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November 8, 2017
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Montgomery County Agricultural Resources Newsletter for Livestock, Equine & Forage Producers

Beef Cattle BQA Clinic

Beef cattle producers work hard to provide a quality product for the market place. It is always important that we provide **only** medications that improve animal health, **only** at recommended rates according to the label, and **only** administered as labels states. The Montgomery County Beef Improvement Association is sponsoring a clinic on Thursday evening, November 16, beginning 6:30pm that will demonstrate the importance of using products according to label and possible consequences. Dr. Joe Paschal and Dr. Paul Schmitt will be the speakers and demonstrators. This will be a hands on demonstration. The clinic will be held at the Montgomery County Extension Office at 9020 Airport Road.

Soil Testing Campaign

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office Montgomery County and the Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation Board sponsor a soil testing campaign for agricultural producers each fall. Samples from pastures, hay fields, crop areas and forested areas should be submitted to the Montgomery County Extension office by Monday, December 4. There is a brief form that should be filled out at our office when delivering samples. The Soil and Water Conservation Board takes care of the cost of sampling. The results will provide you with the diagnostic information to better prepare your fields for optimum productivity. If you have questions about drawing a sample, please contact our office.

Texas Large Animal Emergency Rescue Training

The events surrounding Harvey highlight the importance of first responders and other individuals involved with rescue operation have the latest information and skills to safely and properly provide assistance. The Montgomery County Adult Horse Committee is sponsoring a rescue class featuring Dr. Rebecca Gimenez in Conroe on December 8 and 9. The two day class will feature lecture and hands on demonstrations that will include incident prevention, emergency scene management, large animal restraint, basics of mud, water, ice rescues, confined space rescue, livestock trailer incidents, and fires. There is a \$100.00 registration fee that will cover materials, noon meals, and certification credits. The clinic will be held at the Montgomery County Extension office located at 9020 Airport Road in Conroe. For more information or to register, contact our office at 936-539-7822 or email m-heimer@tamu.edu

Town and Country Recertification Seminar

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will sponsor an educational recertification program on Thursday, December 14. This program will be held at the Montgomery county Extension Office but will be broad cast to 17 other counties. The day long program will feature a variety of speakers addressing landscape tree management, aquatic weed management, ants impacting our life, update on laws and regulations and pesticide labels and calibration. The program will offer 5 hours of TDA CEU credit and 5 hours of SPCS CEU hours. To view the agenda or receive registration materials, go to the Montgomery County Extension website at montgomery.agrilife.org or email m-heimer@tamu.edu

There is a \$50.00 registration fee that covers the program materials and noon meal. Early registration ends December 4.

Disaster Programs for Farmers and Ranchers

Many landowners were able to attend one of the USDA workshops held the last couple of weeks that highlighted the variety of assistance available. You can contact the Farm Service Agency to receive general information or contact this office for a listing. Those included on the list include: Disaster Unemployment Assistance/ Texas Workforce Commission, State of Texas Agriculture Relief Fund/ Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Farm Bureau Hurricane Harvey Relief Fund/ Texas Farm Bureau, Texas Farmer-Rancher Harvey Disaster Relief Fund/ Texas Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Emergency Conservation Program (ECP)/ Farm Service Agency, Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm Raised Fish program (ELAP)/ Farm Service Agency, Tree Assistance Program/ Farm Service Agency, Rural Housing Assistance/ USDA Rural Development, and Small Business Administration Disaster Loans.

NATURAL BEEF, AND OTHER MARKETING CLAIMS

Numerous beef products are marketed with various claims of how cattle from which the product is obtained were raised. A common claim is "Natural". According to the USDA Food Safety Inspection Service, beef products that have a "natural" label cannot contain artificial flavors or flavorings, coloring ingredients, chemical preservatives, or other artificial or synthetic ingredients and be no more than minimally processed. So, this deals only with processing the product after slaughter, not how the animal was raised.

However, many products have "Natural" in their names. And they also may indicate a claim such as raised without antibiotics, raised without use of hormones, organic, grassfed,

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status.

