can be on the beef cattle farm. There are many added value components of low stress handling ranging from lower labor requirements to increased weight gains, however the most striking may be the added net return per head when healthy weight gain is combined with reputation selling programs. Low stress weaning pays dividends.

Cattle handling is often an overlooked approach to increasing performance and value of cattle. Low stress (LS) cattle handling can increase the marketability of your cattle by allowing weaning and conditioning of calves to obtain premium prices without the additional stress that could result in negative weight gains. Producers have worked to improve the gain and profitability of their beef cattle since the initiation of raising cattle as a business entity. They use to their advantage the improved knowledge that the industry has acquired in genetics, better feed sources, grazing protocols, health programs, etc. These practices usually increase input costs. The question is; are there other areas that can be improved? Are there other areas that may also increase production that will not add to input costs?

Media coverage has increased public awareness of the livestock industry. A portion of the public has demanded the humane treatment of livestock, whether they are consumers of beef or not. Walmart has taken action to address animal welfare issues as well, demanding humane treatment of farm animals by their suppliers. Recent survey results from the American Humane Association show that 94.9% of the respondents are concerned about animal welfare (Radke, 2014). Those respondents were more concerned with food labeled, “humanely raised” than food labeled “organic”, “natural”, or “antibiotic-free”. Online content and media fuel these issues and have tarnished the industry’s image. This has led to increased expenses for producers, processors, and the beef industry as a whole. These issues have initiated a movement towards better handling practices.

The Virginia cattle industry has worked to enhance the marketability of their cattle by encouraging the use of the Virginia Quality Assured Feeder Calf Program (VQA). All producers must also be Beef Quality Assured (BQA) trained to qualify for the VQA program. The Beef Quality Assurance program provides producers with the tools and training to ensure animal health and welfare that furnishes a safe and wholesome beef product. A significant aspect of the BQA program is cattle handling. The Mid-Atlantic BQA producer certification manual states, “Handling procedures must be safe for the cattle and caretakers and cause as little stress as possible.” It also states that facilities should be utilized to take advantage of the cattle’s natural instincts. The VQA and BQA programs are often utilized by local cattlemen’s associations pooling their cattle for comingled Tel-O-Auction sales where weaning is required. However, one of the most stressful times for cattle in the cow/calf operation is weaning. Herein lies the challenge for Virginia producers to wean and then feed calves for an additional 45 to 60 days and see adequate gains or to at least minimize the calves’ weight loss due to stress. Additional stress during weaning can also affect immunity and reproduction in cows. Can positive human handling (LS cattle handling) at times of normal cow and calf management procedures lower the stress response and negative weight gain of calves at weaning?

We conducted a study to determine if low stress handling could reduce the stress of calves during the weaning process. LS handling and weaning training were based on teachings of Bud Williams and includes working cattle from the side instead of behind them, carefully judging flight zones to move them. The techniques were performed on half the calves and the other half were worked with conventional (C) methods. Groups were located at two correctional center farms in Virginia and weaning.

Continued on Page 38
LS handling methods used to decrease weaning stress do have a financial impact on the cow/calf producer when price is calculated for the additional weight of the LS group. Using the prices received at a 2014 VQA Tel-O-Auction, which utilizes all the programs available in Virginia to market cattle and weans their cattle to receive premium prices, we compared it to that region’s local market prices for the same day. A calculation of the additional weight gain of the LS handled calves was done using a $0.04 slide and was also shown by an actual example from this sale where a load of 67 head of cattle averaging 745 lbs. sold for $2.5850/

level of stress response, as the C calves did. Additional energy is required for the increased stress response of additional walking/pacing and thereby reducing weight gain in the C calves post-weaning, regardless of weaning method, when compared to the LS calves. At one week post weaning the LS calves outgained the C calves by 12.65 lbs (LS gain: 16.94lbs, C gain: 4.29 lbs). At one month post weaning the LS calves outgained the C calves by 19.8 lbs (LS gain: 68.6 lbs, C gain: 48.8 lbs). Both the LS treatment group and the C group were fed the same amount of grain. The difference in weight gain can be attributed to the LS calves utilizing that energy for weight gain, rather than increased stress response. The LS group with access to free choice hay may have consumed more hay than the C group and the LS group with access to lush pasture may have consumed more forage than the C group as the decreased stress response allowed for more time for increased hay/forage consumption.

