The Virginia Cattlemen's Association is proud to unveil our new logo on the cover of the April issue of the Virginia Cattleman. This logo will represent a VCA that is dedicated to serving the best interest of the Virginia beef cattle industry by actively listening to the voices of its producers and affiliate partners.

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The Virginia Cattleman
P. O. Box 9
Daleville, VA 24083-0009
what I do mean to emphasize is a cornerstone of decision making of course, precise and advanced in our technology provides means to be more competitive and to discount technology is harder to sell cattle and please producers when prices are high than when they are low. He said a producer will come into the yard to pick up their cows and check in today’s market and those same five weights will have sold for $207. That market operator pointed his finger and said you can bet your behind they will want to know why they didn’t bring $237. Gaging success is a finicky thing. The first step is always to get educated. What is realistic for anyone much less you or the organization you are a part of? Another wise man once told me that having a plan is often better than knowing the direction you are heading because we can re-sign ourselves to complacency when we don’t plan to change. The second step is to set goals. Again, if complacency is the breeder of contempt, then we should not expect more until we aspire to have more. In this good feeder cattle market that we live in today, that environment was partly created by a lot of hard work by many before me that I am appreciative of. There are some important relationships that have been cultivated over time providing a consistent market for Virginia feeder cattle. There are also programs here that have successfully allowed producers to expect to comingle weaned and preconditioned calves for a premium payday. That premium is relevant of course, but when you live in a $12 – 20 spread within weights, being in the front end of that spread is the cat bird seat in any market environment. These good things, relationships and marketing programs, have fueled an expectation for marketing security that should be marketed to commercial cattle producers to get further educated, set goals for growth and develop a plan. Part of that plan also needs to be planned breeding. Some of the great marketing programs that we have are built on reputation of quality and service. We all can agree that has allowed some inferior calves, from time to time, to get sold as well as the good ones. We sometimes get burned, but consistent quality allows for plenty of forgiveness too, with some finagling. My point is, there has never been a better time in the cow/calf business to invest in good genetics to continue to produce quality cattle. Cull cow and bull prices are tremendous and there is a lot of genetic horsepower in this state being sold very reasonably when you look at the returns. Our feeder cattle program in Virginia is enviable and that has been earned. Continue to think of marketing as work and don’t allow the reliability of reputation programs to substitute for progressive breeding in this high cattle market.
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Implanting Calves Pre-Weaning Equals Easy Pounds & Easy Money

Wes Ishamal, BEEF Magazine

Implanting nursing calves with a growth stimulant is one of the most economically justifiable practices available in the beef industry," says Lawton Stewart, University of Georgia Extension beef cattle specialist. Stewart points to research trials where daily gain from birth to weaning increases by 4%-6% in nursing beef calves that receive a single implant. Other research suggests the response can be even higher.

Stewart also notes that growth response is about 20% greater in heifers than steers. For the sake of illustration, assume that implanting calves on the cow increases gain by 5%. Figure 15-30 lbs. more weaning weight. In today’s market (Dress $1.80) that’s worth $27-454/ head. The cost of the implant and labor is routinely less than $2/head. Yet, only a minority of cow-calf producers utilizes implants in their pre-weaned calves. In fact, according to the most recent National Animal Health Monitoring Service “Beef” study published for 2007-2008, only 11.9% of operations surveyed had implanted any calves prior to, or at, weaning during the previous year. Even for producers with 200 cows or more, only 31.1% reported implanting at least some calves.

If Superior Auction data is any indication, implant use by cow-calf producers continues to trend lower over time. In 1995, 64.3% of the lots sold through Superior Livestock Video Auction were implanted. Only 26.5% were implanted in 2009. In 2011 and 2012 combined, 31% were implanted. Data for those last two years include 11,350 lots and 1.11 million head of cattle, says Michael King, a Kansas State University (KSU) research assistant (see Figure 1). King has provided the analysis since Superior first began sharing the data in 1995. Merck Animal Health sponsors the analysis.

No difference to calf price

“I would argue much of the decline in implanting in the Superior data has to do with the development of ‘natural’ beef programs,” says Ken Odde, head of the KSU Department of Animal Sciences and Industry. He worked with King to develop the initial analysis in 1995. Producers’ rationale for not using implants typically revolves around fear that buy-

Continued on Page 7
Liability Risk Is Beginning To Flow Down The Beef Production Chain

The whole topic of liability is a frustrating one for cow-calf producers. After all, a cow-calf producer has no way of controlling what happens to the product once it leaves their farm. However, in today’s litigious world, someone is going to be sued if a problem develops. Retailers, packers, and feeders tend to be much larger enterprises; thus, they’re more able to field more amusing targets from a trial lawyer’s viewpoint. That doesn’t mean, however, that cow-calf producers are immune from such legal action. Lawyers at the retailer and packer levels understandably work hard to protect their clients. Increasingly, they are asking for affidavits or some other form of guarantee that the products or cattle they procure haven’t been fed animal byproducts and that withdrawal guidelines, etc., have been followed. Meanwhile, the hotel, restaurant and institutional (HRI) sector has created additional value by making specific claims regarding these products. That value, however, has potential risk associated with it, as one must step back to create big problems. That means the HRI trades and retailers are demanding assurances from packers in order to limit any liability exposure. Not surprisingly, as the packers have been forced to accept that liability, their lawyers are demanding assurances from their suppliers. Now, whether the feedlots and auction markets are going to be demanding those assurances from their suppliers as well. It can be argued that this is a good thing, and it’s certainly understandable. Thus, everyone will be very concerned about meeting standards while animals are under their control; they’ll also demand that guidelines have been followed prior to their taking control of the animal. Of course, it also means that liability will be pushed back to the cow-calf sector as well. The challenge becomes making sure these assurances can be made, while not impeding the rate and flow of commerce. I don’t envy the logistics and paperwork of a sale barn, for instance, that sells a load of cows and must have 25 different owners sign an affidavit and store it on file. Eventually, it will be understood that any time an animal changes hands, assurances will have to be made. It will simply be seen as necessary cost of doing business – like brand inspections and health papers. In the short term, it will pose challenges, especially for the sale barns across the country. Perhaps, to make it easier, the industry needs to standardize and create such forms. Currently, we have different buyers with different forms, even though they are essentially the same. Perhaps some entrepreneur will come up with a phone app that will enable producers to fill out and sign these forms electronically and store them on a cloud somewhere so they can be easily accessed.

This week, USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service announced its plans for moving forward with its traceability initiative. There’s been a lot of concern in the country about traceability, but the marketplace is beginning to demand it to a degree that the argument is shifting. Without question, there is a cost associated with this degree of record keeping. But the debate is no longer

Continued on Page 21
BURNS, Ore. – Unlike cows that haven’t ever had a run-in with wolves, ones that have can experience stress-related illnesses and have a harder time getting pregnant – meaning decreased profits for ranchers, according to a new study by Oregon State University.

“When wolves kill or injure livestock, ranchers can document the financial loss,” said Reinaldo Cooke, an animal scientist in OSU’s College of Agricultural Sciences. “But wolf attacks also create bad memories in the herd and cause a stress response known to result in decreased pregnancy rates, lighter calves and a greater likelihood of getting sick. It’s much like post-traumatic stress disorder – PTSD – for cows.”

After a reintroduction to Yellowstone National Park in the last two decades, grey wolves have dispersed through the West and have hunted in livestock grazing areas. Since then, OSU researchers have heard anecdotes from ranchers that cows that have come in contact with wolves are more aggressive, sickly and eat less.

To measure the stress of a wolf attack on cows – and estimate its lingering effects – researchers simulated a wolf encounter with 100 cows. Half of them had never seen a wolf, and the other half had been part of a herd that was previously attacked on the range. Cows were gathered in a pen scented with wolf urine while pre-recorded wolf howls played over a stereo. Three trained dogs – German Shepherds closely resembling wolves – walked outside the pen.

Researchers found that cortisol, a stress hormone, increased by 30 percent in cows that had previously been exposed to wolves. They bunched up in a corner, formed a protective circle and acted agitated. Their body temperatures also increased rapidly, another indicator of stress. Yet the cows previously unfamiliar with wolves were curious about the dogs and did not show signs of stress.

Multiple studies from Cooke and other researchers have established a link between cow stress and poor performance traits that can cost ranchers. A 2010 OSU economic analysis estimated that wolves in northeastern Oregon could cost ranchers up to $261 per head of cattle, including $55 for weight loss and $67 for lower pregnancy rates, according to John Williams, an OSU extension agent in Wallowa County who conducted that study.

“In a herd, if you are not raising calves, your cows are not making you money,” said David Bohnert, an expert in ruminant nutrition at OSU’s Eastern Oregon Agriculture Research Center in Burns. “With stress likely decreasing the proportion of those getting pregnant and causing lighter calves from those that do, a wolf attack can have negative financial ripple effects for some time.”

Both researchers call for further research into ways of successfully managing both wolves and livestock so they can co-exist.

