Save The Date!!!

July 8, 2016

Virginia Cattlemen’s Association
Annual Meeting & Field Day.

Contact: VCA for more information or visit our website at www.vacattlemen.org or our facebook page

The Virginia Cattleman
P.O. Box 9
Daleville, VA 24083-0009

Photo Taken By: Tracy Brown, Seminole Farm, Culpepper, VA
Opportunities
By: Jason Carter

How quickly the weather changes huh? In this article in the May edition of The Virginia Cattlemen, I wrote about how dry it had gotten statewide and now has it ever more rained. And cool. Challenges as we head through the Memorial Day weekend getting hay made, getting corn planted, getting small grains chopped and anything else hampered by mud and or rain. When I was a kid the only kind of hay we made were small square bales (round balers evidently weren’t invented prior to my going to college) and wet weather made hay making a real game. As most of you know, once you start making hay then you’re in it no matter what. So in weather like this the conditioners ran sometimes twice over mowed hay (we’re talking pre-haybines here also) and even then we made hay a little “damp”. I remember some “lively” discussion between generations over the condition of hay. Often it was the older generation that won and baled the hay while we younger folks fell in behind pulling on twine strings that came up ten inches ahead of the bale. Any farm kid that tells you they never heard a cross word working alongside grandad, dad and the hired hands is lying to you – but they are the best memories and taught me a great deal about stubbornly pushing ahead in life.

This is also the time of year for many producers to be thinking about weaning calves for sales in the summer and headed into the early fall. We have obviously entered a trying economic time in the cattle business. The market and its influencers have become more confounding than ever. From all time profitability in 2014 to on farm margins half or less that now. Ranges vary considerably but most think tanks out there agree that the US cow herd is and will continue to expand through the first half of the next decade. This means more beef on the market and continued reliance on exports and added value marketing for cow/calf producers along with managed input costs to maintain positive margins. Next to the benefits of soil sampling, the benefits of weaning calves may be the oldest program in the Extension tool box. The benefits of weaning are immediate and additive overall to the bottom line and the condition of the cow herd. Yes, it requires additional labor, feed resources and facilities for most producers, however when weaning and calving seasons become the management plan, instead of the “thing to do” this year, then dividends are realized. In 2015, as the down market really punched the accelerator, added value for weaned and preconditioned feeders in the Virginia Quality Assurance program was $88.92/head across sexes and weights. It’s worth the effort folks.

On Friday July 8, 2016 at Virginia Tech’s McCormick Farm and Shenandoah Valley Research & Extension Center in Raphine, the Annual Cattle Industry Field Day will take place. Last year was a huge success near Blacksburg and we anticipate the same this year as well. What a great time it will be in fellowship with other cattle producers, networking with service suppliers and having a free beef lunch. We are also proud this day to honor a producer and industry leaders that have excelled in Virginia. The Producer of the Year and Industry Service Award recipients remain to be seen, however VCA is proud to honor Congressman Robert Hurt that day in his retirement. Congressman Hurt will be sorely missed in the 5th District and by Virginia agriculture for his value to our concerns and his integrity and thoughtful. The field day is free and will be a great day for everyone. I look forward to seeing you there. You’ve seen me use this space before to brag on the staff at Virginia Cattlemen and it is indeed a fact – I am very proud of the people I work with and work for you. They care and it shows. I am pleased to announce that we have temporarily added another face to the crew as a summer intern. Aldyn Abel recently graduated from Virginia Tech with an agriculture degree and plans to make a career in policy and advocacy for our business. We are glad to help her along the way with those plans and have her assist us with some projects over the summer for the Association and the Beef Council. Summer is upon us and along with that means plenty of work to be done in the fields and pastures. Don’t forget to take time to count your blessings and everyone needs to tend some kind of garden. A lot of soul searching can be done tending tomatoes and watching vegetables grow. And it’s awful hard to beat hot cornbread and sliced tomatoes from your own vines.
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600-700 lbs 122.00-177.25, mostly 156.00-177.25, average 160.69
700-800 lbs 119.00-152.00, mostly 135.00-148.00, average 142.86
State Graded Feeder Heifers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 95.00-163.00, mostly 134.00-150.00, average 140.26
500-600 lbs 81.00-142.75, mostly 129.00-135.50, average 133.93
600-700 lbs 111.00-136.50, mostly 122.25-136.50, average 124.68
700-800 lbs 97.00-135.00, mostly 110.00-125.00, average 117.52
Slaughter Cows
Boning, 800-1200 lbs, 55.00-78.00, average 72.36
Breakers, 1200-1600 lbs, 61.00-80.00, average 72.67
April 29, 2016
State Graded Feeder Steers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 114.00-179.00, mostly 155.00-179.00, average 161.97
500-600 lbs 111.00-187.00, mostly 145.00-161.00, average 158.58
600-700 lbs 116.00-152.38, mostly 136.00-152.38, average 143.58
700-800 lbs 110.00-134.00, mostly 120.00-134.00, average 129.91
State Graded Feeder Heifers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 111.00-147.50, mostly 129.00-147.50, average 133.62
500-600 lbs 104.00-139.50, mostly 128.00-139.50, average 130.69
600-700 lbs 91.00-128.00, mostly 116.00-128.00, average 119.80
700-800 lbs 80.00-119.00, mostly 105.00-119.00, average 111.05
Slaughter Cows
Boning, 800-1200 lbs, 58.50-82.00, average 69.37
Breakers, 1200-1600 lbs, 64.00-80.00, average 71.24
May 6, 2016
State Graded Feeder Steers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 140.00-172.00, mostly 156.00-172.00, average 164.58
500-600 lbs 124.50-164.50, mostly 150.00-164.50, average 153.96
600-700 lbs 126.00-151.00, mostly 126.00-145.00, average 140.48
700-800 lbs 115.00-140.00, mostly 124.00-140.00, average 128.15
State Graded Feeder Heifers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 120.00-142.50, average 138.49
500-600 lbs 117.00-140.00, mostly 123.00-140.00, average 128.16
600-700 lbs 109.00-136.00, mostly 119.00-136.00, average 121.30
700-800 lbs 103.00-117.00, average 110.95
Slaughter Cows
Boning, 800-1200 lbs, 59.00-77.00, average 70.40
Breakers, 1200-1600 lbs, 66.00-81.50, average 73.17
May 13, 2016
State Graded Feeder Steers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 115.00-172.00, mostly 151.50-172.00, average 160.88
500-600 lbs 127.00-163.00, mostly 148.50-160.00, average 154.78
600-700 lbs 128.00-155.75, mostly 140.00-155.75, average 147.58
700-800 lbs 127.00-142.75, average 138.60
State Graded Feeder Heifers, Medium and Large 1
400-500 lbs 120.00-155.00, mostly 143.00-155.00, average 146.99
500-600 lbs 122.00-145.00, mostly 134.00-145.00, average 139.87
600-700 lbs 113.00-135.50, mostly 130.00-135.50, average 131.11
700-800 lbs 113.00-125.75, mostly 125.75, average 123.65
Slaughter Cows
Boning, 800-1200 lbs, 65.00-77.00, average 71.18
Breakers, 1200-1600 lbs, 67.00-83.00, average 73.00
Develop a Drought Management Plan BEFORE The Drought.

Travis Bunn, Extension Agent, Patrick County VCE

Not that long ago, you could step foot into any sale barn, farm supply store or local eatery and the topic of discussion amongst most folks was all the “cold, wind, mud and muck” we were fighting just to get the critters fed. March came and tempted us with the dirty old “early SPRING” trick, only to be followed by a cold snap that seemed to never end. Now here we are, spring has sprung, but the rain did not come with it. NOW is the time to make plans for drought, should things continue on track for a season with below average precipitation, above average temperatures, or a combination of both. Each year, it seems we have a short stint of dry, hot, drought-like weather. Each year we are all surprised when this happens. I’m no meteorologist, but I’d be willing to bet that at some point during the growing season, there will be a period of hot, dry weather where forages seem to just stand still and do nothing. That being said, let’s take precautions now to be prepared for that yearly dry spell that catches us by surprise somehow.

MANAGING FORAGES

Drought rarely kills well-managed pastures. In most cases, drought stressed pastures are in better condition than they appear. Cool-season forages go into a semi-dormant stage during extended periods of hot weather, and also during periods of low precipitation. The most noticeable effects on forage plants during drought conditions are reduced yields due to low soil moisture. Root growth is also limited, which restricts the plant’s ability to pull moisture from deeper in the soil profile. Managing pastures to maintain a 3-4” stubble height during extreme conditions is very important. Overgrazing delays how quickly the plant can respond to moisture once rain does come. The more leaf area you maintain between grazing events, the quicker the plant will “bounce back” and start growing again. If you do not currently have your pastures subdivided into smaller paddocks, you may want to put in some temporary fencing to do so. Rotating through smaller paddocks increases efficiency and helps maximize forage growth. According to research done by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Agricultural Research Service, rotational grazing increases forage quantity by thirty to fifty percent as compared to a continuously grazed paddock. Cost share programs are available to assist producers with installing cross-fencing and watering systems by state and federally funded programs. For more information on these programs, contact your local USDA Service Center.