LS handling increased the income on each calf by $45 in the local livestock market and approximately $55 in VQA marketed cattle. On 100 head of weaned cattle, the benefits equal $4,500 to $5,500 more in the producer’s hand at the market for the additional weight by using LS handling techniques over conventional handling. If you combine the use of LS handling techniques and weaning with the marketing programs available to Virginia producers, the potential income increases can be $40,000 per 100 head of cattle. Other areas that showed a potentially positive impact due to handling technique during the study was the cow artificial insemination conception rate and reduced labor. It was documented that the LS group usually worked with one to two fewer handlers and once they were familiar with the weaning training protocol, still managed to accomplish the tasks in a similar amount of time as the C group. This would be two fewer employees needed to accomplish these particular tasks that could be working elsewhere on the operation or not needed, saving in labor costs and production efficiency.
4 Questions To Ask To Prioritize The Summer To-Do List

It’s hard to believe we are already halfway through June. In South Dakota, summer days may be long, but the season is always too short. As a result, once the dog days of summer hit, we are running at full speed to get as much done as possible before the first freeze hits. Over the course of the long, cold winter, our to-do list grows to exponential lengths, so by the time calving is completed, pairs are turned out to pasture, AI’ing season is behind us, planting is done, and haying has begun, the list of tasks we need to tackle on the ranch is pretty overwhelming.

READ: The problem with June: Tractor fixin’ & honey-do’s aren’t my thing. Prioritizing the to-do list while balancing family life and the regular responsibilities on the ranch can be difficult. Life can’t be all work and no play, but we also hate to waste precious day-light hours of summer and not get some of our extra chores accomplished.

So how does my operation prioritize the activities, chores and projects of summer? It’s not always easy, but here are a few questions to ask when deciding in which order the things on the to-do list get tackled:

1. How pressing is the project?
   If it’s hay that needs to be baled, fence that needs to be repaired or thistles that need to be sprayed or chopped, these tasks usually come first and are the most pressing. Timeliness makes all the difference between high-quality hay and moldy hay, weeds that run rampant vs. controlled thistles, or cows on the road vs. cattle that are happily grazing within the pasture boundaries.

2. Will completing the project impact profitability on the ranch?
   We never want to get complacent in our operation, so we consider it a failure not to re-evaluate long-term goals and constantly chip away at those goals little by little. Whether that’s implementing new grazing strategies, planning for upcoming female and bull sales, networking with customers and peers in the industry, or doing something as simple (but timely and labor intensive) as building and putting up new windbreaks, these projects are tempting to skip, but in the long haul, going the extra mile pays off.

3. Am I making family a priority?
   Working and living on a family ranch means spending ample time with loved ones, and I’ve learned to enjoy the quality time we get to spend together outside — whether that means washing show calves, working cattle, or simply checking fences at the end of a long summer day. However, I also believe that summer is made for building fun memories on and off the ranch. Squeezing in fun family activities is good for morale and gives everyone a break from the long hours spent working on the ranch.

As a family, we enjoy camping, boating, fishing, playing softball, going to cattle shows, and relaxing in the evenings sitting by a bonfire. At times, it’s easy to feel guilty about indulging in some of these fun activities instead of taking advantage of the extra working hours summer has to offer, but life is about balance, and I often have to remind my husband of that.

READ: Help your cattle beat the heat, PLUS: Fun ways to keep the kids busy this summer

4. Is this a winter project?
   Finally, there are some projects — like welding, woodworking, etc. — that we can tackle in the heated shop during the winter months. Sometimes, it’s worth saving a few tasks until later in the year when it’s more difficult to work outside in the cold.

How do you balance work and play in the summer months? What is on your to-do list in June? Share your thoughts in the comments section below.

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