The wolf-corne simulated encounter study, which was funded by the Oregon Beef Council, was published in the Journal of Animal Science and co-authored by Cooke and Bobmont. The text is available at http://bit.ly/OSU_CowWolf-Study.
Researchers Use DNA From Exceptional Carcass To Produce Donor Cow

Beef researchers in Texas are just a month away from producing a large number of embryos from recently cloned male and female cattle—all part of an engaging, historic project using Somatic Cell Nuclear Transfer (SCNT) reproductive technology to create cloned calves. The public-private partnership between West Texas A&M University and industry professionals is more than three years in the making, and researchers hope to successfully reproduce cattle from animals graded Prime, Yield Grade 1, the highest quality and most sought after animals in the beef industry. Ideally the clones would be used to breed a line of cattle that could produce USDA’s highest grade beef in a shorter amount of time using fewer feed resources. The researchers, led by Dean Hawkins, head of WITAMU’s Department of Agricultural Sciences, presented their findings to date in December at the Range Beef Cow Symposium in Rapid City, S.D.

Since 2010, the researchers have identified very few exceptional carcasses. “Of the 20 possible combinations of quality (Prime, Choice, Select, Standard) and yield (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) grades that occur within the young fed beef population, the probability of a Prime, grade 1 carcass is approximately 0.03 percent of the fed beef in the U.S. just 29 out of thousands of cattle carcasses rated as Prime, Grade Yield 1,” they wrote. “The progeny from this mating will be tested for DNA markers for carcass merit and growth efficiency. A portion of the resulting progeny will be fed at the university feedlot and slaughtered to determine their quality and yield grade,” they added. “Additional cows will be inseminated with semen from Alpha or a purebred bull with known EPD’s to determine if Alpha is truly genetically superior.”

Implanting

Continued from Page 4

Some fear that implanting makes their calves less valuable to the buyer by removing the “natural” option. That makes logical sense, but reality suggests no loss in value (read on).

Others have heard that buyers discount implanted calves because they under-perform in the feedlot compared to non-implanted peers. Whether that’s an old wife’s tale or the usual comment of a zealous buyer, there is nothing to support that notion.

Yet, when used appropriately, according to Stewart and others, there is no reason suggesting that calves implanted before weaning will perform less than non-implanted peers. “Implanting calves during the nursing phase hasn’t been shown to decrease subsequent performance or affect carcass characteristics,” Stewart explains. “Calves should not be disserted at weaning if they have been administered an implant. Studies show that calves implanted prior to weaning and three times during the finishing phase don’t show any decrease in performance compared with calves administered implants only during the finishing period.” So, buyers shouldn’t care if calves are implanted. In fact, contrary to the common perception and the growth in natural programs mentioned earlier, Superior data says buyers don’t care if calves are implanted. Prices paid in the Superior data are the same, regardless of implant status. Incidentally, Odde believes the Superior data should be viewed as representative of producers with approximately 300 cows or more. That’s the size herd that has the number of similar-weight, same-sex calves to sell as load lots through Superior. “Implanting nursing calves is one of the most underutilized, but proven management practices in the beef industry,” Stewart emphasizes. Moreover, Odde says, “The Superior data suggests there’s more opportunity for cow-call producers to utilize this technology.”
USDA Ready To Enforce Animal Disease Traceability Regulations

Rita Jane Gabbett, 
The Meating Place

USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service issued a bulletin outlining the next phase of implementing Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) regulations including enforcement actions when needed. “We know that sometimes taking enforcement action is necessary to make sure a system as important as ADT is successful,” APHIS Administrator Kevin Shea said in a note to stakeholders. “When and where necessary, we will take that action. As a standard practice, we will continue to notify first-time offenders when they do not meet the regulatory requirements to ensure they understand the regulation and what they need to do to comply. Additionally, we will now pursue appropriate penalties in situations where an individual repeatedly fails to comply with the regulatory requirements.”

The ADT program was finalized in March 2013 to hasten response to a disease outbreak and lessen its economic impact, as well as provide the information and assurances trading partners expect. Shea said progress in 2013 and through today is now making it easier for producers to participate. The number of authorized tag distributors has expanded, a greater variety of official identification devices are on the market, and several states are working to make health certificates more mobile for use in the field. APHIS will now begin exercising and testing the system by making sure all animals moved interstate have the proper identification.

This spring, as APHIS identifies issues with identification of livestock moved interstate, the agency will begin identifying individuals who aren’t meeting the program’s requirements. Local Veterinary Services area district directors will contact them in writing to help guide them through the process for meeting the program requirements, including providing them with details on how to obtain the necessary official identification devices or movement documentation.
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3 Morley FH, Donald AD. Farm management and systems of helminth control. Vet Parasitol. 1980;6:105-134.


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Steve Lucas

In 1888, a Texan named David Wilson built a 30 mile stretch of electric fence powered by a water wheel on the XIT ranch. The fence design reduced the number of fence posts needed, and was easier on cattle than barbed wire. Cowboys remained unconvinced, and the project was deemed unworkable.

Today, fence chargers are as common on farms and ranches as horses and cows. Cowboys are expected to be more skilled in electric fence construction and troubleshooting than digging post holes and repairing broken strands of barbed wire. Large boundaries and continuous grazing have been abandoned and management intensive and mob grazing are becoming the norm thanks to the technological improvements in electric fence equipment. The issue has become the gate; where there was one woven wire or barbed wire fence to go through, now there may be two, or three, or four highly charged electric fences to negotiate with gates and gaps sometimes inconveniently located.

Stepping over or squeezing through charged wires has become the alternative method of avoiding gates and providing the shortest route for a brave stockperson. When the ground is dry, a pair of thick soled rubber boots can provide enough insulation to reduce the shock to a tingle when pushing down a wire for a step over. When it is wet underfoot and boot soles are thin, only the foolhardy attempt the push down maneuver unless they are willing to use their hat to press down the wire. Even then, if the wire slips off the hat, footing is lost, the back arches too high or a leg is not lifted high enough, the risk of a substantial jolt is ever present.

If you use electric fencing, you have experienced the heart stopping shocks that come from a well-grounded contact with the fire that runs through the wire. We fuss at the cattle when they break a wire to get to new spring grass, then we have to decide whether to disconnect the charger or try to fix the broken wire hot, and whether the repair will hold or if the wire should be replaced all together. Meanwhile, the cows watch from afar, unconvinced, deeming the project unworkable.
Scott P. Greiner & Mark A. McCann
Extension Beef Specialists, Virginia Tech

After a cold and snowy winter, spring always offers a new perspective to daily chores and activities. This new perspective is also something to apply to cattle enterprises. The industry is operating at record prices along with reduced input costs compared to recent times, creating a situation where we have no history to lean on. The near term outlook is very favorable and shows no major change from where we are today. The playing field of revenues vs. costs suggests that some management practices may need to be reevaluated. The perennial statement “if it cost more than it returns, then don’t do it” is based on both costs and returns, and the relationship between these two factors has changed over the course of the last several months.

The value of today’s calf crop justifies a reexamination of return on investment for spending additional dollars to obtain an additional calf born, or put on an extra pound of weaning weight. Management practices which impact return to estrus, pregnancy rate and weaning weight should be reconsidered in terms of the present economic climate.

Spring Calving Herds (January-March)

**General**
- Calving season winding down. Continue to observe late calving cows frequently.
- Tag, tattoo, record birth weight, calving ease score, test/calving score and mothering ability of dam. Keep accurate records of return on investment for spending additional dollars to obtain an additional calf born, or put on an extra pound of weaning weight. Management practices which impact return to estrus, pregnancy rate and weaning weight should be reconsidered in terms of the present economic climate.

**Herd Health**
- Consult with your veterinarian concerning pre-breeding vaccination schedule for cow herd, yearling heifers, and bulls. Plan early to allow 30-day vaccination window prior to breeding season.
- Monitor calve health closely, particularly for signs of scours and pneumonia, have treatment supplies on hand.
- Observe newborn calves to ensure colostrum intake is adequate and provide selenium and vitamin A & D injections to newborn calves.

**Nutrition and Forages**
- Continue to offer a high magnesium mineral to prevent grass tetany.
- Monitor intake to ensure adequate dry matter needs of the herd.
- New forage growth is very digestible, high in protein and high in moisture content.

**Reproduction**
- Finalize plans and protocols for breeding season. Establish calendar to map timing of synchronization program to be used during breeding season. Have supplies and semen on hand.
- Breed heifers 2-4 weeks ahead of mature cows to allow longer post-partum interval prior to second breeding season.
- Schedule and conduct breeding soundness exams on herd sires, including annual vaccinations.
- Manage newly acquired herd sires properly to prepare them for the breeding season. Yearling bulls often lose 100-150 pounds during their first breeding season. Adjust them to the feed and environment of their new home, and commingle bulls of same age/weight for a period of time prior to turnout. Ample exercise, in combination with a proper nutritional program, is essential to make them physically fit for the breeding season.

**Genetics**
- Finalize genetic goals and selection criteria for upcoming breeding season (both AI and natural service sires).
- Collect remaining yearling performance data (weight, height, scrotal, ultrasound) in seedstock herds.

Fall Calving Herds

**General**
- Schedule and conduct pregnancy diagnosis with veterinarian 45-60 days following breeding season.
- Evaluate potential options for marketing of calf crop, including timing of weaning to meet operational demands.

**Herd Health**
- Consult with your veterinarian concerning pre-breeding vaccination schedule for cow herd, yearling heifers, and bulls. Plan early to allow 30-day vaccination window prior to breeding season.
- Monitor calve health closely, particularly for signs of scours and pneumonia, have treatment supplies on hand.
- Observe newborn calves to ensure colostrum intake is adequate and provide selenium and vitamin A & D injections to newborn calves.