NITRATE POISONING

Forages harvested (mechanically or by grazing) during periods of low soil moisture are suspect for nitrate poisoning, especially if nitrogen was applied to the crop. Shading by other plants, cloudy weather, and frost also increase nitrate levels in plants. Nitrates in hay are stable and can cause deaths months after harvest. Not all forages are at high risk for accumulating nitrates. Some examples of common forages that are at a higher risk for nitrate accumulation are sudangrass, sorghum-sudan hybrids, pearl millet, johnsongrass, corn, wheat and oats. Some weeds may also accumulate toxic levels of nitrates and pose a threat, especially in hay. Some examples include: pigweed, smartweed, ragweed, lambsquarter, goldenrod, nightshades, bindweed and Canadian thistle. Symptoms of nitrate toxicity are labored breathing, muscle tremors and staggering, followed by collapse and death. Testing of suspected forages should be done to prevent any losses due to nitrate poisoning. Some groups of cattle are more susceptible than others. Pregnant females and young animals are at the highest risk. Forages that were tested and have less than 2500ppm nitrates in feed (on dry matter basis) are generally considered safe. Any samples that test from 2500-15,000ppm should be limit fed. (The amount depends on which end of spectrum the sample is.) Any samples at or above 15,000ppm (dry matter basis) are considered toxic and should not be used in a free-choice feeding program.

The nutrient requirement for a dry cow is about 60% of that for a cow nursing a calf. Early weaning can be a relatively simple practice to address forage

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shortages. If you choose to early wean your calves, do not wait until the cow has lost too much condition. Doing so will actually increase her nutrient requirements through the winter months, which will probably hinder the reproductive performance of the cow or even herd. Cows can live on mature grass, leaves, and some weeds, but they cannot live on bare ground. PULL THOSE CALVES BEFORE IT’S TOO LATE.

Calves can be weaned from their mothers between 90-120 days old with excellent results. These calves are much better converters of feed to gain than their mothers are. Calves can achieve dry matter conversions of 5-8# of dry matter per pound of gain. The best conversions are achieved when feeding a higher concentrate diet and achieving higher average daily gains. Early weaning calves at 90-120 days of age has also shown to greatly improve conception rates when grazing the same forage as cows that continue to nurse their calves.

ALTERNATIVE FEEDS

Believe it or not, cows can, will, and do eat more than just grass and hay. No kidding. Hay is typically the most expensive forage used to feed livestock so plan to use your resources wisely. You may actually need those hay fields to graze, stockpile, or bale for winter feeding. By-product feeds such as, soybean hulls, wheat midds, cottonseed hulls, brewers’ grains and peanut hulls can be feasible options for supplementing cattle during forage shortages. Check with feed suppliers in your area for product pricing and availability.

In addition to supplementing with by-product feeds, you might want to include an ionophore such as Rumensin in your supplemental feeding. Rumensin or Bovatec will improve gains of cattle fed a high-roughage diet and will improve the feed conversion of cattle fed high-energy diets. If any of you are horse lovers and have a few running with your cows, keep in mind that even very low amounts of Rumensin are lethal to horses. TESTING STORED/AVAILABLE FORAGES

If there has ever been a time to test forage quality, it is when forages are scarce. When moisture is hard to come by, hay yields are quick to follow suit. Rarely is there an over- abundance of hay to purchase on dry years, so knowing what nutrients you have stored up may save you some money. During dry years, hay supply may be short, but often, quality is higher. When you think about it, it makes sense. In a normal year, the start and finish of “first cutting” of hay is dictated by the chance of a 3-4 day streak of little to no chance of precipitation. During dry years, those are easier to come by. Some of us may have even put some hay on the ground in hopes of it getting ruined by rain.

Don’t waste precious resources by feeding or managing it the wrong way. Cows do not have to be “full” to meet their daily nutritional requirements. Testing forages allows you to meet the nutrient requirements of your livestock, and eliminate waste from over-feeding.

If you are fortunate enough to make hay during droughty years, store it inside, wrapped, or under a tarp. Losses from weathering damage from hay stored outside can be as high as 50%, as compared to bales stored in a barn. Feeding losses can also be minimized by feeding bales in feeders or rings. The “cone type” feeders tend to have the least amount of waste among bale feeders.

GROUPING AND CULLING

For some reason, culling is the most difficult part of management for lots of folks. I can understand why, I mean most of these ol’ girls have been around long enough to get Christmas presents from “Santa.” During years when feed resources are tight, we need to be sure to “call a spade a spade” and let them roll on to the market. Now is the time to give those marginal cows a free pass. Do not wait until you bury ‘Ol Bossy’ to label her as a cull cow. Rest assured, that cow or bull is worth more alive than it is dead.

Normal culling rates are between 10-20% each year on most operations. Culling combined with early weaning can reduce the feed resources needed for cows by about half. Group cattle based on bred vs. open, dry vs. lactating, age and body condition, etc. Culling should begin with cows that are older, open, in poor condition, late-calving, or have poor dispositions. Old, worn-out bulls approaching or already past retirement should also be considered when culling from the herd. Do not be afraid to market a cow that still “looks good” as a butcher cow. Those Breaker and Boner type cows will bring more per pound than the Lean ones, and you will have more pounds to sell too. You don’t have to be a Fortune 500 company manager to figure out that makes a lot of “cents.” Chances are if your operation is experiencing a drought, so is your neighbor’s. Do not wait until it gets “bad” to cull some of the less desirable cattle from your herd. If you find yourself needing to cull, you’re probably not the only one, so be proactive instead of reactive and beat the “rush” of culls to the market.

WRAP UP

Herd and resource management during drought may not prevent short term losses, but it can aid in preventing long term losses to forage based operations like those in Virginia. Do not wait until conditions are severe to

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Save the Farm, Save the Bay

By Robert Whitescarver, Bay Journal News Service

The five-year court battle is over. The Supreme Court of the United States, by declining to hear the case, has affirmed two lower courts’ decisions that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency did not overstep its bounds by setting total maximum daily loads (TMDL), or a “pollution diet,” for jurisdictions in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

That is now settled law, part of the federal Clean Water Act, and we can finally focus our resources on what will make the most difference to the health of the Bay: improving soil health on farmland and cleaning up our streams. It is now time for environmentalists, farmers, bureaucrats, politicians and watermen in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to embrace this fact: A well-managed farmland is the most important land use and our greatest hope for a restored Bay.

The first order of business is to keep farmers on the farm. The second order of business is to help farmers apply the necessary soil and water conservation measures on their land so that soil and nutrients stay on their land, out of their local streams and out of the Bay. Not counting forested land, farmland has, by far, the largest footprint in the Bay’s 64,000-square-mile watershed — and, happily, it is the most economical and practical land to treat for clean water. For sure there are many other sources of Bay pollution, and there are ongoing fixes, but farmland has the most potential to do the most good.

The following scenario is true and is typical of what happens somewhere, every day, in this sprawling watershed. A 200-acre farm in the Shenandoah Valley is rezoned from agriculture to high-density residential. Developers bulldoze the green pastures, put up 400 houses and people move in — a thousand of them. This requires a new elementary school and a sewage treatment plant upgrade that together cost the taxpayers in the county more than $30 million dollars. It also takes away another piece of what makes the Shenandoah Valley so beautiful: farmland.

I wish we would instead give the farmer a million dollars to not develop. We could save 29 million in public funds every time it happens.

Protecting farmland from development is the best way to avoid the cost of future development. The more farmland within the watershed, the easier it will be to put locally grown, healthy food on the table and restore the bay. Farmland not only produces food, fiber, feed and fuel, it can also produce clean water, if done right.

When it rains on farmland where good soil and water conservation measures are in place, the rain soaks into the soil, percolates through it and emerges as clean water in our streams. The soil is in fact the regulator of the water cycle. Not so with concrete, pavement, and rooftops from urban areas. The resulting runoff from these areas is not clean water — and it is in fact the most expensive and difficult to water to treat.

So our greatest hope, and the best value for our money, is to help farmers stay on the farm and continue their work to improve soil health on their farms. Agriculture is halfway to reducing its share of nutrients fouling local streams and eventually reaching the bay. That’s why the Virginia General Assembly recently passed a budget with an estimated $30 million for land conservation and $61.7 million for agricultural best management practices.

To varying degrees, other bay states are investing in farmland preservation and improvements as well.

Land conservation involves a mixture of incentives and disincentives to keep farms in place and operational, instead of selling the land for non-farm uses. Outright purchase of development rights is one way to do it, and there are various federal, state and local tax incentives to help farms stay in agricultural production. Beyond that, we need to greatly expand financial aid and incentives for agricultural best management practices that minimize farm runoff and pollution. These include rotational grazing, using cover crops to cover the soil during the winter, planting on the contour, rotating crops, keeping livestock out of streams and carefully managing nutrients. The cost of government support of these practices pales in comparison to the expense of upgrading a wastewater treatment plant or reducing urban and suburban polluted runoff.

Where do farmers need help? Overgrazed pastures, eroding cropland, manure-laden feedlots with streams flowing past or through them, livestock lounging in streams, and too many nutrients applied to fields — those are the main causes of agricultural pollution. There are well-known fixes for these poor practices and funds to help get the job done.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled: The Chesapeake Clean Water Blueprint is our path forward. The Blueprint is online. Every state, every county and every city knows what they have to do to do their part for a restored Bay. Let’s work together to show the world that we really can restore the Chesapeake Bay.

Contact: Bay Journal News Service, 410-746-0519

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**June Herd Management Advisor**

Scott P. Greiner  
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The official start of summer is June 21st, and typically summer conditions have already made an appearance by this date. Pasture rotation during the summer months will guarantee a rest period for forages yielding a more productive, diverse pasture. Hot weather also signals the onset of fly season. Delaying fly tag application in early summer extends protection into the warm days of early fall.

