

Of Cows & Plows



November 2009

Beef Conference Highlights

FORAGE TESTING A MUST FOR THIS YEAR'S HAY CROP

The Beef Conference was once again held at the Fayette County Extension Office with a full crowd. As usual, attendees received up to date market info and expert predictions.

Randy Blach, CattleFax, reported that:

- >Cattle numbers are down to levels of WWII. So feedlots are overbuilt by 25%. Production remains high due to genetics, decreased calf death losses, improved nutrition, etc.
- >Beef farms have decreased by 25%, farm size and capacity has increased though.
- >Low calf prices should bottom in 2010 and start to trend upward thereafter.
- >Americans are eating less beef. 48% of their food dollar is spent at restaurants, etc. Total consumption remains constant as more are eating beef but less of it. Only 7% is exported now.
- >We no longer have corn reserves. We're using up corn as fast as we can grow & harvest it.

From Dr. Lehmkuhler, UK Beef Specialist:

- >New research shows that colostrum absorption occurs mostly within 12 hours, not 24 as previously thought.
- >As cow ration protein levels decrease, calf weakness increases accordingly.
- >Remember to keep adequate water for weaned and growing calves. 80-85% of the rumen volume is water.
- >Watch the corn or other cereal grain intake levels. Up to 0.25% body weight is suggested. Over 0.5% of body weight can be detrimental.

By Tom Keene, UK Hay Marketing Specialist:

While driving the highways of Kentucky this fall, the need for testing this year's hay has become painfully apparent.

While driving I see rows and rows of round hay bales stored outside, with green grass growing on top of the bales. This is due primarily to two factors. First, the hay was made at a very mature stage and had a tremendous amount of viable seed in the seed heads of the hay when baled. This seed ensures that the hay was way past an optimal nutrient value when it was harvested thus reducing quality dramatically.

The second issue is the over abundance of rainfall that we have had this year when compared to others. This additional rainfall has made the hay stored outside deteriorate at a much great rate than normal and will cause our storage and feeding losses to skyrocket.

The most economical and efficient correction for this type of hay would be to make sure that the hay is tested either with the KDA hay Research & Education Center (For more forage information, visit our UK Forage Extension Website at: <http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage>) Testing Program 1-800- 248-4628 or with another certified laboratory such as Dairy One (see foragetesting.org for a listing of certified labs) and then feed according to the class of livestock being fed.

ESTIMATING CLOVER IN YOUR PASTURE

November Forage News:

Have you ever wondered just how much clover is in your pastures? Looks can be deceiving and we commonly overestimate the amount of clover. Dr. Ed Rayburn of West Virginia University and Dr. Jim Green of North Carolina State have developed a tutorial to show you how to improve your estimation skill.

Go to the UK Forage Website (<http://www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage>) to view the tutorial. It is in the form of a pdf file that you can download and go through like a slideshow. The pictures that you are viewing show ladino white clover and red clover in a mixed cool season pasture. The grasses are tall fescue, orchardgrass, and Kentucky bluegrass and the weeds shown are common cool season weeds that would be found in most KY pastures.

For you to use these pictures as guidelines on your farm it is important that you also have ladino and red clover in your pastures. Dutch (common) white clover is so short that visual estimations usually overestimate the amount of clover that livestock. It is also important that the stands you are estimating are 6 to 10 inches tall since that is the height of the pasture shown in the pictures.



<http://www.ca.uky.edu/gogreen/index.php>

Start frost seeding clovers onto pastures after Christmas.

Perennial rye works good when sown into bare areas over the winter.

Manure Values

AGR-146

Table 1. Nutrient content of manures commonly used in Kentucky. (All values on an "as-is" moisture basis.)