**Nutrition and Forages**
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Continued on Page 17
Kansas Farm Boys Put Ag In National Spotlight With Parody Videos

“We are seriously just normal guys,” said Greg Peterson, the oldest of the three “Peterson brothers.” The Kansas farm boys have put agriculture in the national spotlight by producing and starring in farming parody videos of top music hits. Peterson said the boys think it is “amusing” that fellow agriculturists are treating them like celebrities. “We are just down-to-earth Kansas farm kids,” he said.

It all started June of 2012, when “I’m Farming and I Grow it” hit YouTube.com. Greg, an agricultural communications major at Kansas State said, “Professors were always challenging us to find new ways to advocate for agriculture. I was browsing YouTube one day and noticed that the most popular YouTube videos were music videos. At that point I decided I wanted to make a farming music video with my brothers.” After hearing “I’m Sexy and I Know it,” Greg jokingly changed it to “I’m Farming and I Grow it.” The idea caught fire and after writing the song, he took it home to his brothers and they filmed their first humorous music video.

The Peterson brothers have several videos on their YouTube channel, the latest being “Chore.” They have over 29 million views on YouTube, which equals over 80 years of viewing time. The story of American’s farmers and ranchers through the Peterson Brothers is reaching consumers in over 232 countries. Not only do they share their story on YouTube but they have over 120,000 Facebook followers, a Twitter and Instagram following as well. “I know at the beginning that it was important to advocate for agriculture, but I think I underestimated the importance. Not only that, but I feel like the need is growing with every day that goes by. If we in the agriculture community don’t do a better job of communicating to consumers, we are going to be in some real trouble down the road,” explains Greg about the importance of daily advocating.

Greg states, “The most important thing is to assure the consumer that their food is safe to eat and dispel any fear they may have about the products they consume. I mean, we have the safest, most abundant food supply in the history of the world and I see consumers complaining all of the time and wondering if what they are eating is safe. Other than that, I think there are many myths about agriculture that need to be corrected and explained. For instance, the terms, “factory farming,” “monoculture,” “big-ag,” “industrial agriculture,” we all very misunderstood.” With a consumer population that is farther and farther removed from the farm, the Peterson Brothers are opening that door for communication. They make themselves available to give presentations and their farm is YouTube proof, it’s real and the consumer appreciates that fact.

While Kansas is home, and Kansas State is their school of choice, so far, the brothers have had a unique opportunity to travel and tell their story beyond the screen. Their life got flipped when the first video came out in June 2012 and they took a quick trip to appear on the Today show. Little did they know it wouldn’t stop there. “I’ve been to over 30 states since the video came out, so obviously it’s changed my life quite a bit. I think my favorite has to be when I spoke on a panel in Hanover, Germany at the largest farm show in the world, the Agritechnica. I was sitting alongside farmers from all over Europe discussing the similarities and differences in our farming practices and the challenges all of us face with connecting to consumers,” explains Greg. While traveling and making videos is what we have come to expect from the brothers, they will be the first to declare “Kansas is awesome! We love it.”

“Farming with your family in the Midwest is about as good as it gets,” said Greg. The future for The Peterson brothers includes farming, advocating and making videos. Just like a typical farm family they are running 90 miles an hour. Kendal is still in high school and is a four-sport athlete and is involved in numerous clubs and activities. Nathan is a college student living in a different town than the rest of us during the school year; and Greg embarked on a full time speaking career as well as helping out “full-time” as much as he can on the family farm. Greg explains that a video may be in the near future, “But we will continue to do our best to advocate through videos.”

The Kansas Farm Boys are opening the door for communication. They make themselves available to give presentations and their farm is YouTube proof, it’s real and the consumer appreciates that fact.
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On February 26, 2014 fed cattle futures for April delivery rose 1.5 percent to settle at $1.44525 a pound at 1 p.m. on Wednesday February 26, 2014 on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. After the close, the price reached $1.453, the highest for a most-active contract since the commodity debuted in 1964. Trading almost doubled compared with the 100-day average for this time, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

**Herd Mgmt.**  
Continued from Page 12  
Final goals. Calculate break-evens on various marketing options and consider risk management strategies.  
- Reimplant commercial calves.  

**Nutrition and Forages**  
- Begin creep feeding or creep grazing calves if desired.  
- Cows are entering latter portion of lactation, above average to good quality hay should meet nutritional requirements.  
- Although pasture green-up is beginning, hay should be continued to be offered until consumption declines significantly.  
- Reserve high quality hay and a pasture area for calves post-weaning.  

**Herd Health**  
- Consult with veterinarian on vaccination protocol for calf crop.  
- Design vaccination and weaning program around marketing goals and objectives.  

**Genetics**  
- Collect weaning weights on calf crop at optimum time (AHBR age range 120-280 days), along with cow weights, hip heights and body condition scores (cow mature size data taken within 45 days of weaning measure).
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Meet Robert Harper, Cattle Producer

Robert manages cattle as part of a partnership called Cross River Farms, LLC. Robert’s operation is located at Dungeness Farm, which has fascinating roots in early American history. Dungeness was built by Isham Randolph in the early 1700s, and Thomas Jefferson’s mother was raised there. Today at the Goshen farm, Robert specializes in several aspects of cattle production. In addition to running a cow-calf operation that includes Red Angus cattle, he custom-raises Holstein heifers for a nearby dairy farm. He also manages a group of females for the Amelia Area Cattlemen Heifer Development Program. Heifers in this program are produced and owned by individual livestock producers from across the region, but they are brought together to live at Cross River after they are weaned. They are bred in December and undergo further development through the winter. In the spring, most return to the herds on their home farms where they were born. A few are sold in April to buyers looking for high-quality females for their cow-calf herds.

To keep up with so many cattle, Robert must carefully manage his feeding program to ensure that he has adequate pasture and hay available to the cattle throughout the year. Because each set of cattle on his farm has a unique purpose, Robert must tailor his feeding and management to suit the needs of each particular group. His breed covers in his cow-calf herd need enough energy and protein from feed to produce milk for their calves from birth until weaning. The calves, in turn, need to grow steadily before and after weaning so that they will perform well at a finishing operation later in life and provide high-quality beef for consumers. However, the young female calves in the heifer development herd require a different approach. Unlike their counterparts that will not remain in a herd for many years and must instead reach a robust “finished” weight in a timely fashion, the heifers need to grow at a more moderate pace. The young heifers must build bone, fat, and muscle tissue at a rate that promotes longevity and sound reproductive traits in preparation for a future career living on pasture and raising their own calves on a cow-calf breeding operation. To meet this goal, the heifers are run on pasture and receive a daily ration of stage, commodity feeds, hay and grain to grow and mature in preparation for breeding. Robert periodically weights the Cross River heifers to gauge continued on Page 23
Definition Of Beef Sustainability Covers Considerable Ground

Sustainability could mean increasing efficiency, but one thing’s clear: not everyone has the same definition. “Many of us in the cattle business grew up thinking of sustainability as making enough money to keep ranching the next year,” says Nebraska cattlemen Bill Rishel. “Of course that meant we had to care for our natural resources and manage them in a responsible way.”

“That’s not as obvious to today’s consumer,” he said, “so we need to redefine the concept.”


The GRSB’s beef community, environmental and food industry leaders share knowledge and resources that support sound, responsible and viable beef production. The group goes beyond reducing costs and maximizing production to focus on the environment, animal care and food quality. While global in nature, the GRSB outlines measurable actions at regional and local levels. Key strategies include providing forums for discussion and problem solving. GRSB is the only global forum dedicated to connecting local, regional and global initiatives. “Sustainability is a common goal of the beef community,” said Certified Angus Beef Vice President of Production Mark McCully. “Working together through the GRSB, we can bring all viewpoints to the conversation and help ensure the best possible care of the resources.” The GRSB envisions a world in which all aspects of the beef value chain are environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable.

In a March analysis for Farm Progress, retired Penn State University Beef Specialist Hami R. Harper had a different take on what’s ultimately driving big box beef buyers: “You’d have to be truly naive to think we aren’t steadily moving toward being told how we’ll be permitted to produce livestock — beef, pork and poultry. This might not be so troubling if those directives were coming from those with real-world expertise.

“Sustainable” sounds good. But no one knows how the industry can sink its teeth into it. Those trying to call the shots have no firsthand knowledge of livestock production. And when those shot-callers have their own not-so-hidden agendas, it becomes much more confusing. This is the age of the Humane Society of the United States, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals and consumer perception, says Harper, a co-op producer in Centre County, Pa. Those with the most financial backing and most TV sound bites rule the day.

In response to that clamor, McDonald’s put the beef industry on notice in early January that Mcd intends to put real teeth into dictating how beef they buy will be raised. Here’s — “McDonald’s Three-Part Plan for Sustainable Beef”:

Our aspiration: A world in which all beef in our supply chain comes from verified sustainable sources.

- Support development of global principles and criteria in

Continued on Page 21
Beef Sustainability

Continued from Page 20

2016.

• Develop targets for purchasing verified sustainable beef.
• Begin purchasing verified sustainable beef during 2016.

Our vision: McDonald’s beef comes from farmers and processors who create economic value and nutritious protein through verifiable, diverse production systems that:
• Optimize cattle’s impact within ecosystems and nutrient cycles;
• Positively impact lives of their employees and communities they operate in;
• Care for the welfare of the cattle throughout their lives.