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naturally raised, etc., or combinations of claims. These production claims must be approved by FSIS. But there is no restriction on simply calling a product such things as “Uncle Joe’s Natural Beef”, if it meets the USDA definition of natural. To avoid confusion with products marketed under certified programs such as organic, grassfed, naturally raised, etc, some groups would like to see regulation of “natural” to require how an animal was raised. How much beef has some sort of production claim? Not as much as some say. Over the 2nd quarter of this year, 3.2% of the volume and 4.3% of the value of retail beef sales were associated with some production claim of any sort. You may see something in the news that the volume of such product has increased significantly. Yes, volume in 2011 was 2.5% so it has increased by about 25%. Expressed that way, it looks like a big change. But it’s an increase of only 0.7 percentage points, a tiny part of total sales. Will production claims become more important? Perhaps, but it appears that most of today’s consumers are largely unaffected by such claims, probably primarily because of higher cost of most such products.

What are Bulls Worth?

It is time to start having the discussion about what to look for and how much to pay for a bull by taking a look at both the genetic influence as well as the economic influence to your cowherd.

Every decision that a cow-calf producer makes, with regard to adding/culling cows, which heifers to retain and which bulls to use to breed the cowherd, not only has implications for the following calf crop but has a genetic influence for 5 to 10 years at minimum. These influences accentuate when using your own genetics for replacement heifers. Due to the relatively slow biological nature of cattle, cow-calf producers should be thinking where they want the genetics in their cowherd to be 10 years down the road. Once that decision is made, selection of individuals that best fit that criteria can then also be made. Remember, selecting for extremes in one trait may show rapid progress in said trait, but it will lead to dysfunctional qualities also expressing themselves further down the road. Genetic progress is a slow process when commercial cow-calf operations still have to match cows to their environment.

The question may arise of what genetic path is best to take. That is something that each individual operation will need to answer themselves. Some operations may be able to pursue more market desirable traits, such as grading percentage or feed conversion rates. Other operations may have to rely more on maternal traits to create an efficient and viable cowherd. Each operation will vary and will need to decide the traits their environment will allow them to pursue to create the most economically viable cowherd. It is highly important to not forget that the cows and bulls (to a certain extent) need to be matched to their environment, first and foremost.

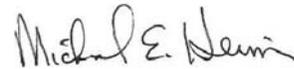
After deciding what direction the genetic makeup of your cowherd should be, (this may be something that you have already decided years ago) start the process of finding seedstock producers that fit that criteria. Seedstock producers typically have a certain market or traits that their bulls will excel in – for example, that may be maternal traits, growth traits, calving ease, etc. With a plan in your hand and the right seedstock producer, it is time to decide what to pay for those genetics.

However, before raising your hand at the next auction, there are several other factors to consider when deciding which seedstock producer(s) to work with and buy bulls. Things such as the location where the bulls are raised, how they are developed, how many were

culled prior to the sale and the age of the bulls, are all things that should be considered and do not show up on EPDs or genomic testing. If bulls are developed on a high concentrate ration, they may look in great condition at sale time, but what do they look like after being turned out on dormant pasture in November or February? This may be as simple as managing those bulls differently after purchasing them, but could also hide some of the ability of those bulls to thrive in the conditions that are present on your operation. The same can be said for the location in which those bulls were raised. Things to consider are elevation and type of forage/forage availability. Also, seedstock producers should have some quality control. Mother Nature has a way of putting her own fingerprint even on the best matches on paper. Seedstock producers should have a rigorous culling process that leaves only the best representation of their genetics for the sale ring.

BQA TIP-OF-THE-MONTH: FENCE LINE WEANING

Good weaning programs are important to minimize stress on calves and prepare them to perform well as stockers, feeders, and replacements. Fence line weaning works well because cows and calves can see and hear each other which reduces stress on both. A key to successful fence line weaning is to separate cows and calves with as little excitement as possible. An ideal weaning pasture would be about 5 to 30 acres in size, with good grass cover, have good shade along the fence line, and have a good water source within a few hundred yards of the fence.



Sincerely,

Michael E. Heimer,
County Extension Agent, Agriculture

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