		N	P ₂ O ₅	K ₂ O	Moisture (%)
Solid Manures (lb/ton)					
Beef		11	7	10	80
Dairy		11	9	12	80
Swine		9	9	8	82
Broiler	(fresh)	55	55	45	20
	(stockpiled)	40	80	35	20
	(cake)	60	70	40	30
	(pullet)	40	68	40	25
	(breeder)	35	55	30	40
Layer		30	40	30	40
Liquid Manures (lb/1,000 gal)					
Holding Pit	Swine	36	27	22	96
	Dairy	31	15	19	94
Lagoon	Swine	4	2	4	99
	Dairy	4	2	3	98

It is often hard to obtain a representative sample of manures, so results that vary significantly from the values in Table 1 should be questioned. For guidelines on taking manure samples, see UK Cooperative Extension Service publication *Livestock Waste Sampling and Testing* (ID-123).

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“Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.”

William Jennings Bryan

New Technology for Determining Pregnancy in Your Cows

*Dr. Les Anderson, Beef Extension Specialist,
University of Kentucky*

Last month I discussed the importance of obtaining a pregnancy diagnosis on your cows this fall. Pregnancy rates appear to be lower than normal this year likely due to the cows suffering through two consecutive years of drought. I received several questions regarding a fairly new technology for determining pregnancy in cattle. Researchers have developed a method to determine pregnancy in cattle via blood sampling. The blood test is called BioPRYN and is marketed by a company called Bio Tracking LLC.

The blood test method to determine pregnancy is simple and accurate. First, a blood sampling kit needs to be ordered from the company. The easiest method is to go to biotracking.com and look for their products. Usually, the cost is about \$1.55 per cow for the kit. All the tubes should be labeled according to the instructions in the kit. The most difficult part of this process for most producers will be obtaining the blood sample. Cows must be at least 30 days pregnant and 90 days from calving for the test to work. Also, producer's who have no experience taking a blood sample will need to schedule this test with their local veterinarian. Once the sample is obtained, the samples are packaged and sent to one of Bio Tracking's 25 laboratories located across the US. The cost for the test is \$2.40 per cow. So the total cost per cow will be the cost of the kit (\$1.55), plus the test cost (\$2.40), plus the cost of mailing and any costs associated with obtaining the sample if you cannot do it yourself. Likely the cost per cow will be less than \$5 for most producers.

The results are normally obtained with 2-3 weeks and the accuracy of the test is very high. If the test calls the cow open, then the producer is 99+% sure the cow is open. When the test determines a cow pregnant, you can be 93-95% sure they are pregnant. This test will not

determine stage of pregnancy (i.e. 90 days versus 120 days).

Many beef producers in Kentucky have limited access to large animal veterinarians. Using this blood sampling technique for pregnancy determination may be a solution to these producers who have been unable to obtain a pregnancy diagnosis in their cows.

Potential Hay Losses

Field Curing = -25%
Baling = - 15%
Storage = - 35%
Feeding = - 30%

Animal consumes only 30% of forage potential unless strides are taken to avoid the loss!

The rumen is 80-85 % water

A cow will eat about 10lbs in 1-1.5 hours.
Intake peaks at ~ 6 hours, then waste increases.

Feeding corn to supplement a ruminant on pasture or hay? Do not feed more than 0.25-0.5% of their body weight to avoid upsetting the rumen pH. (more than that and you should replace the hay with an all grain diet)



The Capital Classic Bred Heifer Sale, United Producers Stockyards Owenton, Friday October 23 with the following results:
139 head sold averaging \$1036 per head. The low pen sold for \$900 per head, high pen sold for \$1185 per head. 4 cow calf pairs sold for an average of \$1041 per pair.

Kentucky Beef Cattle Market Update *Kenny Burdine, Livestock Marketing Specialist, University of Kentucky*

The fall calf market continued its price slide through September. As mentioned before, prices tend to decrease seasonally as we move from summer to fall and winter. However, fall price slides were incredibly steep last year and have started looking that way in 2009. The first week of October, 500 to 600 lb Medium / Large Frame #1 steers were trading in the low-mid \$90's on a state average basis. At the same time, 7 weights were trading in the mid \$80's. Both have fallen substantially from mid-August. Feeder cattle typically make their seasonal lows in November or December.