Our approach: Create principles and criteria for sustainable beef production:
• Identity and test sustainable beef production practices.
• Lead with transparency and engagement.
• Work closely with our suppliers and other partners for industry change.

Last fall, Walmart announced an expanded program and a standard of excellence that will involve at least half of the cattle industry by the end of 2016. The guidelines reportedly will include how producers care for land, reduce manure emissions and improve water quality. That plan envisions sourcing 15% of Walmart’s beef supply under new environmental criteria by 2023. A key problem remains: After years of discussion, there’s no beef, pork or poultry industry or USDA definition as to what “sustainable beef” is, points out Harpster. “Today, it’s about animal welfare and the environment. It’s new about what consumers perceive is the best way you should raise your animals.” No one seems to know how “sustainable beef” will be verified or what the criteria will be. Yet the beef that McDonald’s and Walmart purchasing programs want in 2016 will be born this year.

Liability Risk

Continued from Page 5

about whether or not it is going to be required, as the consumer has spoken. The question is how do we create a system that minimizes the costs and does not impede the flow of commerce? With mandatory country-of-origin labeling, the great debate was whether it should be voluntary or mandatory. In regard to traceability, we have debated how the data should be stored, who will have access, and the degree to which the government should be involved. The marketplace is answering those questions by instituting a mandatory/voluntary program.

Of course, you have a right not to sign the affidavit. However, if you exercise that right, you also have to assume responsibility that those buyers will exercise their right to not buy our cattle.

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**Virginia Angus Association**

*Virginia Angus Breeders Page*

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**Virginia Angus Association**

Events for April 2014

- April 4
  - Echo Ridge Spring Turnout Bull Sale, Atkins

- April 5
  - Lawson Family Farms, Ewing

- April 12
  - Knoll Crest Spring Bull Sale, Red House

- April 25
  - Quaker Hill Bull Sale, Trevillians

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Virginia Angus Association

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**Please Note**

- Annual Spring Bull & Female Sale
- Last Friday in April
- Annual Fall Bull & Female Sale
- First Friday in November

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**Look for Edgewood Bulls in the BCIA Sale or call us to visit and look at our On Farm Private Treaty Bulls**

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- Farm Address: 2422 King Street Highway, West Point, VA 23188

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**Please Note**

- Virginia Angus Association will hold our
- Echo Ridge Spring Turnout Bull Sale
- at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel in Staunton, VA

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**Events for April 2014**

- April 4
  - Echo Ridge Spring Turnout Bull Sale, Atkins

- April 5
  - Lawson Family Farms, Ewing

- April 12
  - Knoll Crest Spring Bull Sale, Red House

- April 25
  - Quaker Hill Bull Sale, Trevillians

**Virginia Angusr Association**
Robert Harper
Continued from Page 19

their growth and make management decisions.

Once the heifers reach an appropriate age and body size and undergo a reproductive soundness check from a veterinarian, they are ready to be bred. Robert Harper and the rest of his fellow cattle producers in Virginia have the option to use a live bull for breeding or rely on artificial insemination. Both options follow the natural cycle for cattle reproduction, allowing females to produce one calf each year as they would do if left to their own devices. After breeding, cows remain pregnant for nine months before calving, and the calf nurses the cow on pasture for several months before it is weaned.

Unlike most horses and sheep which only can be bred during certain seasons, cattle cycle naturally throughout the entire year. However, instead of leaving the bull with the herd full-time and allowing heifers and cows to get pregnant and calve sporadically, producers aim to synchronize calving to a single season, often the fall, so that calves within a herd are of approximately the same age and can receive the same health treatments such as vaccinations at the same time. This practice reduces stress on the animals by limiting the number of times that the herd must be brought close to humans for handling. For these reasons, Robert and the Amelia Area Cattlemen choose to breed the heifers at Cross River in December so that they will calve during the following fall season.

To ensure that the animals can all be bred around the same time, they follow a heat synchronization program that causes all of the heifers to cycle on the same schedule. Once the group of heifers collectively comes into heat, they are bred. This herd is first bred using artificial insemination. This advanced, well-studied reproductive method puts little stress on the heifers and allows herd managers to bring cutting-edge genetics into the herd from bulls all over the country.

If a producer wants to use a live bull, he or she will not have to spend time synchronizing cows and heifer cycles or watching animals for signs of heat—the bull takes on this job himself. However, a locally-purchased bull’s genetic traits may not always be predictable, and the producer will need to rotate a new bull into the herd every few years to ensure that the quality of the herd and its collective genetic potential continue to progress. Producers choose instead to buy units of semen from a company that offers a catalog of bulls available for artificial insemination, they can select semen from bulls with well-documented performance traits that match their goals to improve traits like mothering ability, meat quality, animal build, or a plethora of other factors.

Bulls that selected for use in an artificial insemination program are considered the “top of the line” in the industry and are subject to extensive performance testing and offspring data collection. Hence, producers like Robert Harper and members of the Amelia Area Cattlemen who choose to breed via artificial insemination have the means to improve their herds far more quickly and increase their genetic diversity far more easily than they could with a live bull. However, old-fashioned bulls still have their place and are still many high-quality bulls sold locally that may never be featured in a semen company catalog. These animals are useful even to a herd that relies on artificial insemination, as not every heifer heifer will successfully conceive through this means. Hence, the “cleanup bull” is turned out with the artificially-inseminated heifers so those that do not “catch,” or get pregnant, come back into heat and have the opportunity to get bred by the bull.

Like many producers, Robert likes to stay on top of the curve and adopt progressive practices that improve the health, performance, and longevity of his animals and the animals he custom-rises for fellow cattlemen across the region. His creative edge has allowed him to increase the scope of his operation over the years, but anyone who visits the Cross River Farms partnership at Dungeness can easily sense that Robert’s passion for working hard to raise high-quality cattle has been the ultimate force driving his success.

Be sure to check out the (Central Virginia Ag Spotlight Blog) [http://blogs.ext.vt.edu/cen-tral-virginia-ag-spotlight/]. If you are interested in being “In The Spot Light” of the Virginia Cattlemen Newspaper please contact Jacquelynn Davis at the Virginia Cattlemen’s Association Office 540-992-1309 or jdavis@ vacattlemen.org

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THE VIRGINIA CATTLEMAN–APRIL 2014–PAGE 23

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There is a report on the Drovers Cattle Network website dated Feb 13, 2014. The headline is “More Pounds. More Money.” It stated that recent research documents Charolais and Charolais-influenced genetics lead all major beef breeds compared for both weaning and yearling weights. “More pounds. More profit. Simple Math.” You may log onto the American International Charolais Association website (www.charolaisusa.com) and click the “Business Side of Beef” link to access more information.

The new Expo date was not a good date for the VA Charolais breed this year. We will work on a better date for next year. We are already working on our annual November “Fall Herd Improvement Sale” at Virginia Tech.

All members of the Virginia Charolais Association are entitled to join all the sales we sponsor.
Plan To Import Beef From Brazil Causes Uproar

Mike McGraw, Kansas City Star

Foot and mouth disease is so highly contagious it can be spread on a gentle breeze or the tires of farm machinery. The disease, which affects cattle and other hooved animals, was eradicated in the U.S. more than 80 years ago. But a government proposal to import fresh beef from Brazil — when the disease is still active — has ignited fears of a new epidemic that could cost the U.S. cattle industry billions of dollars. The idea is “hilarious,” South Dakota rancher Tracy Trask wrote on a government website where the proposal was posted.

“Have you lost your freakin’ minds?,” one commenter wrote on a government website two days before Christmas where the proposal was posted.

“We are aware of the concerns of ranchers,” an APHIS spokesman told The Kansas City Star. “USDA bases its import decisions on science and will continue to protect the health of U.S. agriculture through appropriate importation eligibility requirements.” Officials said they based their assessment that imports would not re-ignite the disease here at least in part on information provided by Brazil’s Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food Supply, and on site visits by U.S. experts in Brazil. “We concluded that Brazil has infrastructure and emergency response capabilities adequate to effectively contain and eradicate FMD in the event of an outbreak and to comply with U.S. import restrictions on products from affected areas,” USDA said in the proposal.

The Brazilian government requested that the U.S. conduct a review of import restrictions after U.S. and Brazilian officials announced that they would work to lift trade barriers between the two countries. The USDA originally closed public comments on the proposal two weeks ago, but it reopened comments Thursday after the proposal was met with swift and negative reactions. Eight U.S. senators, including Kansas Republicans Pat Roberts and Jerry Moran, wrote Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack last month to request a 60-day extension of the public comment period, saying they were “concerned about the possible risk of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) being brought into the United States.” USDA officials extended the comment period until April 22, after which they could amend or withdraw the proposal.

If that occurred, Richt said, the U.S. would quickly be designated as a foot-and-mouth-positive country and would have to stop exporting meat, costing the meat industry here billions of dollars.

