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AGRIVIEW

By: Rick Hirsch
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The nation's beef cattle producers are in expansion mode and record-high prices have likely seen a top, according to a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service livestock marketing economist.

Dr. David Anderson says over the long term, we are continuing to expand and prices are coming down from record highs because we are expanding herds. We are starting to increase supplies and calf prices have been coming down. However, we will still see high prices since it will take some time to build our inventory back up.

Beef demand continues to be strong and this has helped during times of record retail prices.

There is a huge growth in these specialized burger restaurants. This coincides with one of the fewest supplies of cows in several decades. The second driver is the popularity of Texas style barbecue. We've seen huge growth in barbecue restaurants nationwide. This comes at a time when we've also got the fewest cows. Overall, this is the strongest demand for beef in 25 years.

Looking ahead to future cattle prices, there are currently 2 percent more cows and 2 percent more calves in the U. S. than a year ago.

Through 2017, he has every quarter of the year projected with more beef production than the year before. He says we can continue to look for strong cattle prices and positive-side demand for beef.

Recently declines in calf and cattle prices are largely due to record-high cattle weights resulting in more beef production.

More imported beef and reduced exports are pressuring prices lower, too. But, as the fed cattle backlog is reduced, then price will rebound higher.

Anderson said for the first quarter of 2016 he projects Souther Plains #1 500 - 600 pound steers at around \$216 - \$222 per hundredweight. Second quarter prices in 2016 are projected at \$220 - \$227 per hundredweight, while third quarter prices are projected at \$215 - \$224 per hundredweight. For the fourth quarter, Anderson projects prices to be \$207 - \$216 per hundredweight.

Currently, some estimates of annual cow costs are around \$700 per cow. Factoring in an average selling price of \$1,100 per head for calves leaves cow-calf producers in a profitable position.

Many of the factors important in storing and feeding hay are common sense. Nonetheless, much hay is wasted. Losses are often much more than a producer might think. Those resulting from improper storage and poor feeding practices are particularly objectionable because the expense of producing the hay has already been incurred.

The amount of hay lost during feeding depends on the feeding system and on the amount allocated per animal per feeding time. An efficient feeding system should keep losses to a practical minimum. Feeding losses are caused mostly by trampling, leaf shatter,

chemical and physical deterioration, fecal contamination, over consumption and refusal.

To some extent, you can control these losses by proper management. Management decisions include feeding method, intervals between feedings, amount of hay fed at one time, weather conditions and the number of animals fed.

The largest hay losses occur when large hay stacks are fed without animal restrictions. The lowest hay losses result from hand feeding livestock the amount they will consume at one time. However, the labor expense for the big hay stack is lower, and hand feeding requires extensive labor. The most economical feeding system is somewhere in between.

When feeding large round bales, you must use some restriction barrier to limit animal access. Barriers include electric wires, feeding racks, panels, wagons, gates and many other items. Feeding racks are now available in various sizes and shapes.

Research conducted at Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center in Overton showed that feeding large round bales free choice resulted in a 24 percent hay loss. Feeding identical bales in a feed rack cut the loss to 4 percent. (Standard small bales sustain a 6 percent loss when fed free choice and a 3 percent loss when some type of restricted access is used.) This 24 percent loss from free-choice feeding justifies the use of a feeding rack to conserve feed and money.

During the feeding season, hay may be fed in one or more areas. Both systems have advantages and disadvantages. The main disadvantage of feeding in one area is the heavy traffic on sod during wet weather. This can result in soil compaction and deep ruts throughout the field leading to this area. Feeding in one area destroys the sod excessively and usually involves muddy conditions.

Feeding in different spots in the field each time can actually improve soil fertility,

but it requires more time and is less convenient.

Either system will work, depending on each producer's particular situation. Under either feeding system where the sod is killed, these areas should be reseeded as soon possible. Scatter the excess hay and manure in surrounding areas.

With this information in mind the Henderson County Beef Cattle Committee has put together the 2015 edition of the Cow-Calf Roundtable. The Roundtable will be held at the Senior Citizens Building located at 3344 State Highway 31 E, Athens, on Thursday, November 19th with registration beginning at 5:30 p.m. The cost of the program and meal is \$15.00 per person. The speakers will be Dr. David Anderson, Extension Economist - Livestock Marketing and Dr. Jason Banta, Extension Beef Cattle Specialist. Topics will include the Beef Market Forecast - *Factors Impacting Price* and 2015 - 2016 Beef Cattle Nutrition Forecast - *Hay Quality and Testing, Utilizing Low Quality Hay and Options and Alternatives for Feeding.*

A barbecue meal will be served and 1.0 continuing education unit will be provided towards the recertification of private, commercial and non-commercial applicators license. Pre-registration is requested by calling 903-675-6130 on or before Monday, November 16th.

IMPORTANT DATES:

- November 19th - Cow-Calf Roundtable - 5:30 p.m. - Senior Citizens Building, Athens - \$15.00/person - 1 C. E. U.
- November 21st - Hunter Education Class - 7:30 a.m. - Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center, Athens - 903-676-2277 for more information and to register

- November 21st & 22nd** - **Henderson County Horsemen's Association Benefit**
Sorting and Jackpot Clinics - Henderson County Fair
Park Complex J. D. Lewis Arena, Athens
- December 3rd** - **Pesticide Applicator Training - Texas A&M AgriLife**
Research and Extension Center, Overton - 5 C. E. U.'s -
\$30.00
- December 8th** - **Pesticide Applicator Training - Texas A&M AgriLife**
Research and Extension Center, Overton - 5 C. E. U.'s -
\$30.00
- December 12th** - **Dash for Cash Livestock Clinic - Henderson County**
Fair Park Complex
- December 13th** - **Dash for Cash Livestock Show - Henderson County**
Fair Park Complex
- December 18th** - **Trinity Valley Ag Chemical Seminar - 8:00 a.m. -**
Mabank Fire Station - \$25.00/person - 6 C. E. U.'s

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