June normally marks the conclusion of harvesting the first cutting of hay and the hope for rain to stimulate regrowth. Equal attention should be given to pasture management in an effort to minimize the need for hay later in the year. Summer pasture management impacts future forage growth and vigor. Research has shown that rotational grazing which provides a rest period can make grasses more productive. Generally 3-4 weeks of rest is recommended. Rotational grazing does require some planning, time and inputs but the return is 25-33% more forage. Other benefits include enhanced forage diversity, reduced cattle trails, better distribution of nutrients, and improved ground cover in sensitive areas.

**Spring Calving Herds (January-March)**

**General**
- Focus on forage management, pasture rotation, cow nutrition and young calf health.
- Manage first-calf heifers separately; give them best forage and supplement.
- Cattle comfort should be monitored ensuring adequate shade and availability of clean water.

**Nutrition and Forages**
- Continue feeding high magnesium minerals to prevent grass tetany; may be able to switch to high Se mineral as grass matures.
- Complete harvest of first cutting hay early in month.
- Start grazing warm season grasses.

**Herd Health**
- Implement parasite and fly control program for herd. Delay application of fly tags until a threshold of about 100 flies per side.
- Administer mid-summer deworming and implant calves late in month or early next month.
- Plan vaccination and preconditioning protocol for calf crop.
- Castrate commercial calves if not done at birth, consider castrating bottom end of male calves in seedstock herds.

**Reproduction**
- Finish AI; turn out clean-up bulls.
- Remove bulls from replacement heifers after 45 day breeding season.
- Make plans to pregnancy check heifers as soon as possible after bull removal. This will allow options in marketing open heifers.
- Use 48 hour calf removal for thin cows and first-calf heifers at beginning of breeding season.
- Monitor bulls closely during the breeding season. Observe frequently to confirm breeding performance and soundness, and monitor cows for repeat estrus. Avoid overworking young bulls (a rule of thumb- yearling bulls should be exposed to number of cows equal to their age in months).

**Fall Calving Herds (September-November)**

**General**
- Plan a marketing strategy for open cows. Cull cow prices typically peak mid-spring through mid-summer, and prices generally stronger for cows in good body condition vs. thin cows (evaluate forage availability and potential feed and management costs to increase BCS of cull cows if warranted).
- Finalize marketing plans for calf crop. Time weaning, vaccination program, and weaning management to meet operational goals. Calculate break-evens on various marketing options and consider risk management strategies.
- Reimplant commercial calves.

**Nutrition and Forages**
- Switch to high selenium trace mineral salt.
- Body condition score cows. Plan nutrition and grazing program based on BCS. This is the most efficient period to put weight and condition on thin cows.
- As calves are weaned move cows to poorer quality pastures.

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**Continued on Page 9.**
How Rotational Grazing Improves Pasture Health

By: Chris Carter, Southern States Cooperative

Being a farmer is more than a day job, it’s a lifestyle. Early to bed and early to rise, few farmers have the luxury of getting away from the farm for much needed rest and relaxation. Just like farmers, pastures also require rest from the stresses of daily farming life.

What is Rotational Grazing?

Simply put, rotational grazing is moving livestock to different sections of the pasture every set number of days in order to maintain healthy, nutritious forages. Large pastures are sectioned off into smaller parcels using either permanent or temporary fencing to allow the manager to effectively control grazing.

Why is it important?

Grass and clover plants become “stressed” from grazing and need sufficient time to grow back once grazing has occurred. Without a break from the stresses, forages can lose the ability to reestablish new growth, as the ability to utilize photosynthesis is minimized when grasses get below a certain length.

When livestock are allowed to continuously graze a pasture, they’ll eat the most savory grasses first, leaving some parts of the pasture overgrazed while other less palatable areas lie under grazed. Horses, especially, are notorious for “spot grazing,” where they’ll graze on small, choice areas while surrounding areas remain untouched. Animals will keep going back to the more palatable sections and graze without giving the plants optimal time to develop strong roots and recover if rotational grazing is not practiced. Eventually these plants will die and pesky weeds will rear their ugly heads and begin to take over the pasture.

Planning to Rotate

If you have a large farm, one of the best ways to develop your rotational grazing program is through the use of an aerial photograph of your pastures. Southern States Cooperative has an imagery program that can take images or your farm by satellite or by airplane that will allow you to develop a plan for setting up rotational grazing sections on your pastures. Once you have the aerial photo in hand, you can divide your pastures into smaller fields and rotate livestock in when forage is around six inches high, and rotate them out as grass plants begin to approach the two-to-three inch threshold. This also promotes forage growth and can even break the life cycle of pesky parasites. When deciding how to structure your pastures, keep in mind that square pastures allow for the most even grazing. Pastures should be large enough for your desired stocking rate and ensure there is adequate shade in each area.

From there, you can begin to subdivide by using either permanent or temporary fencing. Typically, portable electric fence tape is used to subdivide pastures, while permanent fencing makes up perimeter fencing. Portable fencing allows you to be flexible in your program. If you see a certain pasture design or setup isn’t working, the fencing can be easily moved.

Rules of Thumb

- Grass should be six-to-eight inches high during the weaning period to bunk train calves and minimize weight loss.
- Reserve high quality hay and a pasture area for calves post-weaning.
- Start grazing warm season grasses.

Herd Health

- Administer mid-summer deworming on replacement heifers and pregnant heifers.
- Implement parasite and fly control program for herd. Delay application of fly tags until a threshold of about 100 flies per side.

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eight inches tall prior to grazing. If livestock are allowed to graze too early, plants may die as immature root systems cannot handle the stresses of grazing and the weight of hooves.

- Eat half, leave half. Once your animals eat half of the grass in the pasture, it’s time to move them to the next available pasture that is ready for grazing. Try not to allow animals to graze the pastures below three inches.
- Rely on plants rather than calendars. Recovery time for pastures is generally anywhere from 10 to 60 days depending on the season. Evaluate the plant growth and then decide whether or not the pasture has had ample time to rest and regrow prior to grazing again.

By implementing a rotational grazing program, you can help ensure your livestock consumes nutritious and palatable grass with each mouthful they take. Being proactive and efficient in your pasture management practices is the key to maintaining quality pasture. Good management practices—in all areas of your operation—will ultimately lead to success and increased profitability. Speak to your local Southern States representative about creating an effective plan for managing pasture around your farm.

Southern States Cooperative has grown to become one of the nation’s largest farm supply companies. With over 1,200 retail outlets spread across 23 states, they provide a wide range of farm and home supplies, including livestock feed, fertilizer, seed, animal health supplies and petroleum products. Farmer-owned since 1923, the Virginia-based cooperative has more than 200,000 farmer-members. For more information, visit www.southernstates.com.

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What was Old is New Again

Elizabeth Nixon, Oklahoma State University

Virginia’s largest independently-owned slaughter facility, Seven Hills Food Co., plans to assist both producers and consumers to facilitate the growth of a regionally based food system. The idea for Seven Hills Food Co. came from Ryan Ford, owner, said he saw as a problem: the difficulty of getting meat, including Virginia raised beef and pork products, to the consumer, he said. Ford, who comes from a sales and marketing background, fell into the meat business by accident, he said. Fourteen years ago, Ford was part of a dinner table conversation that forever changed his interest in the local food movement and also his career. After that conversation, he began to recognize locally raised meats were only sold at farmers markets, Ford said.

“A lot of suburban people are not psyched about buying frozen meat out of a cooler from the back of a pickup truck,” Ford said. “They are used to buying a pristine-packaged, fresh product in the supermarket. “A larger segment of the consumer population is never going to shop for their meat in farmers markets,” he said. “Not to mention, it is only available frozen and on Saturday mornings.” Because of this issue, Ford and a business partner decided they needed a butcher shop. The idea for this small local meat company arose by determining a way to better manage the output of their business partner’s farm. Starting a new business and solving this problem intrigued Ford, he said. He started educating himself and called the state meat inspector’s office to learn where the slaughterhouses were, what services they provided and what their capacities were like.

Because many of the smaller plants did not provide the services they wanted, a small processing facility was built on the business partner’s farm. They did not include a kill floor, but they wanted to be able to dry age beef and make sausage. With disagreement on continued on Page 13.

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From Page 12. - Old is New

how to grow to business, Ford and his brother-in-law decided they would venture out and start their own butcher shop. Ford opened the Organic Butcher in Charlottesville, Va., and his brother-in-law started a second location in McLean, Va. For 10 years, they operated the Organic Butcher shops with the idea to open more shops and grow the business. However, it always came back to the same problem. “How do we grow more butcher shops when we do not have control over the product?” Ford said. “It doesn’t get any easier for us if we open more shops because there is no efficiency. “We still have to go out and source product from these same small processors,” he said. “It was just really inefficient.”

Thinking about the problem, Ford visited the Dinner Bell Meat plant that was for sale in Lynchburg, Va., with a state meat inspector. “It was eye opening and the scale was like nothing else I had seen,” Ford said. The Dinner Bell Meat plant stuck in his mind. Ford said. While he liked the idea of owning a larger plant, he walked away from it. After seeing the plant listed for sale again two years later, he could not push away his ideas any longer and decided to buy the plant, he said. After 20 months of renovations, the Seven Hills Food Co. was born. Its name pays homage to the City of Seven Hills—Lynchburg, Va., Ford said. “The plant was unique in its ability to address this problem of opening up the bottle neck for local meat,” Ford said. “We have a lot of great foods grown in Virginia, but meat has not been able to keep up with the rising tide of the local and sustainable food movement.”