In their objection to the proposal, the Kansas Cattlemen’s Association cited a K-State report that found that a foot and mouth outbreak in Kansas alone would cost the state nearly $1 billion. Richt compared the effects of a potential outbreak of foot and mouth here to a 2003 incident in which one cow in Washington state was found to have bovine pneumonic pleuritis, or “mad-cow disease.” That incident immediately closed more than 50 countries to U.S. beef imports and cost the cattle industry billions of dollars. In the end, said Richt, foot and mouth today remains one of the most economically damaging diseases in the world, with scores of countries still working to eradicate it. Humans do not contract the disease, but they can carry it in their nostrils and on their clothing and pass it on to animals. Its effects are devastating to livestock, causing high fever, excessive slobbering, going off their feed, lameness and, in some cases, death. And the disease can survive in fresh beef from infected animals, said Bob Larson, a veterinarian and professor at Kansas State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine. It could possibly spread from there to live animals here, he said. Although that would require a series of unlikely events to occur, it’s not impossible, he added. “It is probably a pretty small risk,” Larson said, “but the question people are asking is, is that an appropriate amount of risk for the trade benefits we would receive?”

Jürgen Richt, a veterinarian and professor at Kansas State University, agrees that if infection from Brazilian meat were to reach a susceptible animal in the U.S., “yes, we will have a problem.” If that occurred, Richt said, the U.S.
The market rally has increased more than just the value of calves. It’s increased the value of your management, too.

Want to increase your payday next fall? The grazing plans you implement in the next few weeks will have a dramatic impact on the success of your business this year and in years to come. That’s because, in good years and bad, no ranch strategy has a greater influence on your bottom line than grazing management.

Grazing versus feeding. The cattle market rally for the past few months has increased more than just the value of your calves. It’s also dramatically raised the value of your management. For instance, weaned calves are projected to be 30% higher this fall, which means each additional pound you add to these calves through grazing management is worth 30% more than last year. According to university research, feed and forage costs represent 50% to 70% of your annual cow costs, so placing more emphasis on grazing management this fall and raising total cow costs will improve your profitability.

What’s startling about cow operating costs is the wide variation between low-cost producers and high-cost producers. USDA’s Economic Research Service, for instance, found national total operating costs of $833 per cow in 2012. The low-cost producers in that national survey were found in the Gulf Coast region, where cow costs averaged $387 per cow. High-cost producers were found in the Northern Great Plains, where cow costs averaged $884 per cow. It’s no coincidence the nearly $500 difference between low- and high-cost operations is due in large part to the longer grazing season in the Gulf Coast region, compared to the shorter grazing season in the Northern Great Plains.

Even within states, however, dramatic variations are found in cow operating costs. In Kansas, for instance, the Kansas Farm Management Association (KFMA) cow-calf enterprise analysis reports the average cow cost for 2012 was $487 for the 93 ranches participating. “But considerable variability existed as costs ranged from less than $200 per cow to more than $800 per cow,” says Kevin Dhuyvetter, Kansas State University farm management extension specialist. KFMA has compiled data on cow costs for 30 years, but since
Grazing
Continued from Page 26

2009, pasture costs and non-pasture costs have been split to provide a better understanding of how management can affect total costs. Not surprisingly, “producers who rely more on pasture and less on non-pasture feeds tend to have lower or average total feed costs,” Dhuyvetter says. “That’s lower-than-average total feed on non-pasture feeds have tended to be grazed, the remaining pasture.

consistent with the common belief that we should let the cow harvest as much of her feed as possible.” Grazing management. Recognizing that you’ll lower annual cow costs and improve profitability by increasing the number of days your cows graze, however, is just the start to improving your ranch’s grazing program. Range and forage specialists say you must commit to goals that:

• Meet the nutritional needs of your cattle from standing forage for as many days as possible each year.
• Harvest forage as efficiently as possible.

Proper grazing management requires an emphasis on management, and pasture and range-land specialists suggest grazing animals be used in a management intensive or rotational grazing system.

“Grazing management is an art, but it is based in science,” says Jim Gerrish with American Grazing Lands Services LLC in May Idaho. “Livestock intensively graze by nature; only people can intensively manage.” Gerrish, who spent 22 years in forages and grazing systems at the University of Missouri’s Forage Systems Research Center in Lima, Mo., believes ranchers will find many benefits when adopting management intensive grazing practices.

Management intensive grazing or rotational grazing is a system

where livestock graze one portion of a pasture that has been divided into several paddocks. Livestock are systematically moved from paddock to paddock based on the stage of growth of the forages on the objectives of the grazing system. While one paddock is being grazed, the remaining pasture

Grazing management intensive grazing delivers on those promises. ”I have yet to travel to any environment where managed grazing was not being successfully implemented.”

Spring turn-out. Management intensive grazing makes you responsible for more decisions about how your cattle will harvest the forage on your ranch. Rain and grass growth will dictate when cattle are moved and what pastures are rested. The first day of grazing each year for instance, can vary significantly. Research at University of Wisconsin’s Dairy Forage Research Center found substantial reductions in forage production when cows were turned out too early.

“If we turn cows loose when pasture is 4” tall in spring versus waiting until we’re closer to a 12” level, the total seasonal yield of that paddock is reduced by a quarter ton of forage,” says Gene Schriefer, University of Wisconsin Extension ag agent. “With current hay market prices in the $100 to $120 per ton range, we’re losing $25 to $30 per acre in lower forage production from turning out too early, either in lower days grazing or lower stocking rates.” Schriefer says spring turn-out is also influenced by how pastures

were managed last fall. “Fall is the season when grasses are developing buds for next spring,” he says.

“If we grazed tight and forced cattle to clean up the pasture down to a height of 1.5” or less in the fall, we may be grazing next spring’s dormant buds.” He says “This will delay the average 12” growth date by about two weeks. That’s an additional 14- to 16” of bud that we will need to supply or lower head our pasture can carry.” How producers graze their pastures in the spring will have an impact on grass growth in the summer, and hence pastures are grazed in the summer will have an impact on fall forage growth.

“When 50% of the grass is grazed, only 2% to 4% of the roots stop growing,” Schriefer says. “At 60% grazed, 50% of the roots stop growing. As we get above 75% defoliation, 100% of the roots stop growing.” Grazing and genetics. Forage specialists and many ranchers

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THE VIRGINIA CATTLEMAN—APRIL 2014—PAGE 27
How You Feed Impacts AI Success; Gaining Diets Improve Results

Scott Lake, Beef Cattle Extension Specialist at the University of Wyoming and the primary author listed on the report, told audiences at the Range Beef Cow Symposium where the paper was presented, “A drop to a maintenance diet can put them on a negative plane of nutrition immediately after AI, and it can result in lower pregnancy rates.”

The researchers hypothesized that maintaining the same plane of gain-focused nutrition used before insemination through to at least day 25 post-insemination would result in an increase to first service conception rates. The results of their experiment seem to support their hypothesis. The experiment took several groups of heifers in a couple different locations and fed them on a gain diet on drylot. Following insemination, the original groups were broken into groups of three based on different nutritional planes.

One group at each location was kept on the gain feeding diet used pre-breeding, or 125 percent of maintenance requirements. A second group was put on a maintenance diet of 100 percent maintenance requirements, and the third was put on a losing diet of 80 percent maintenance requirements. At the end of the experiment, the 21-day post-insemination data for the paper was analyzed. The test groups were combined due to small sample numbers at the different test locations: University of Wyoming and Purdue University.

The results of the study, which was supported by past similar studies, showed a notable increase in conception rates for the heifers on a gain diet. The gain-fed heifers, which gained between 4.4-2.9 pounds of gain per day over an average, had a combined AI pregnancy rate of 77.4 percent. The maintenance diet heifers had a combined AI pregnancy rate of 86.3 percent, and the losing heifers had a combined AI pregnancy rate of 60.8 percent.

Lake noted at the symposium when presenting the data that the diets had an impact on second service conception rates, as well. “To me, what’s even just as telling, if we didn’t get them bred in that first cycle, our second service conception rates were terrible.” According to the data Lake presented, combined second service conception rates were 58.3 percent for the gain-fed group, 23.8 percent for the maintenance-fed group, and 35 percent for the lose-fed group.

“I know that’s an obvious thing but what we’re talking about is that if you didn’t get them bred the first time, then you’re not getting them bred the second time either. So it could have tremendous impact in setting us back. When we talk about AI programs, that’s an investment.”

The experiment also included an embryo quality portion with a different, though similarly treated, group of heifers. At South Dakota State University and the University of Minnesota, heifers that were similarly fed a gaining diet before being AI’d, then switched to one of two losing groups; gain or lose. At six days post-insemination, the embryos were flushed using non-surgical methods and examined for quality.

“The examination of the recovered embryos showed that embryos from the gaining fed heifers were larger, higher quality, at a more advanced state of development, and had fewer dead cells than did the embryos of losing heifers.”

“These results suggest that the early embryo, oviduct, and uterus are sensitive to immediate changes in nutrition,” the researchers concluded. “It is proposed that the immediate retardation of embryonic development observed is likely responsible for reduced pregnancy rates due to an inability of the embryo to successfully signal maternal recognition of pregnancy at later stages of development.”

“We’re having a huge impact in how we feed these cattle. If we go from a feedlot diet to grass, that change is huge and metabolically speaking, we’re causing a huge train wreck,” said Lake to the symposium audience in closing. “Unquestionably, nutrition impacts reproduction. We know that we’re affecting those embryos in as little as six days of diet change.”

— Kerry Halladay, WLJ Editor
VBIC Provides In-Depth Understanding Of Beef Industry

Valerie Van Dyke

At the end of March, VBIC brought a dozen retail influencers on a farm-to-fork beef camp at Virginia Tech. These sales reps and meat merchandisers work with many independent retailers throughout the state and are responsible for selling beef to these stores, providing merchandising information, and being a beef resource for store owners.

