**Delta & Franklin Agriculture Newsletter**

**Free Fertilizer and Irrigation Water**

This is a claim some companies are using in an effort to get rid of waste water from local plants. The companies have a contract with food industry plants to remove all their waste. They then offer farmers this waste in the form of a fertilizer and irrigation water which will be drilled or injected into their farm or pasture land. The landowner is asked to sign a contract allowing the disposal company to dispose of the waste on their property. Once you sign the contract you have committed yourself to take a certain amount of the material. I have heard of many landowner issues arising from these contracts, everything from runoff due to over application of the product, to property damage. My biggest concern is that the analysis I have seen of the products show very little nutritive value and considerable heavy metal content. It also appears that the landowner becomes responsible for the product on his property, which means any complaints to Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) or the EPA are the landowner’s problem not the disposal companies. So make sure you are fully educated on exactly what and how much of the product you would be contracted to take. Also, work out all other issues like closing gates, damage repairs, etc. I would encourage you to talk with other experts before signing any contracts allowing permission to any group to dump, drill, and inject any recycled waste on your property. This waste has to go somewhere, and recycling it through the soil is a noble idea, but you need to be careful that it does not become a potential liability to you and your farm.

**Farm Family Living Expenses Continue to Climb**

Cost of living expenses continue to rise at a very fast pace. In a recent article in the Corn & Soybean Digest, Mr. David Kohl points out that in Nebraska the average cost of living for a farm family of 3.3 people in 2010 is $79,250, compared to $65,213 in 2009, $66,126 in 2008, and $33,749 back in 2001. The average farm family living cost has more than doubled in the past decade. Mr. Kohl points out that while family living expenses are currently approaching $80,000.00, in 1986 they were $20,000.00: and in 1967 they were $4000.00. This is an amazing increase and shows no sign of decreasing in the near future. These figures do not include Social Security or taxes which are certainly not diminishing.

**How Will You Feed This Winter?**

This year, this is the $60,000.00 question for all cattle producers. While we have fared much better than most of the state, our hay production is still probably about 1/3rd or less of what it should be. So, if you depend solely on hay to get through the winter, unless you had a really good first cutting, you may be up a creek. Everyone will need to take a look and a pencil to their options.

With the current prices, selling out is very tempting and may be the best bet, but one day it will rain and you will need to restock, and you can bet good cattle will be very high. I certainly recommend culling very hard; with weigh cow prices being what they are, you should get rid of any less productive or problem cattle.

Another way to lessen your hay and feed bill is to wean early and sell any calves over 350 lbs. Today at OKC 350 lb steer calves are bringing an average of 1.70/lb, heifers are bringing 1.45/lb, which is $595.00 for a 350 lb steer calf and $507.00 for a 350 lb heifer calf. That is more than we have made on 500 and 600 lb calves most years. It takes a lot less to feed a dry cow than a cow with a nursing growing calf. This will also give those cows a chance to put on a few pounds before going into the winter. There is no worse wreck in a drought than waiting until October to wean and then having to try to feed a bunch of thin cattle through the winter. It is just not profitable or practical.

Many of you are considering planting small grains for grazing this winter. This is a very good option, but you can expect to pay a premium for seed this fall if you can even find seed. If you are planning on going this route you should start locating seed now. While I love good winter pasture, this may not be the year to put all your faith and resources in it. The Climate Prediction Center predicts drought conditions to persist or intensify throughout most of Texas through at least the end of September. But, they are not always right and we should catch enough fall and winter rains to provide some grazing from winter pastures, just do not count on this to be your only potential winter feed source.

With the predicted and potential future cattle prices, purchasing hay from out of state or elsewhere maybe economically feasible. I would not normally suggest paying high prices and bringing in hay, but the cattle market looks pretty positive for the next couple of years, so if buying a little hay helps you retain your herd nucleus then it maybe another option to consider.

Feed cost will be high, but some feeding of grain can help to stretch hay and grazing. Just shop around there can be quite a difference in feed cost. Buying bulk will always save you a little money. If you do not have overhead bins there are other options like the big seed and flour bags or other containers, just watch out for rodents. Buying troughs and feeding loose feed or corn could be cheaper than feeding cubes in the long run.

There are no quick and easy answers for getting through droughts and the winters that follow. You should consider all your options and use a variety of tools and methods to lessen your risk and increase the potential for profit even in a bad situation.

**What Does a Beef Cow Really Need???**

I am including a very basic chart of what you can expect the dry matter intake to be for your beef cattle. You can use this as a starting point to help determine how much hay, silage or pasture you will need to get through the winter. Please understand this is a very basic chart and intake will be affected by weather conditions and other factors.

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| **Table 1. Forage Intake Capacity of Beef Cows1** |
| **Forage Type and Maturity** | **Stage of Production** | **Forage Dry Matter Intake Capacity (% of body weight)** |
| **Low quality forage (< 52% total digestible nutrients)** | Non-lactating | 1.8 |
| Lactating | 2.2 |
| **Average quality forage (52 to 59% total digestible nutrients)** | Non-lactating | 2.2 |
| Lactating | 2.5 |
| **High quality forage (> 59% total digestible nutrients)** | Non-lactating | 2.5 |
| Lactating | 2.7 |
| **Lush, growing pasture** | Non-lactating | 2.5 |
| Lactating | 2.7 |
| **Silage** | Non-lactating | 2.5 |
| Lactating | 2.7 |
| 1 Intake estimates assume that protein requirements are met in the total diet. When protein requirements are not met, forage intake will be lower than the values in the table. Source: Hibbard and Thrift, 1992. |

**Upcoming Events:**

We have some very good educational programs being offered in the next few weeks. Please see back for more information.

**Livestock Predator Management Seminar**

Tuesday, July 26th

9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Community Exhibit Building

Lamar County Fairground, Paris

Registration - $15.00 per head

Please RSVP by July 22 by calling 903-395-4400 ext. 230 or 903-537-4017

Three hours of continuing education (1 L&R, 1IPM, 1 General) available to private pesticide license holders attending. Those participants testing for M-44 certification will not receive the continuing education.

This course is designed to teach management tactics and strategies for the safe and effective reduction of livestock losses, primarily to predatory animals. Both non -lethal and lethal methods will be presented as well as instruction for certification of individuals in the use of sodium cyanide dispensed by the M-44 device. Those wanting the M-44 designation on their pesticide license will test following lunch.

**Discussion Luncheon**

**Antibiotic Residues in Meat and Milk**

**Surveillance Affects You**

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Wednesday, Aug 10, 2011

11:30 A.M. – 1:00 P.M.

Wood County Extension Office

618 South Main St.

Quitman, TX.

Discussion led by Dr. Ellen Jordan

Professor and Extension Dairy Specialist

Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Lunch provided by Pfizer to those that RSVP:

 Please call either office by August 8, 2011 to RSVP.

 Franklin office- 903-537-4017, Delta office 903-395-4400 ext. 230

Michael Berry CEA-Ag. Delta & Franklin Counties