Meat processing has occurred at the Lynchburg site for nearly 100 years. The man who owned and operated Valleydale Meats, one of the largest beef and pork companies on the East Coast in the 1940s though 1960s, started the company in the same plant in the 1930s. “As someone who has not come from industry experience,” Ford said, “I had a level of confidence that said ‘Hey these guys were able kill 75 to 100 head a day for decades.’ “It is not a question of ‘Is this plant designed poorly or is it going to work,’” he said. “It had already been battle tested.”

A refrigeration contractor who has done work with the Seven Hills Abattoir, along with hundreds of slaughter plants, told Ford that Seven Hills Food Co. is large enough to have some efficiency and scale, but too small to add automation. “It is always going to be a people business with meat cutters, and we cannot make it bigger,” Ford said. “We are going to populate it with people instead of machines.”

Seven Hills Food Co. is only in its beginning stages and runs the kill floor one day a week. While they have a 100 head-a-day beef capacity, they are currently slaughtering 25 to 30 head of beef a week and have an immediate goal of doing 40 to 50 head a week. “Our ability to trace the product back to the source and put the Virginia beef industry’s best foot forward will be able to provide a more consistent buying experience,” said Will Carr, Seven Hills Food Co. agricultural liaison and operations manager. “Seven Hills recognizes more of the value farmers put into the meat that comes out of their animals.”

Glenmary Farm LLC located in Rapidan, Va., is one of the farms supplying beef to Seven Hills Food Co. “Seven Hills is good for the farming community and the state of Virginia, being they are going to harvest locally grown animals, said Tom Nixon, Glenmary Farm LLC owner. “By marketing Glenmary Farm beef through Seven Hills, hopefully, we will build a long-term relationship where we will have some stability in the market,” he said.

In addition to their wholesale business, Seven Hills Food Co. also offers custom processing. “Seven Hills wants to provide a higher level of customer service,” Carr said. “While we act as a market that grows with local recognition, we also act as a meat processor that provides a higher level of customer service for people who are looking for processing services for their animals. “We want to be an active advocate for those people and their efforts by providing a service that recognizes the efforts they put into their animals,” he said.

Ultimately, the goal of Seven Hills Food Co. is to forge the gap between the farmer and consumer, making locally raised meat products more accessible, Continued on Page 14.
From Page 13. - Old is New

Ford said. “One thing to keep in mind is we are not reinventing the wheel here,” Ford said. “We are doing exactly what this plant used to— buying regionally and distributing products.” Seven Hills Food Co. is just trying to make a better ingredient, Ford said. “There is no reason why someone should not be able to make the best beef or pork around and be able to drive right down the road and have us deliver it to a restaurant,” Ford said. “Virginia is a great meat-producing state and a great place to pull off something like this.”

Not only has Seven Hills Food Co. positioned itself in a great location, but also the company is adding value to Virginia farming operations involved in the business, Nixon said. “There is a sense of pride that comes with knowing Glenmary Farm is contributing to this regional effort,” Nixon said. “With the ever-growing disconnect between the farmer and consumer, now is the time to be involved in something like this.”

People are demanding to know where the food they put on their table comes from, Carr said. “They want accountability in the food chain— that is the new normal,” Carr said. “We want to position ourselves to tell the story of local agriculture to a larger market. “We want to be at the center of that new normal and grow with it,” he said.

“The agriculture story and the strength of the product needs to be made accessible to chefs, customers and people who want it because it is now an essential need.”

What started as a simple conversation more than 14 years ago has grown into a business venture providing new opportunities to producers and consumers to meet this essential need.

“Virginia-grown meat products should not be exclusive,” Ford said. “Not only does Seven Hills Food Co. want to provide producers with more opportunities, but also we want to foster the growth of a local market that provides the consumer with a high-quality, consistent meat product that is readily available.”

Summer Cattle Hauling Tips

David Roper, PhD & Bain Wilson, PhD
Extension Animal Scientists
Virginia Tech University

With summer months and warmer weather around the corner, it’s important to keep livestock health and well-being in mind during transport. This is important for both producers and families traveling to livestock shows and county fairs. Regardless of the operation type, your cattle represent a large investment of time, finances, and resources. Aside from increased risk of animal mortality, improper transportation techniques can result in decreased animal performance and increases in health issues that negatively affect animal wellbeing. Below are several considerations to keep in mind when loading cattle for transport:

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From Page 14. - Cattle Hauling

Distance and time are two factors that go hand in hand when making transportation plans. Determining the duration of round trips will ultimately determine the amount of time needed to move all animals. It will also determine what time to start moving animals. Keep in mind that summer temperatures begin to rise earlier in the day and can be exponentially hotter in enclosed trailers. This is also influenced by the humidity as well as the type of animals being transported. Larger, lactating animals will naturally produce more metabolic body heat, as will animals that possess a denser hair coat. This is extremely important for show cattle that may have more hair. Therefore, the use of open sided trailers if possible will increase the amount of air flow that reach the livestock and ensure body temperatures remain in an acceptable range.

To help reduce heat stress on cattle, timing of transport should also be considered. If possible, animals should be transported earlier or later in the day to provide exposure to cooler temperatures. Typically the hottest times of the day range from 11 AM to 4 or 5 PM depending on elevation, humidity and cloud cover. Prior planning and attention to weather forecasts can help you plan your travel schedule. However, at times transportation is a must regardless of weather and consideration of other stress factors will help minimize exposure risks.

Type and size of trailer must also be considered when making hauling plans. As we discussed previously, open sided trailers may be more ideal. This can be especially important for smaller calves. The enclosed trailer designs have limited air flow for these smaller animals since the vents are located further up the side. The length of trailer and space provided animals also impacts their well-being. Even with the cost of fuel, it may be more economical to make additional trips rather than overstock the trailer and cause injury or death to an animal. The space requirements vary by size and several sources can be found online. However, as an example a 600 pound calf requires 8.5 square foot of space per head, while a 1200 pound mature cow requires 14.5 square foot of space per head. In practical terms this means that about 16 head of calves and 9 head of cows would safely fit on a 20 foot long by 7 foot wide trailer.

Footing or bedding when used properly can help enhance the safety and comfort of the stock being hauled. Again, depending on the number of animals being hauled, the frequency, and duration may all influence the type of footing or bedding used. For large frequent loads bedding may not be economical or justifiable. However, ensuring a no-slip footing is crucial. Large amounts of feces and urine will collect during large loads and may result in animals getting down reducing airflow and potentially resulting in death or injury. Ensuring that the trailer floor is cleaned following use will also ensure secure footing and trailer readiness for future trips.

Conversely, cattle being transported to shows may utilize bedding to help ensure animal cleanliness upon arrival. However, keep in mind that most bedding is designed to be absorbent and retain moisture from feces and urine. This increased moisture can add to increased humidity inside the trailer. The temperature and humidity index can combine to increase the heat stress applied to the animals.

Basic trailer care and maintenance cannot be overlooked when planning a trip. Like any other vehicle, a trailer should have a regular maintenance schedule to ensure it is ready for use. Several things to keep in mind include:

- Tire tread and condition
- Structural integrity of the floor
- Condition of any bearings or grease points
- Functionality of lights and brakes
- Inspection of axels

Emergency preparations are often overlooked when making transportation plans but can be invaluable during an accident. Basic supplies should be stored and the hauling weight of the trailer should also be followed and inspected by an experience mechanic shop can help determine weight limits. This also can provide a point for inspection of the overall integrity of the trailer.

If you routinely transport large loads of animals an upgrade in trailer length may be required. The initial cost of larger trailer depreciated over time and the number of animals hauled may be justified. Weight limits of the trailer should also be followed to ensure safety of the animals and other travelers alike. Typically the gross vehicle weight of the trailer should be listed near the nose, tongue, or hitch. If the trailer is an older model and this information is not visible then inspection of the axles by an experience mechanic shop can help determine weight limits. This also can provide a point for inspection of the overall integrity of the trailer.

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THE VIRGINIA CATTLEMAN, JUNE 2016, PAGE 15
The Profound Problems of Political Purity

Chuck Jolley, Feedstuffs
It has been around for a long time, a demand by some that absolute purity must be maintained in all political decisions. Promoting it most effectively are lobbying groups that look at a candidate’s votes on issues important to a specific, narrowly-focused special interest. High marks and good money are awarded to senators and reps who score a 100 or an A+. Anything less and the transgressor might be targeted for ‘primaried,’ an organized party-level attack designed to deny him the chance to even run for office during the next general election. One-issue voters often flock to the cause, like vultures after fresh carrion. The offending politician might have scored an 80 or a B- and the anointed new one might bring more bad baggage than the back room of a long-abandoned Goodwill store but it won’t matter. The lines will be drawn and the battle will be joined.

Such a thing is happening in Illinois. A very conservative Governor, Bruce Rauner, a man with excellent party credentials, went against the best interests of his rural Illinois core constituency when he proposed removing the budget line item for state funding for agricultural education. When Rauner formed an exploratory committee in 2013 to look at a run for Governor as a Republican, he said one of his top priorities was improving education. Establishing his conservative credentials, he also talked about eliminating unnecessary spending and improving the state’s business climate. It seems like he’s done the latter. Empty office space in downtown Chicago, for instance, hasn’t been this scarce since 2001.