Beef camp attendees began at the Virginia Tech Beef Center to learn about the beef lifecycle, cattle diets, and the technology used during production to help produce high-quality beef. They then participated in a merchandising class to educate the group on the value of beef in retail and some specific techniques in working with some of their largest ethnic groups: Hispanic & Korean. Following the classroom session, attendees competed in a group Cook-Off by preparing three stir-fry inspired beef recipes for lunch. Reps went on a feedlot tour via FaceTime video conference with the Nebraska Beef Council, and concluded their day with a meat-cutting workshop at the Virginia Tech Meat Center.

The goal of foodservice and retail driven beef camps is to enhance the knowledge and confidence of those responsible for educating many people on the importance of beef in a healthy diet. Attendees are measured through a pre-assessment survey and again after the camp. In addition to increasing awareness about cattle production and beef cuts, attendees are also informed about how to answer hot-button issues such as antibiotic use and questions surrounding beef options such as grass-fed or natural.

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Brazil

Continued from Page 28

and mad cow disease “is one of the most contagious agents in the animal kingdom.” It is so efficient and dangerous, said Richt, who also directs the Department of Homeland Security’s Center of Excellence for Emerging and Zoonotic Animal Diseases at K-State, that U.S. officials are aware of its potential as a weapon of terrorism.

Some think importing fresh beef from Brazil could help shore up sagging U.S. supplies and help drive down sky-high beef prices in the U.S. “There are clear economic signals to pursue importing more beef,” said Glynn Tonsor, an agricultural economist at Kansas State. However, the amount anticipated by the Brazilian proposal, at least at this point, is miniscule. The USDA says it anticipates somewhere between 20,000 and 65,000 metric tons of Brazilian beef would come into the U.S. — less than a 1 percent increase in total U.S. beef imports.

Bill Bullard, head of the Montana-based Ranchers-Cattlemen Action Legal Fund, said he thinks the real driver behind the proposal is JBS, S.A., a Brazilian beef company that has set up shop in the U.S. Bullard, whose group believes big packers and foreign beef are driving small ranchers out of business, said the USDA is just “kowtowing” to JBS, the world’s largest beef producer and the third largest U.S. beef packer. “JBS wants to import higher-risk cattle and beef into the United States, without regard to the well-being of the U.S. cattle industry and the safety of U.S. consumers,” Bullard said. He thinks JBS, which contributes large amounts to U.S. and Brazilian politicians and which benefits from Brazilian government loans, is at least partly behind the Brazilian government’s push for the proposal. USDA officials said JBS did not lobby them over the issue, and the company denies they are behind the initiative. The company said in a statement Friday that it “played no role whatsoever in this negotiation process between two sovereign governments.” The company added that it supports “transparent, predictable international trading conditions based on sound science. We believe any effort to eliminate trade barriers ... and enhance cooperation between our two countries is a positive for the people of both Nations.” Bullard and others note, however, that JBS and Brazil have had their share of trade and import problems.

Last year, Brazilian officials acknowledged a two-year delay in reporting an “atypical” BSE-positive cow in that nation’s beef herd, which would have stopped exports to many countries. Brazilian officials blamed the delay on a “logistical anomaly” at its laboratory. And in 2010, the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service recalled 258,000 pounds of cooked beef from a Chicago-based JBS plant. The beef had been imported from Brazil despite a U.S. ban on such imports because of high levels of vermicides, a drug used to control intestinal worms in cattle.

2014 Richmond Southern Women’s Show

Virginia’s beef producers were well represented at the Richmond Southern Women’s Show in March. The show traditionally attracts nearly 20,000 women (and men) from the greater Richmond area. At the beef booth visitors received new recipes and ideas for preparing beef, potholders, spice packs and signed up to win a summer grilling pack including a $25 beef certificate redeemable at their local meat department. They also enjoyed tasting microwavable beef pot roast and shredded beef while asking a variety of questions about beef from cooking issues to concerns about beef nutrition and safety. The crowd also enjoyed a demonstration on the cooking stage where they learned how to prepare quick, easy and nutritious beef dishes.

Virginia Beef Council • P.O. Box 9 • Daleville, VA 24083 • 540.992.1992
Cow slaughter this year combined with record high fed cattle/wholesale beef prices has led to a sharp appreciation in the price of lean grinding beef. On February 26th, the benchmark 90CL boneless beef price, central US basis, was quoted at an all-time high of $206.60/cwt, 16% higher than a year earlier and about 31% higher than the market low last fall. The sharp appreciation in the value of lean grinding beef has significant cost implications for a wide range of US end users, both on the retail and foodservice end. Most US beef is consumed in ground form and costings for ground beef for the largest fast food companies in the US are benchmarked, in part, off the lean grinding beef component. It is something that is watched closely each day and directly impacts the bottom line of some of the best known names in the food industry.

So what is happening with lean grinding beef and what are the implications for the market going forward? First of all, it is important to recognize the seasonal aspect with Asian markets for a shrinkage in demand once weather warms up possibly large spreads but not completely unprecedented. The rally in the lean beef market so far has been driven by cuts in domestic supply, high priced fed beef and retail demand. The big wild card is what happens with foodservice demand once weather warms up and consumers start moving around for their ground beef packages.

Different from retailers, who tend to include imported grinding beef in their ground beef packages, foodservice operators have no problem using frozen lean beef. The implementation of COOL rules, which only apply to retail labels, has further limited the use of imported grinding beef at retail outlets. The fact that retailers are now much more reluctant to include imported grinding beef due to the excessive COOL regulation certainly makes for a more explosive domestic lean beef market. Also, keep in mind that the removal of Lean Finely Textured Beef, which was an extra lean component, further has increased the demand for domestic lean grinding beef. As a result, the spread between imported and domestic lean beef now stands at almost 40 cents per pound and when you account for freight to move lean beef to either East or West Coast, the spread between imported and domestic may be as high as 45-50 cents per pound. These are some incredibly large spreads but not completely unprecedented. The rally in the lean beef market so far has been driven by cuts in domestic supply, high priced fed beef and retail demand. The big wild card is what happens with foodservice demand once weather warms up and consumers start moving around for their ground beef packages.

When considering the spike in prices has come much further than expected and given the seasonal tendency, prices could climb even further in March and April. Imported beef supplies have increased modestly but so far the rally has been driven by retailers. We could see demand for lean imported beef increase significantly in the spring, especially if foodservice demand recovers. For now, end users remain rattled by grinding beef prices that now are double what they were paying less than 5 years ago.

When considering the spike in the price of US lean grinding beef, the role that imported beef plays in the overall US supply picture needs consideration as well. Most of imported beef coming into the US, especially beef from Australia, New Zealand, Uruguay and Central America, tends to be lean grinding beef. Traditionally, this supply has accounted for a significant portion of the overall US lean grinding beef supply, especially for US fast food operators. Different from retailers, who tend to prefer fresh lean grinding beef for their ground beef packages, foodservice operators have no problem using frozen lean beef. The implementation of COOL, which only apply to retail labels, has further limited the use of imported grinding beef at retail outlets. The fact that retailers are now much more reluctant to include imported grinding beef due to the excessive COOL regulations certainly makes for a more explosive domestic lean beef market. Also, keep in mind that the removal of Lean Finely Textured Beef, which was an extra lean component, further has increased the demand for domestic lean grinding beef. As a result, the spread between imported and domestic lean beef now stands at almost 40 cents per pound and when you account for freight to move lean beef to either East or West Coast, the spread between imported and domestic may be as high as 45-50 cents per pound. These are some incredibly large spreads but not completely unprecedented. The rally in the lean beef market so far has been driven by cuts in domestic supply, high priced fed beef and retail demand. The big wild card is what happens with foodservice demand once weather warms up and consumers start moving around for their ground beef packages.

China is also now the top market for Uruguay. A stronger US dollar and high grinding beef prices normally should lead to an increase in US beef exports. COOL rules, however, will likely keep the spread between domestic and imported quite large. And if Australia supplies slow down, maybe higher prices may be required to successfully compete with Asian markets for a shrinking supply.

Now when will Brazil start shipping to the US?
According to the data reported by the USDA last month, the total number of cattle feeding operations in the U.S. dropped again last year by 2,010 operations and now totals 73,090 feedlots. The number of cattle feeding operations has declined or been flat in each of the last 11 years since 2003. Furthermore, compared to 2002, the last year to show an increase in feedyard numbers, the total number of U.S. cattle feeding operations has declined by over 22,000 operations. Nearly all of the feedyards removed from operation last year and since 2002 are feedyards with 1,000 head or less one-time capacity.

Over the last several years, the feedyard consolidation has led to a higher percentage of the U.S. fed cattle supply being marketed through the larger capacity yards. Interestingly, even with the decline in the number of feedyards under 1,000 head capacity last year, their percentage of the total U.S. marketings actually increased from 11.5 percent to 12.3 percent. The percent of marketings in feedyards with capacities from 1,000 head to 22,000 head were mostly flat to lower in 2013, while feedyards with 50,000 plus capacity increased their marketing share from 32.8% in 2012 to 34.3% last year.