When Rauner was elected Governor of Illinois, his first executive order halted state hiring as well as discretionary spending, and called for state agencies to sell surplus property. He was putting major points on the conservative side of the ledger. He erased a few of those points with his ‘walk away’ from agricultural education. Explaining his decision, he said, “Let’s not have a lot of line items dictating terms of where money get spent. Let’s put a lot more money into schools, and let the schools decide how they spend their money. I hope a lot of the schools in Illinois put more money into agriculture, not less.”

Reacting to the potential loss of important funding, the Illinois Future Farmers of America immediately pointed with alarm, expressed concern and issued statements. The FFA Center called agriculture the number one industry in Illinois and said ‘education for our state’s future farmers is in jeopardy.’ John Edgar, assistant director for the Illinois FFA Center, said, “For so long there’s been so many different unfunded mandates that a lot of this is just going to have to go to pay a lot of those that haven’t been getting any money for the last few years. We do hope agricultural education would a priority for a lot of these schools. But we also want to see agricultural education grow.”

The Illinois Board of Education disagrees with Rauner, too, asking for $3 million in state funding for agriculture education but, in recent years, that number has been reduced to just $1.8 million. “We don’t have enough ag education statewide as it is. 96% of our

continued on page 17.

From Page 14. - Cattle Hauling

In the trailer, if space permits and easily accessible while the trailer is loaded, a high quality spare tire that is in good condition is extremely important. The ability to lift the trailer off the ground while loaded for a tire change is crucial. Commercially available ramps can be purchased at local hardware stores and store easily for travel. They also provide increased security by removing the potential for a jack to slip and fall while changing tires. Additional items that may be needed include flares, lug nut wrenches, bottled water, ropes or halters. It is also a good idea to have the contact information for your local veterinarian handy in the case of an animal emergency. It is a good idea to have the number stored in your phone or hand written in your emergency kit for others to find can be valuable in an emergency situation.

Ultimately, attention to detail, preplanning, and common sense can help ensure that cattle trans-
students aren’t being exposed to 25% of our jobs. So in theory that might make sense, but in practice we’re setting ourselves up for failure and for a little bit of a short term gain,” said Andrew Bowman of the Illinois Leadership Council for Agricultural Education. It would be cutting a vital pipeline “for those that need the technical skills that may stay in their local community to those going on to college that will work for a Fortune 500 agriculture company,” said Jess Smithers, Illinois’ Facilitating Coordination in Agricultural Education Coordinator. Bottom Line: While Rauner’s conservative credentials remain strong, he has seriously disappointed the state’s powerful ag community. A lot of ‘down state’ single-issue voters might be reconsidering their ballot next time around.

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The 2016 Virginia Beef Expo and Junior Beef Roundup show were held at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds in Harrisonburg, VA, April 15-17, 2016. The Youth State Stockmen’s Contest started off the youth events on Friday, April 15th. The 2016 Junior Stockmen’s Contest consisted of 104 junior and 126 senior competitors that are in the 4-H or FFA programs. The contest consists of a livestock specific quiz, identification of livestock equipment, breeds, feeds, and meat, judging of live sheep, live cattle, meats, and hays. This year the contest featured a keep/cull class, questions on meats and hays, and a judging scenario judged solely on data. The winning Senior 4-H team will go on to compete at the National 4-H Stockmen’s Contest that will be held later this fall in Louisville, KY. This year’s winners are from Rockingham County 4-H. Team members included: Paul Craun, Hannah Craun, Carley Carpenter, and Seth Diehl. In addition to Rockingham, congratulations go out the top 5 Senior teams: Sherando FFA, Riverheads FFA, Frederick County 4-H, and Washington County 4-H. The top 5 Senior Individuals were: 1st Place – Paul Craun (Rockingham County) 2nd Place- Hannah Craun (Rockingham County), 3rd Place- Ryan Sensabaugh (Riverheads FFA), 4th Place- Kaylee Greiner (Montgomery County), and 5th Place- Jacob Coffey (Shenandoah County). Top honors were also awarded in the junior division, which consists of youth ages 9 – 13. The top five teams were (in descending order) – Montgomery County 4-H, J. Frank Hillyard FFA, Frederick County 4-H, Rockbridge County 4-H, and Rockingham County 4-H. The top 5 junior individuals were: 1st Place – Ethan Clouse (Montgomery County), 2nd Place- Jacob Craun (Rockingham County) 3rd Place- Ella Warns (J. Frank Hillyard FFA), 4th Place- Quinna Molden (Frederick County), and 5th Place- Sidnie Saville (Montgomery County).

Friday also featured a contest new to the Junior Beef Roundup, the first Virginia Beef Challenge Contest. This contest, sponsored by Virginia Beef Industry Council, challenged teams of youth members to create a dish using only a predetermined set of ingredients including beef. From these ingredients, team members had to identify and prepare the dish, then make a presentation about it to a panel of judges. Team members had to exhibit and communicate knowledge of cooking beef, the beef industry and topics regarding beef and the consumer. Five teams participated in this inaugural event, representing counties from across the state. Awards were provided to the top three teams courtesy of Virginia Cattlemen’s. The team from Augusta County (Augusta Food Works) won the event. Team members included Ryan Sensabaugh, Luke Jennings, Jake McCall, Jacob Lewis and Nathan Zullig.

The State Youth Cattle Working Contest was held on Saturday, April 16th. Earlier this spring, five regional contests were held in various locations across the state to determine the Top 10 teams that would be represented at the 2016 State Youth Cattle Working Contest. A total of 77 teams competed at the regional levels. The State Youth Cattle Working Contest, as well as the regional contests, begins with teams completing a cattle processing map. This processing map is judged and returned to the team with any corrections prior to the team working the cattle. The teams then work a total of three head of cattle and are judged on the preparation and administration of a growth implant, a 7-way clostridial vaccination, a respiratory complex, ear tags, dewormer, and any other products that are deemed appropriate. In addition, the teams are also judged on the safety and handling of the cattle, as well as the time it takes to work all three head. For the 2016 State Youth Cattle Working Contest, first place was awarded to James River FFA, which consisted of Davis Fenster, Eli Stevens, and Morgan Curry. Orange County Team A (Blake Hopkins, Garrett Hopkins, and Marlaina Johnson) took home second place honors. Third place honors were awarded to Randolph Henry FFA (Cassie Long, Hannah Adams, and Conner White). Congratulations to all those teams that made it to the state level.

The Youth Meat Quality Assurance (YMQA) Program hosted youth training in conjunction with the Junior Beef Roundup. The youth learned proper animal management, husbandry, and handling techniques while at the training. By attending the classroom portion of the training, youth were certified in the Youth Pork Quality Assurance Plus program; youth who participated in both the classroom and a chuteside training were Beef Quality Assurance certified. Both YPQA Plus and BQA certifications are recognized as national certifications through the Virginia Department of Education and are both part of the YMQA certification program that is administered through Virginia Cooperative Extension. All youth participating in these trainings will be fully eligible to compete at the State Fair of Virginia held in October.

The 2016 State Cattle Sales Contest was held Saturday morning, April 16th, of the Junior Beef Roundup. The objective of this contest is to gain a working understanding of performance and pedigree information. Competing teams were to take pedigree information, marketing materials, and an animal to a panel of judges and attempt to sell the judges that animal, based on a pre-chosen scenario. Top Junior honors went to a team consisting of Ashley Hostetter, Ella Warns, and Sidnie Saville. The Senior Division was won by Shenandoah County 4-H, a team consisting of Tiffany Heitsman, Jesse Zirkle, and Kenneth Whetzel. Rockbridge County 4-H (Olivia Williams, Jenna Hamilton, and Sarah Harris) took home second place honors.

The 2016 State Cattle Fitting Contest began Saturday afternoon. This contest was open to exhibitors at the Junior Beef Roundup and encourages youth to gain the ability to work with a team to enhance the showing performance of a groomed animal. Top honors in the 2016 contest went to the Virginia Junior Angus Association (Jake McCall, Zach McCall, Caleb Boden, and Suter Clark). Second place went to Rockbridge/Pittsylvania County (Olivia Williams, Gordon Clark, Ruth Alexander, and Evan Lineweaver). Thank you to Showtimes Magazine for supporting the 2016 Youth Cattle Fitting Contest.

The Junior Beef Roundup hosted nearly 180 exhibitors, 34 commercial heifers, 89 prospect steers, and 124 breed entries, making for a grand total of 247 head shown throughout the weekend. The youth beef shows started off with the Showmanship division, held Saturday evening. Top honors went to Phyllis Hope in Collegiate Showmanship, Olivia Williams in Senior Showmanship, Zach McCall in Intermediate Showmanship, Suter Clark in Junior Showmanship, and Blake Keppel in Novice Showmanship. Reserve champion showman was awarded to: Hannah Cox in Senior Showmanship, Samantha Moore in Intermediate Showmanship, Lianna Durrer in Junior Showmanship, and Hannah Smith in Novice Showmanship.

Sunday featured the youth registered breed shows, as well as the commercial heifer and prospect steer shows. The Youth Angus Show saw a very strong showing of 55 head of Angus cattle. The Overall Grand Champion Angus Heifer was exhibited by Zachary McColl of Greeneville, VA. The Overall Reserve Champion Angus Heifer was awarded to John Michael Knight of Montpelier Station, VA. Other Angus honors included: Grand Champion Bred & Owned Angus Heifer – Callie Eastin; Reserve Champion Bred & Owned Angus Heifer – Zach McColl; Reserve Grand Champion Owned Heifer – John Michael Knight. The youth Hereford show followed the Angus show. The Hereford show featured 22 head of cattle. The Overall Grand Champion Hereford Heifer was awarded to Olivia Williams of Fairfield, VA. Olivia Williams also exhibited the Overall Reserve Grand Champion Hereford Heifer. Other honors included: Grand Champion Bred & Owned Hereford – Olivia Williams; and Reserve Champion Bred & Owned Hereford – Kelly Richardson.

The Red Angus cattle were shown next, with 11 head exhibited. The Overall Grand Champion Red Angus Heifer was exhibited by Jolene Davis of Montpelier Station, VA. Jolene also owned the Reserve Champion Red Angus Heifer. Other top awards in the Red Angus show included- Grand Champion Bred & Owned Red Angus – Jolene Davis; Reserve Champion Bred & Owned Red Angus – Emily Yowell.

The Simmental and Percentage Simmental divisions followed with 9 head each. Overall Grand Champion Purebred Simmental Heifer honors were awarded to Carlee Taylor of Saltville, VA. Reserve Champion Simmental Heifer was exhibited by Savanna Cline of Wytheville, VA. The Overall Grand Champion Percentage Simmental was exhibited by Lianna Durrer of Ruckersville, VA. Jenna Kibler from Edinburg, VA exhibited the Overall Reserve Champion Percentage Simmental.

The All Other Breeds division saw breeds such as Braunvieh, LimFlex, Shorthorn, Chianina, Maintainer, Charolais, and Chaine and Maine compete for top honors. Samantha Moore of Raphine won the AOB Grand Champion Heifer with a Lim-Flex Junior Yearling heifer. Samantha also exhibited the AOB Reserve Champion Heifer, a Limflex Senior Yearling heifer.

Sunday morning also featured with the Youth Commercial Heifer show and was followed by the Youth Prospect Steer Show. Bailey Talley of Craigsville, VA won the Grand Champion
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Red Angus Sale: 13 lots Avg. $2,335

Thank you Virginia Tech B&B and VT Beef Council!
Junior Beef Round Up Contestants

Supreme Champion Steer, exhibited by Gordon Clark of Gretna, VA

Supreme Champion Heifer, exhibited by Zach McCall of Greenville, VA

A showman sets up her heifer during Novice Showmanship

Team members from the Virginia Junior Angus Association (Jake McCall, Suter Clark, Zach McCall, and Caleb Boden) work during the Cattle Fitting Contest

Contestants identify livestock feeds during the State Stockmen’s Contest

Top 10 Junior Contestants at the State Stockmen’s Contest (left to right: Ethan Clouse, Branson Custer, Jacob Craun, Chet Boden, Ella Warns, Peyton Fravel, Quinna Molden, Ryan Borer, Sidnie Saville, and James McDonald)
David Bennett, Delta Farm Press

Having helped negotiate the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, Ambassador Darci Vetter arrived in Arkansas in late March to explain the agriculture side of the pact. Vetter, the United States’ chief agricultural trade negotiator, is in a unique position to help push the deal prior to it being taken up by Congress. “The TPP is a free-trade agreement negotiated among 12 Asia Pacific countries,” said Vetter at the law school. “Forty percent of global GDP is around the TPP table. It’s the highest standard trade agreement in history – both the level of tariff or trade liberalization in the reduction of tariff barriers and also the highest standard of rules we’ve negotiated. “If you think of TPP and all the products we gain access to it’s essentially like giving a tax cut to 18,000 different tariff lines. For U.S. farmers and ranchers that provides unprecedented access to markets in the region; importantly, a region increasingly filled with middle class customers.” Vetter repeatedly mentioned that the TPP region will support two-thirds of the world’s middle class by 2030 and not passing the bill would hamper the U.S. economy.

The agreement covers every good and service from the United States – not just agricultural but the manufacturing economy and service providers. “Again, 40 percent of our exports already go to TPP nations. If you assume (the TPP) just cuts taxes and we didn’t export a penny more, it would put more money in our pocket. We’d keep a bigger portion of the $898 billion. The TPP would provide an interesting mix of customers. “On one hand, you have access to really high-value economies like Canada and Japan. Japan has never included all the ag sector in a free trade agreement before. It usually exempts it because it’s too hard politically. But with TPP everything is on the table. “We couldn’t get Canada to open supply managed sectors of dairy, poultry and eggs though NAFTA. But in order to be a part of TPP, we said ‘those have to be on the table.’ … One principle of TPP was ‘every tariff line without exception must be addressed and liberalized in some way.’” Vetter then nodded towards countries in the TPP like Malaysia and Vietnam, “part of the fastest-growing and emerging economies in the region. The middle-class consumption that comes with that is so important for U.S. agriculture. There is particularly a focus on eating more protein. “That’s great news for the U.S. exports. We already sell to these markets a lot of basic commodity inputs: soybeans, wheat and feed grains, skim milk powder. But as these countries join the middle class – there are 90 million people in Vietnam alone – they’ll demand more protein. So, we won’t just feed their livestock but we’ll ship more protein. With Brunet, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand and..."
The Virginia Simmental Association held their annual Spring Sim-Sensation Sale at Virginia Beef Expo on April 15, 2016. Forty-three lots were sold and averaged $2,665. Top selling lots are listed below.

High selling lot (open heifer):
VPI Blackbird C574 $5,500
Consigned by Virginia Tech Beef Center
Purchased by Cooper Joines

High selling bred heifer:
Schutte Charm A33 $5,100
Consigned by Jack Shutte
Purchased by Sloup Simmentals

High selling bull:
LRF RTCC Grand Jury B044 $4,100
Consigned by RT Cattle Company
Purchased by Matthew Eears

High selling cow/calf pair:
SR Ms BP8H with heifer calf $3,300
Consigned by Smith Reasor
Purchased by Fletcher Simmentals
Vietnam the United States “is getting a market access deal, a tariff reduction deal, for the first time. They’ll eliminate duties on 93 percent of all their ag tariff lines. Seventy percent of those will be eliminated immediately. The day the TPP is in force, those tariffs are at zero. “The remaining products in the seven percent that don’t go to zero still are liberalized. Either high tariffs come down to low levels or a quota is established and a certain volume of products can come in cheaper.” Vetter said the TPP also sets high standard rules for agriculture, better rules on sanitary and phytosanitary issues. “Those regulations on plant and animal health are now often used as trade barriers or implemented in ways that don’t provide (proper) safety.” “If you look at the value of these (TPP) rules and tariff cuts, the American Farm Bureau Federation did an economic analysis and found that $4.4 billion would be generated annually as farm income. ‘Farm income’ is money in your pocket after the trade deal – that’s a direct gain for farmers.”

In Vietnam and Japan, all tariffs on poultry will be eliminated within 13 years. Some of those tariffs are now at 40 percent. Among other benefits in the deal:

- Building on WTO sanitary and phytosanitary rules to ensure transparent, science-based decisions based on risk, encouraging other countries to move toward high U.S. standards.
- Building on “technical barriers to trade” rules to promote open, transparent standards settings, with specific commitments in important U.S. exports sectors.
- Establishing rapid response mechanisms to address non-tariff measures to resolve goods and agricultural issues. “If you’re shipping an ag product and it is stopped at the port, you have a problem. … With the TPP, if a product is stopped the importer and exporter must be notified as soon as possible but no later than seven days. “Sounds simple, sounds like common sense but that doesn’t always happen in global trade. This is particularly important for agriculture. If you have a shipment of tomatoes that’s stopped, in seven days you have tomato soup.”
- Affirming U.S. standards to ensure that U.S. food safety and plant and animal health standard will not be changed.
- Biotech and organics are included in the trade agreement for the first time ever to ensure coordination on key issues affecting trade. “For the first time ever there is a biotech annex saying the TPP countries will make their decisions on whether to approve biotech based on science. We know that isn’t always how it’s been done in other countries and has caused trade problems.”

What happens if Congress doesn’t approve TPP? Vetter said the AFBF study estimates the United States “will forego $5.8 billion in additional cash receipts from TPP annually. The Peterson Institute has looked at the overall economic gain of TPP and says failure to pass it will mean the loss of $94 billion. That translates to $700 per U.S. family every year.” And Vetter warned the global trade situation won’t remain static. “If we fail to implement TPP, the other countries will continue to negotiate trade deals. Our standing won’t remain the status quo but will decline compared to the advantageous deals others are negotiating. … The world isn’t standing still; (countries) are lowering their tariffs with each other and we’re standing outside.”
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Notice! Charolais Field Day
Please mark your calendar to attend the Virginia Charolais Association Field Day at Virginia Tech, Blacksburg VA, on Saturday July 30, 2016. Make your way to the VA Tech Beef Pavilion and plan on coming for an all-day event that should be ending around 4pm. Plans are being made for a Charolais judging contest. There will also be informative speakers including our International Charolais Association’s recording secretary, Marilou Wegner. There will be a complimentary lunch and door prizes. This field day is being organized by Dan Eversole. Feel free to contact Dr. Eversole with any questions at 540-641-0295 or Bill Thompson at 540-968-1987.