The net result of the smaller feedyards shutting down is the continued trend of cattle feeding consolidation. The amount of capital required to operate has increased substantially in recent years – with record high cattle prices, the value of a fed steer has increased 70-90% in just the last five years and has more than doubled since 2002. Additionally, a continued declining cow herd has resulted in strong competition between feedyards trying to maintain profitable occupancy levels. These conditions will continue to be major factors in the cattle feeding industry as available cattle supplies are not expected to increase until late 2015 and into 2016.

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Drones Await FAA Clearance To Serve Farmers

Drones are poised to go from the battlefield to the cornfield. But first the FAA needs to clear a path. The high-flying unmanned devices are best known for their use in providing aerial intelligence and striking lethal blows in hostile war-time situations, often causing controversy as in the not-so-long-ago report of an attack on a wedding party in Yemen that killed 12 and wounded 15. Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos has talked about using drones to deliver packages in the U.S., something that seems several other sensors, over their own land, as long as they avoid “careless and reckless operations,” explained an FAA spokesman. The idea of every farmer owning his or her own drone for such uses is not practical, however. A small, approximately 16-pound device available for private farm use can run from $1000 to $12,000, though a simple drone can be as cheap as a few hundred dollars. Also, as Price noted, farmers are not experts, nor can the status of farmland be the next big thing in farming.

A joint venture of yawning unmanned vehicles International, the group that represents drone manufacturers, suggests that precision agriculture has the potential to account for about 30 percent of all civilian uses of these devices by 2020. The remaining 70 percent of use largely could come from public safety applications, such as search-and-rescue operations, the group says. Domestic drones could be a $13 billion industry by 2017, creating 70,240 jobs, the AUVSI report predicts. Other countries already allow drones to perform all of the uses envisioned for farmers. In Japan, drones have been in use for more than 20 years, spraying pesticides and gathering information from fields. More than 2,500 Yamaha RMAX helicopters are now being flown over 2.5 million acres of rice fields in the country. The Western Farm Press reports. But drones have yet to make much of an appearance over U.S. fields. Why? Kevin Price, a professor of agriculture at Kansas State University. Blamed the FAA. “FAA regulations have basically put the United States behind by 20 years as compared to other countries,” he said. Under an exemption for model air-craft, the FAA’s currently does allow farmers to fly small, information-gathering drones, which are just large enough to hold a camera and range of pot
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Drones

Continued from Page 33

Do they want to be experts on the technology. "Farmers are farmers because they like farming... they aren't image sensing specialists," he said.

But the FAA makes renting a drone to fly over another farm's land much more difficult. It requires a commercial license, which must be approved on a case-by-case basis by the administrator, as well as a certified aircraft and a licensed pilot. Additionally, for crop spraying, a farmer must have operational approval, which requires the aircraft to maintain at least a restricted category-type certificate. To date, only one operation has met these commercial criteria: a flight coordinated jointly by the oil giant ConocoPhillips and several federal and international agencies to view marine mammals and survey ice in the Arctic Circle. The drone and agriculture industries are pushing for FAA to allow the technology to be used for commercial purposes in the national airspace, dropping the current system that allows them only under seldom-granted exceptions.

The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, signed by President Barack Obama in February 2012, requires FAA to fully integrate the use of drones into the national airspace by September 2015. However, FAA officials have long hedged on how to accomplish that aim, and have said it is unlikely they will meet that deadline. The hesitancy by FAA to allowing the widespread use of commercial drones comes down to a question of safety, said Michael Toscano, AVUS's president. "The FAA is only responsible for two things: Basically anything that goes into the national airspace has to be able to see and avoid other things in the national airspace and not fall out of the national airspace," Toscano said. "Flying more UASes into the national airspace only increases the congestion of FAA... which gets none of the benefits of the technology and is only brought in when something goes bad."

However, agricultural uses of the technology presents relatively low-risk application that could pave the way for more broad adoption. Toscano added. "The low-hanging fruit for this technology is going to be precision agriculture, because in the middle of 100 acres of corn, safety isn’t an issue," Toscano said. "Flying these vehicles over a corn field is much less risky than flying one over New York City."

"I think it’s just an overly cautious approach to this thing," agreed Price. "They need to go ahead and open up the rural areas with people can start using these things... the risk is just so low; that for the FAA to keep holding this up is really aggravating."

But the FAA set it sitting still. It has approved six test sites for the purpose of conducting research on domestic drone use, seeking information on their safety, command and control issues, their capability to detect and avoid other airborne objects, and their potential effects on populations and the environment. "Meeting the challenges for realizing this potential will take a concerted effort and must achieve the requisite balance of maximizing the technological benefits, while maintaining safety and efficiency of the national airspace," Michael Huerta, FAA administrator, testified to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation during a Jan. 15 hearing on domestic drone use.

Meanwhile, farmers are enthusiastic to incorporate drones into their production practices. Price said he gets about three to four requests per week to talk about drones' agricultural applications at agriculture-related events. "The first questions out of their mouths are how much do they cost and where can I buy one," Price said. "There is tremendous interest — I’ve never seen anything like it."

"Especially for high-value crops such as sugar beets and potatoes, this is a big deal," said North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. "I always look at this as not only being more effective but being more efficient," Goehring said. "There are so many applications that can be utilized with this. I think it can really help agriculture." "We are very supportive of them for use in agriculture," said Mary Kay Thatcher, senior director of congressional relations for the American Farm Bureau Federation. However, the agriculture industry does have its own concerns about drones. Farmers worry, in particular, about the unmanned surveillance devices being used by EPA and other agencies to enforce regulations while violating their privacy. Drones should be governed in such a way that "they are used properly... We want to make sure that the land owner has given the person who's flying permission to gain data," Thatcher said. In the summer of 2012, rumor spread that EPA was using drones to spy on Midwest corn farms to look for Clean Water Act violations. Though the story was debunked, the agricultural community is still so concerned that it has pushed lawmakers in Missouri, Iowa and Maryland to introduce bills this year that would require a warrant or consent from farm owners before government agencies can use drones to inspect their facilities."
Getting A Grasp On Meat Labels

Spend any amount of time in a grocery store and you’ll see foods labeled in separate categories. Organic, all-natural, naturally raised, grass-fed and grain-fed labels supply shelves and meat counters. While each one of those categories has its own market, confusion can occur on what defines qualifications for the label.

Organic

“Organically labeled meat means that the animal’s diet can consist of any grain or forage product as long as those feed items are certified organic,” says University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator Lindsay Chichester. “This program is the most strict with the most guidelines, and is governed by the USDA’s National Organic Program (NOP).”

According to the most recent Organic Market Overview, this niche market is gaining steam in sales and now takes up more than 3 percent of U.S. food sales. For a meat product to qualify as certified organic, livestock must live an antibiotic and hormone-free life (all food naturally contains hormones, this refers to administered). In addition, feed resources are also regulated. “To be certified organic, a grain or forage resource must not have had synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, irradiation applied, or had genetically engineered products produced on that ground in three or more years,” she says.

Something that has potential to confuse consumers is that organic only certifies the livestock’s feed resources, not the finished product. This means that colorant products can be added to the meat during processing.

Chichester is also quick to point out that there is no research confirming organic foods are healthier than conventionally raised foods. Because of lack of preservative use, organically grown products have the possibility of increased contamination of bacteria, parasite and pathogens. “However, people who may have food allergies, chemical allergies, or intolerance to preservatives may prefer organic food products,” she says. “Additionally, organically produced strawberries, corn, and mintberries may be higher in antioxidants than the conventionally raised form.”

All-natural

“All-natural meat, poultry, and eggs that carry the ‘natural’ label cannot be altered during processing, this would include the addition of artificial ingredients (spices, marinades, sauces, etc.), the addition of colorants, the additional of chemical preservatives, making the meat minimally processed,” says Chichester. Unlike all-natural, naturally raised beef must be raised without growth hormones and antibiotics and must be certified by USDA’s Agricultural Market Service. The meat product is also minimally processed and does not contain artificial ingredients or colorants.
William David Wampler

William David “Bill” Wampler of Bridgewater, a local and national leader in the poultry and beef cattle industries whose civic involvements included higher education, 4-H, Future Farmers of America and church work, died March 14, 2014 at the age of 85. Mr. Wampler was born April 9, 1928, a son of the late Charles W. Wampler Sr. and Zola H. Wampler. His father pioneered the modern poultry industry, establishing the legacy that his family has maintained through the decades.

Mr. Wampler is survived by his wife, the former Bonnie Lou May, whom he married on Sept. 22, 1951. Also surviving are a daughter, Melinda Wampler Smith of Lagana Hills, Calif.; a son, Dr. Charles W. Wampler II and his wife Van of Birmingham, Mich.; four grandchildren, Nathan A. Smith and wife Barbara and Eric R. Smith, all of Lagana Hills, Calif., and Megan N. Wampler and Anne C. Smith, all of Laguna Hills, Calif.; a brother, Charles W. Wampler Jr. of Harrisonburg; two sisters, Elizabeth W. Coaster of Hinton and Margaret W. Strate of Harrisonburg. In addition to his parents, he was preceded by two children, William “David” Wampler Jr. and Suzanne Wampler Massie; four sisters, Catherine W. Bowser, Ruth W. Clark, Edna W. Logan and Zola Farley Bowser; and a brother, Donald H. Wampler and served as the first president of the Rockingham County Sheep and Wool Producers’ Association. The Wamplers’ herd of Charolais sheep at one time was believed to be Charles Wampler Sr. to be the largest herd of that breed east of the Mississippi River.