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The Cost of Round Bale Storage Losses

Dr. Bain Wilson
Extension Animal Scientist
Virginia Tech

Whether you look forward to it or not, hay season is rapidly approaching. Virginia Cooperative Extension has several publications that provide helpful information for harvesting hay and its incorporation into a beef operation: Management tips for round bale hay harvesting, moving, and storage and Hay as part of a cowherd production system. It is a great challenge to fight weather and mechanical issues to put up high quality hay; however, ensuring cattle will be provided with quality forage later in the year does not end when bales are rolled up in the field. Development of a cost-effective storage method that preserves nutritional quality and reduces the hidden costs of storage and feeding losses is another step in successfully using round baled hay in a beef operation.

Several studies have researched storage methods for large round bales aimed at reducing storage losses caused by weathering. In a study conducted in Iowa, Brasche and Russell (1988) observed DM losses of large round bales of 9.7% when stored on the ground and left uncovered relative to DM losses of less than 1% when bales were elevated off the ground and covered with tarps during a storage period of 5 to 7 months. In a study conducted in western North Carolina, Turner et al. (2007) measured storage losses of large round bales of hay that were stored for either 7 or 15 months using 1 of 5 storage systems: on the ground uncovered, on pallets uncovered, on the ground covered with tarps, on pallets covered with tarps, and on pallets in a barn (Table 1). Storage losses after 7 months were 22.7% when hay was left uncovered (either on the ground or on pallets), 10.0% when covered (either on the ground or on pallets), and 2.7% when stored in a barn. Storage losses after 15 months were 30.7% when hay was left uncovered (either on the ground or on pallets), 19.3% when covered on the ground, and 11.1% when covered and stored on pallets or in a barn. An economic analysis of the Turner et al. (2007) study concluded that for a storage period of 7 months, storing hay on the ground covered had the lowest cost and storing hay uncovered on pallets was most expensive. For a storage period of 15 months, storing hay covered on pallets had the lowest cost and storing hay uncovered on pallets was still the most expensive. For more information, contact your local UPI representative or Jim Albers, United Producers Inc.

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expensive storage system. Thus, if hay is to be stored for a period of approximately 7 months, placing bales end-to-end on the ground in a well-drained area while covered with tarp is the most effective storage method. If bales are to be stored longer than 1 year, covering bales while also breaking ground contact are is more economic storage method that reduces spoilage losses.

Protecting hay by with tarp or through storage in a barn leads to bales that are less weathered and have greater nutritional value. Protected bales generally have increased DM and decreased NDF and ADF concentrations when compared to bales left unprotected during storage (Brasche and Russell, 1988; Turner et al., 2007). Crude protein concentrations were not consistently affected when bales were protected or left unprotected for a storage period of 7 or 15 months in (Turner et al., 2007). Bales with decreased fiber concentrations would theoretically lead to greater forage DMI and digestibility; however, this has not always been observed experimentally. Despite differences in the nutritive value due to storage method, Brasche and Russell (1988) observed no differences in cow DMI or BW change when cows were fed hay that was either protected or left unprotected during storage. Storage method of large round bales can also affect feeding losses through decreased palatability and greater feed refusals. In a Missouri study, Belyea et al. (1985) observed feeding losses of 24.7% and 12.4% when large round bales were stored outside and left uncovered or stored inside a barn, respectively. When comparing different hay storage methods, these studies indicate that differences in spoilage loss, both storage and feeding losses, come at a greater cost than the potential for reduced animal performance associated with decreased nutritional quality from weathering of hay.

References


Table 1. Estimates of the cost of stored for 7 or 15 months under 5 storage systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No. of Improvement</th>
<th>Performance Tested, BSE, Guaranteed</th>
<th>Free delivery within 50-mile of farm</th>
<th>For Sale Private Treaty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delivery Available!!</td>
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<td></td>
<td>MT RUSH FARM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Angus Seedstock Since 1960</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 Month Old Bulls Available</td>
<td></td>
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Aldyn Abell, 2016 VCA & VBIC Intern

Aldyn Abell joined the Virginia Cattlemens Association on May 16th as their summer intern. Aldyn graduated this spring from Virginia Tech with a Bachelor’s Degree in Agribusiness Management and minors in Political Science, Animal Science, and Leadership & Social Change. She was heavily involved around campus holding membership in several organizations including: Pi Beta Phi Sorority, Block and Bridle, Ag Econ Club, and the National Agri-Marketing Association competition team. In addition, she completed several internships during her collegiate career with the King George Farmers Market, Virginia Cooperative Extension (Fairfax and Orange), and the Virginia Tech Alumni Association. A native of the Northern Neck, Aldyn calls King George, VA home. Her passion for agriculture was sparked at the age of six from involvement in her local 4-H program, where she grew up raising market lambs and feeder cattle in the livestock program. Aldyn is excited to spend her summer working for VCA! She is interested in working with governmental relations and hopes to become an advocate for the agriculture industry in some capacity. Her passion lies with providing educational resources and information to consumers in hopes of developing a better understanding of the ag industry and its practices. This summer she hopes to gain more knowledge of the Virginia beef industry and looks forward to meeting producers and industry members throughout the state.

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City, State, Zip: ________________________________________________________

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Seller’s Signature

Total Number of Cattle Sold: __________X $1.00 per Head= $__________________

Date of Sale: _____________________ State of Origin: _________________________

Person remitting assessment: _____________________________________________

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Page 30, June 2016, The Virginia Cattlemen
When Cash was King of The Beef Market

Wes Ishmael, BEEF Magazine

“The daily fed cattle market is characterized by spotty price quotes, small trade volume, few buyers and sellers, and concerns over the representativeness of publicly reported cash market prices.” Rather than a current observation, the above quote is from a 2000 study, “Alternatives to Cash Prices in Fed Cattle Price Discovery,” by Ted Schroeder, agricultural economist at Kansas State University, and James Mintert, agricultural economist at Purdue University. At the time, the industry was still in the crawling stage of figuring out ways to reward cattle based on individual merit, rather than simple averages. The resulting value grids and formulas were largely the response of packers to a growing number of cattle feeders tired of subsidizing below-average cattle at the cost of above-average ones.

Now, upward of 80% of all fed cattle are traded via what are termed Alternative Marketing Arrangements (AMAs), which typically utilize prices discovered in the spot cash market, but do nothing to contribute to price discovery there. AMAs include marketing methods like formulas and forward contracting. So, you have fewer and fewer fed cattle traded in the cash market providing a discovered price used as a component or reference point in most every other cattle market you can think of, from cash markets for calves, feeder cattle and beef, to futures markets for live cattle and feeder cattle. Along with wondering how thin is too thin when it comes to effective price discovery in the fed cattle market, there are also questions of how representative the 20% are of the other 80%.

Recognition of such challenges, real and potential, is as old as AMAs themselves. Since their development, plenty of folks worried about their impact on cash market function, as well as byproducts of such a system, including captive supplies. It’s only in recent years that attempts began to understand how much cash trade is needed for effective price discovery or ways to prop up the current cash system. While marketing methods have evolved significantly, if Mark Twain was a modern-day cattle feeder, he could be forgiven for thinking: “Everyone talks about the markets, but no one ever does anything about them.”

At least as important as fixing the cash market — if that’s what the industry decides to do — is understanding why cattle feeders mostly opt to trade cattle outside of the cash market, says Derrell Peel, Extension livestock marketing specialist at Oklahoma State University. Stephen R. Koontz, agricultural economist at Colorado State University, is finding such answers as he conducts the multiyear Price Discovery Research Project (PDRP) for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association. It aims squarely at determining whether or not the current cash market for fed cattle is still effective in discovering price, and why cattle feeders choose one marketing method compared with another.

According to the cattle feeders and packers surveyed for the PDRP, AMAs provide too much cost savings and efficiency to relinquish. “Mainly, formula operations viewed selling in the cash market as at least an added cost of $25 per head. The cash market had value in terms of price information but not in terms of opportunity,” Koontz explains in the PDRP executive summary. Those who use forward-contracting quantified a $15- to $25-per-head price advantage compared with selling in the cash market. For clarification, Koontz explains that AMA transactions use prices discovered by individuals not involved in the transaction. For instance, formulas — the most prevalent AMA — might use packing plant average prices or a regional price as the base price before premiums and discounts are applied.

“Formula trades do no price discovery and make use of the information provided, and resources expended elsewhere, on prices discovered by others,” Koontz emphasizes. “Formula trades use both base prices and premiums and discounts discovered through other means.” Formula trades are scheduled with packers at least two weeks ahead of delivery and often longer, Koontz explains. While packers choose the day of the week for pen slaughter, the decision of which week to ship the cattle is up to the feedlot.

Whether the formula is long term or short term in nature, the terms of the formula — how the base price will be calculated at delivery — are known, along with premiums and discounts. But the actual base price depends on the day the cattle feeder sends the cattle to the packer — what the elements of price formula are doing that day. “The bottom line is that the feeder wants to sell the cattle, the packer wants to buy the cattle, and both want to pay or be paid the ‘market price,’” Koontz says. Conversely, folks who forward-contract cattle negotiate a price — outside of the spot cash market — and transfer ownership to the packer in advance of delivery. In both cases, AMAs help manage various risks, including those associated with transaction cost, cattle price and supply chain management.

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Continued on Page 33.
Andrew Dawson: I am from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia Beef Council: Tell us about you and your active lifestyle.