Mr. Wampler served as president of the Virginia Angus Association and twice had the top three Angus bulls at the Culpeper Bull Test Station. He served the Virginia State Poultry Federation as president in 1960, after receiving its Distinguished Service Award in 1962. He was president of the National Turkey Federation in 1960 and was a speaker at numerous state turkey conventions, including those in Missouri, Texas and Utah. While serving on the Stanoton Production Credits Association and the Stanoton Land Bank Association, he was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the Federal Farm Credit Board and was its chairman in 1986. Early, he had been an advisor to Orville Freeman, secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

Bill Wampler’s leadership skills were evident early in his life. He was elected president of his Dayton High School Class of 1946 three times and served as permanent class president, organizing an annual reunion each year since graduating. His high school basketball team had three undefeated seasons. He was president of the Future Farmers of America chapter for three years, served on the state FFA executive committee, won the state public speaking contest and earned all of the FFA degrees, including the top one, the American Farmer Degree. A member of the 4-H club as a youth, he served as state 4-H president in 1947. Both he and his wife Bonnie Lou continued as active supporters of 4-H and received state and national recognition for their involvement. Mr. Wampler attended Bridgewater College from 1944-48 and graduated from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 1950 with a Bachelor of Science degree in poultry husbandry.

Now a life member of the Bridge¬water College Board of Trustees, he has served on the board since 1983 and chaired one of the college’s major fundraising campaigns, Projection 21, which exceeded its $40 million goal by more than $8 million. The college recognized him with its Outstanding Service Award in 2000, and one of the college’s Wampler Towers, a student residence complex, was dedicated in recognition of Mr. Wampler and his wife. As a student at Virginia Tech, he was elected to four honorary fraternities. As a Tech alumnus, he served on the advisory commit¬tee for the Department of Poultry and Animal Science and on an advisory committee to the dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. He and his wife received the U.S. Poultry & Egg Association award which recognizes philanthropic support. Both Bridgewater College and Virginia Tech athletics have been beneficiaries of the Wamplers’ loyalty.

Many community programs and institutions also benefited from his involvement and generosity. He served on the foundation and operating boards of the Bridgewater Retirement Community, where he and Mrs. Wampler were co-chairs of the campaign to build the Wampler Assisted Living Building. In addition to his generosity to Bridgewater College and Virginia Tech, he provided major support to Rockingham Memorial Hospital, the Valley Bankers-Massanutten Heritage Center, Habitat for Hu¬manity, the Rockingham County Fair and United Way. Mr. Wampler joined the Dayton Ruritan Club in 1955 and served as its president in 1959. He was a member of the Harrisonburg RPSE Elks Lodge 490, the ACCA Temple Shrine and the Valley Shrine Club as well as a 32nd degree mason in the Masonic-Europa Lodge No. 0195. He and Mrs. Wampler traveled widely and also enjoyed hosting international visitors and farm-city-essay couples in their home.

As a long-time member of Dayton Church of the Brethren, he served in many capacities, including as a dea¬con, trustee, board member and on the stewardship commission. After retiring from the farm and moving to Bridgewater, in 2013 he joined the Bridgewater Church of the Brethren, where a memorial service was com¬ducted 210 W. Duke St., March 25, 2014. Mr. Wampler requested that, in lieu of flowers, memorial dona¬tions may be made to Bridgewater Retirement Community, 302 N. Second St., Bridgewater, VA 22812.
What Will The Future Of Preconditioning Look Like?

Heather Hamilton Maude

Preconditioning has been utilized since the 1960s. It's commonly defined as having calves weaned for three weeks, bank broke, and on a comprehensive health program. But what else is encompassed under the ideal definition of preconditioning, and what impacts and expectations will face the cow-calf producer who chooses to utilize the management tool in the future?

Darr Feedlot Inc., in Cozad, NE, feeds about 100,000 head of cattle annually. Partner Craig Uden has successfully preconditioned all of his herd for 20 years. He bases his statement on data derived from the tracking system Darr Feedlot has on all cattle fed in this facility. The system provides real-time information on animals, and data-based decision making is a priority to improving health outcomes. Darr Feedlot has on all cattle fed in this facility. The system provides real-time information on animals, and data-based decision making is a priority to improving health outcomes.

"Preconditioning demands additional progress, particularly in the areas of health, accountability and transparency. "Independence is cattleman's greatest asset, but it's also their greatest challenge. We have to communicate and acknowledge that we aren't the cow-calf, feedlot or seedstock producers, but food producers. That has never been more important than today," Uden says.

The push for improved communication is driven both by the need to maximize returns and the fact that today's consumers want transparency. "We have too much cost in these cattle to be duplicating unnecessarily," Uden notes. Such duplication is also of concern to many consumers, who are pushing for a reduction of vaccine and/or antibiotic use in livestock production. Uden says more inter-sector communication would better enable the beef industry to combat activist groups as well as implement a more consumer-favored "holistic" approach to raising cattle. "We'll need to focus more on nutrition going forward, and less on drugs," he adds.

Overall, herd health on a year-round basis is where the production of a healthier feeder animal that can maximize available nutrition and minimize the need for drugs begins. "Preconditioning health starts pre-calving through managing the lifecycle of the cow. Those people that do a better job with their cows have a much tighter trend-up and they're giving shots on time in the spring," Uden says. Uden says his operation has traced many problems to calves that weren't vaccinated in the spring. "Those spring shots are more important than what's given in the fall. I still want the calves given shots in the fall because they won't have enough immunity once they leave the cow and meet that stress without them. However, those branding-day vaccinations will result in fewer health problems in that calf's future," he says. While improved health management across an entire herd will result in fewer health issues in a given calf crop, it's hardly a catch-all that will prevent any and all sickness.

"I'm not saying calves won't get sick in the future, as we know it sometimes will be 60° above on a Monday and 40° on Wednesday, and those cattle have to live through that stress. But when cattle do get sick, those that are managed well throughout that cow's life cycle tend to respond better to one shot. That's a real benefit and value for us," he explains. Uden bases his statement on data derived from the tracking system Darr Feedlot has on all cattle fed in this facility. The system provides real-time information on animals, and data-based decision making is a priority to improving health outcomes.
Preconditioning

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arriving at our facilities because there’s nothing more frustrating than you doing your job and me doing mine and a bad trucking job putting those cattle in jeopardy,” Uden says.

However, that doesn’t change the fact that, in some instances, the basics aren’t being adequately covered at the ranch level. A quality vaccination program is a must in getting cattle started right. That means not only proper timing and dosage but ensuring that vaccine products are handled correctly to maximize their effectiveness. Learning to handle cattle in a low-stress manner on foot is another, as are good facilities. These are additional key components of management that will pay back in dividends, perhaps to a larger degree in the future than has ever been witnessed in the past, he says. “As there is more pressure from above, as in government entities or consumer advocates, I think adhering to Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) guidelines, and being able to tell people this is a BQA facility will be instrumental,” says Uden of where he sees the future of accountability regarding basic management decisions heading. Utilizing DNA technology, as it becomes more accurate and affordable to identify and produce animals with the highest degree of disease resistance, is another future preconditioning tool that Uden suggests producers begin familiarizing themselves with today.

For those within the cow-calf segment, Uden says. “We feed 100,000 to the highest degree possible. We feed 100,000 head of beef and we can find the good ones. Right now, the market is really good, but we are still seeing a $10-$20/cwt. difference in cattle. The reason is that the guys who are managing their cows and the entire program, and telling the story of what they’re doing and passing that on to the second owner of those cattle, are making more money. Right now, if you’re talking $20/cwt. from high to low on 500-weight calves and you sell 100 of them, that’s a $100 bill each or an additional $10,000 you could have had,” Uden says.

Managing herd health year-round, optimizing and balancing costs (vs. focusing on simply being low cost), striving for prevention over responsive treatment, and implementing low-stress handling to the highest degree possible on all key strategies that will be demanded in exchange for that additional $10/bill going forward. “Change is ongoing. If you don’t like change, you’re in the wrong business, and I think consumers will drive that change. That pressure is down to the cow-calf level regarding preconditioning, a significant increase in return is attainable. “We feed 100,000

INGREDIENTS

1. 1 pound Ground Beef
2. 1/4 cup beer
3. 2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
4. 1/4 cup beer
5. 4 slices reduced-fat Cheddar cheese
6. 4 extra-thick slices Maplewood smoked bacon, cut in half, cooked crisp

MAPLE-BACON BEER BURGER

• Total Recipe Time: 20 to 25 minutes
• Makes 4 servings

Test Kitchen Tip

Cooking times are for fresh or thoroughly thawed Ground Beef. Color is not a reliable indicator of Ground Beef doneness.

1. Combine Ground Beef, beer and Worcestershire sauce in medium bowl, mixing lightly but thoroughly. Shape into four 1/2-inch thick patties.
2. Place patties on grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill, covered, 8 to 15 minutes (over medium heat on preheated gas grill, 7 to 9 minutes) until instant-read thermometer inserted horizontally into center registers 160°F, turning occasionally. About 2 minutes before burgers are done, place buns, cut-side down, on grid. Grill until lightly toasted. During last minute of grilling, top each burger with cheese.
3. Place burgers on bottom of buns; top with bacon slices. Close sandwiches.

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