Andrew Dawson: I am from the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. I still call it my home today even though I have been relocated multiple times over the last 9 years with the company I work for. I am currently at Red River Army Depot outside of Texarkana, TX. I have always been active, having run cross-country and played basketball and baseball all through high school. I attended Shepherd College in West Virginia from ‘98-’99 where I was on the cross-country and track teams. I then transferred to VMI (Virginia Military Institute) and graduated in 2003 where exercise was always part of the daily regimen.

Once out of school, I got extremely out of shape and my terrible diet finally caught up with me. From January 2004-December 2008, I had put on 50 lbs. I exercised regularly but it was not intense by any means. My diet was awful; I was sluggish, lethargic, and I had no motivation. In 2009, I decided to make a lot of changes: 1) my diet and 2) run my first half-marathon. I scheduled it in Jackson Hole, WY in June to make a mini-vacation out of it and to stay motivated to train.

I finished the race around 1:46, dropping 50 lbs in the process of training and eating healthier. After the race I told myself I would do at least one half-marathon in each state, found there were multiple 50-state running clubs, and joined one. Since June of 2009 I have run 58 Half Marathons and 17 Full Marathons in 47 states plus Washington DC. I will have done all 50 states by the end of this year. I have also participated in various smaller-distance races, bike rides, and even completed two Triathlons.

It has been amazing seeing different parts of the country, most of which I never would have remotely considered visiting otherwise. In mid-2012, I started training harder and dramatically increased the number of events I was participating in, doing an event virtually every month if not more frequently. Since my first Half Marathon, I have dropped my Half Marathon time by over 20 minutes, broken 3 hours in the marathon and qualified and ran in the last 2 Boston Marathons. I run every day (mixing up speed, pace, hills, and distance), along with some light weights, mixing in the stationary or regular bike and swimming when I can. My additional fitness goals include going back and run a Full Marathon in all the states I currently only have a Half completed in, run in each of the continents, ands the big goal for 2017 is to complete an Ironman.

VBC: Why is beef important in your training?
ALD: Beef is a major part of my diet. It is an excellent source of high-quality protein. Lean meats like extra-lean hamburger, top-round roast beef, and sirloin tip steaks have been in my diet since I started taking better care of my body. I eat beef at least 4 or 5 times a week. Primarily, I eat beef on the days after my toughest workouts, long runs, and races. I believe beef helps in the recovery process and prepares me for the next day ahead. And also, it just tastes good. A major part of my weight gain was what I was putting into my body. Living off drive-thru dollar menus, eating greasy cheeseburgers and crappy fast food for 4 years beat up my body; not to mention the amount of soda I was drinking on a daily basis and being a weekend warrior of drinking beer all night Fridays and Saturdays. I now have a rule that I will not eat anywhere that has a drive-thru window, I rarely drink soda, haven’t had a beer since 2008, eat fruit and vegetables daily, and have switched from whole milk to 2%. It is amazing what a good diet can do for you. I see people at races wearing “Run on Plants” shirts or slogans saying “Vegan Athlete”. I am not one to question anyone’s lifestyle, and those are tough -- I could not do it -- but it must suck not to eat beef. I believe what most people do not realize is the fat in meat, not the meat itself, is the issue with controlling diet. If you do beef right, it works. Take it from me, at 220bs eating burgers every day of the week, to now, still enjoying beef just as much. Just doing it right makes all the difference. My 5-mile time at 36 is faster than what it was at age 18 when I was running college cross-country. A healthy diet with beef works, and it works well.

ALD: A favorite meal for me after a race is a nice, lean sirloin steak (cooked medium), scrambled eggs, and chocolate milk. A lean burger with homemade mac’n’cheese is a must though when I am home for a weekend in Virginia after a long run.

Beef Fuels ME!
Why Selling Beef Livers Overseas Matters to Your Bottom Line

Joe Schuele, US Meat Export Federation

To maximize the value of every steer and heifers slaughtered in the U.S., it is essential that products commanding little interest from American consumers – such as beef livers – find a home in the international marketplace. This is a win-win for all involved, as the U.S. producer receives more value per animal and consumers in less developed countries have access to an economically priced protein source. Liver production depends entirely on U.S. slaughter numbers. Therefore, it is not surprising that the recent peak year for U.S. liver exports was 2011, reaching 101,389 metric tons (mt). From 2012 through 2014, liver exports averaged about 87,000 mt. With herd rebuilding reducing last year’s slaughter, 2015 liver exports dropped to just 72,641 mt, partly reflecting lower production. Due to these lower supplies and an increasingly competitive global market, the U.S. share of all livers exported worldwide declined from 53% in 2010 to 37% last year.

Now that U.S. slaughter numbers are again trending higher and liver production is increasing, it is important that the U.S. industry expand its international customer base for beef livers in order to maintain strong demand and win back global market share. This is a top priority for the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). “The U.S. industry has been very successful in deriving a strong return for beef livers, but maintaining that success is an ongoing challenge,” explains Dan Halstrom, USMEF senior vice president for marketing. “Russia used to be a mainstay destination for U.S. livers, which is an initiative we launched about two years ago. Exporters are very excited about the potential for growth in this region, as several of these countries have emerging economies and rapidly growing retail and meat processing sectors.”

Before the Russian market closed to U.S. beef in early 2013, Russia was the second-largest destination for U.S. livers, trailing only Egypt. In 2012, Russia took 13,083 mt of U.S. livers – about 15% of total U.S. liver exports. Although liver exports increased slightly the following year, USMEF estimates that the loss of the Russian market cost the U.S. beef industry more than $26 million as fewer buyers for U.S. livers resulted in lower prices. “Egypt continues to be an outstanding market for U.S. livers, and we cannot overstate how much the U.S. industry appreciates Egypt as an essential and reliable trading partner,” Halstrom says.

“But it is very important that we find alternative destinations – not only to ensure strong export volumes, but also to maintain strong prices by bringing more buyers into the market. USMEF staff members are working to educate these customers on the nutritional value of U.S. livers, and on the quality advantage of livers harvested from U.S. cattle, which are typically slaughtered at a younger age,” Halstrom notes. “Angola recently emerged as a promising destination for U.S. livers, with 2012-2014 exports averaging more than 5,400 mt per year. But with U.S. livers in shorter supply last year and Angola’s economy slumping due to falling oil prices, exports fell to 1,475 mt.

“South Africa just reopened to U.S. beef in January – the first time we have had access to this market since 2003,” Halstrom says. “This will help bolster USMEF’s efforts to move more U.S. beef – including livers – into Sub-Saharan Africa, which is an initiative we launched about two years ago. Exporters are very excited about the potential for growth in this region, as several of these countries have emerging economies and rapidly growing retail and meat processing sectors.”

From Page 31. - When Cash Was.

kind of cattle will be arriving, when they’ll arrive and which specific markets they fit.

“You can discover price horizontally or vertically,” Peel explains. “So far, the cattle industry has chosen to discover price horizontally.” The auction market for calves and feeder cattle is a sterling example of horizontal price discovery. Hundreds of thousands of head trade every week. Buyers and sellers determine a price that is publicly reported. In any given week, there’s plenty of confidence in knowing at least an average price for calves in the same region of similar weight, condition, muscle and frame. If you want to know the price of one calf, you identify the prices of similar calves – horizontal.

Price discovery for cash fed cattle remains horizontal, too. If you want to know what steers are worth any given week in Kansas or the Texas Panhandle, you see what those of similar quality brought in those same areas — if any or enough of them traded in the cash that week. Current fed cattle cash price discovery also reflects expectations — real or perceived — of downstream value associated with things such as quality grade and yield, at least to a point. Formulas and even grids represent a hybrid marketing method of sorts, which is more vertical in nature. They include a price discovered in the cash market, and then apply a schedule of premiums and discounts based on carcass performance.

Only a handful of programs today determine the price for fed cattle vertically in the truest sense. Ultimately, they reward cattle based on their wholesale and retail value in specific markets. A live price equivalent may be determined for the purposes of accounting and what not, but the animal is rewarded based on the actual retail value. For Peel then, the first question about price discovery for fed cattle revolves around whether cash markets effectively communicate the signals necessary, given the transition to more vertical transactions. Put down your pitchforks and lighter fluid. Peel isn’t suggesting that the industry abandon cash markets. When all is said and done, they may remain the most effective method for discovering fed cattle prices. He’s saying that pondering their value versus some alternative is legitimate — at least as legitimate as trying to figure out how to fix cash markets.
Western Hemisphere, the main destinations for U.S. livers are Mexico and Peru. Both saw solid increases in 2015, with Mexico taking 3,733 mt (up 34% year-over-year) and Peru 2,358 mt (up 17%). USMEF sees potential for liver export growth in Central America, South America and the Caribbean, both as raw material for further processing and as a retail item. “U.S. suppliers have been able to penetrate the liver market in countries like Colombia, Chile and Jamaica, but there is excellent potential for further growth,” Halstrom says. “Free trade agreements have provided better access to several countries in this region, eliminating tariffs and other obstacles for U.S. livers. This is extremely important, because we’re competing with both domestic product and livers from South America’s large beef-producing countries.” Diversifying the market for U.S. beef livers will be a featured topic at the upcoming USMEF Board of Directors Meeting and Product Showcase, set for May 25-27 in St. Louis. For more information on USMEF’s marketing programs and activities, please visit www.usmef.org.
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