Shifting gears a bit, I wanted to revisit cull cow prices this month. Cooperatives Working Together (CWT) recently announced their third round of dairy herd retirements for the year. Bids will be accepted through October 15th. We discussed this topic in June, as we were considering the impact of the 1st round of CWT buyouts on cull cow markets. The first two CWT retirements removed about 175,000 dairy cows from production. It's not clear at this point how many cows will be removed as a result of this third round.

There are multiple impacts from a retirement program such as this on beef cattle producers. The longer term impacts are positive, although likely very small, as there will be fewer dairy cows in production and fewer Holstein feeder steers on the market once the cows are removed. In the short term however, it concentrates additional cows in the slaughter market and would be expected to have a negative price impact on slaughter cows.

The chart below shows Kentucky auction prices for boning 80-85% slaughter cows. Note first, that 2009 cow prices have been below the 2004-2008 average each month. Note also that we are approaching the seasonal low in cull cow prices, which typically occurs in the early winter. Once the October 15th deadline passes, farm audits will commence and producers are expected to sell cows within 15 days of the farm audit. So, it is very likely that slaughter of these dairy cows will coincide with the seasonal lows in

cull cow prices, most likely putting additional pressure on those prices.

While it is not clear how many cows will be retired, beef producers should be aware of the timing as it has the potential to impact cull cow prices for a window of time this fall / early winter. More specific information about numbers and timing will be available once bids have been accepted and audits have begun.

Pet Centered Flea Prevention & Control

**by Michael F. Potter, Extension Entomologist
University of Kentucky College of
Agriculture**



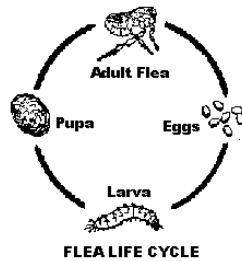
Anyone who has ever battled fleas knows how difficult they are to eradicate. Once a home becomes infested, control can be difficult, time-consuming and expensive. A flea-infested dog or cat can introduce hundreds of new flea eggs into the home each day. By mid- to late summer, pet owners often find themselves fighting a losing battle against established flea populations that are enormous.

A better way to manage fleas is through prevention. By taking action before fleas are abundant, pet owners can avoid severe infestations later in the season. Preventive flea control has been made possible by new product innovations and insights into flea biology. We now know that adult fleas (the biting stage) spend virtually their entire life on the pet, not in the carpet. Eggs are laid on the fur and fall off into carpeting, beneath furniture cushions, and wherever else the pet lays, sleeps or spends time. After hatching, the eggs transform into larvae, pupae, and eventually adults to renew the cycle.

Pet owners can break the cycle of flea development and prevent future generations by killing the eggs as they are laid on the pet, or by

eliminating the egg-laying adults. The easiest way to do this is to take action before flea problems get out of control. Several products are available which are convenient and effective.

The “Pill” (Program™)-This product prevents flea eggs from hatching when administered orally to pets once a month at mealtime. Dogs are fed Program in tablet form, whereas cats are fed a liquid suspension mixed with their food. Different tablet sizes and suspension doses are prescribed according to the weight of the animal. When an adult female flea bites a Program-treated dog or cat, the flea ingests the active ingredient (lufenuron) which then passes into her eggs and prevents them from hatching. Program is dispensed only through veterinarians. A companion product, Sentinel™, contains both the flea control ingredient and heartworm medication all in one dosage.



“Egg-Stopper”

Collars- Unlike conventional flea collars, these contain an insect growth regulating ingredient (methoprene or pyriproxyfen) which prevents egg hatch for several months. Thus, the overall effect is much like Program. Pet owners should carefully read the “active ingredients” panel on the package of the collar to verify that methoprene or pyriproxyfen are present. One such brand, the Ovitrol/Ovitrol Plus™ Flea Egg Collar is available through veterinarians. Retail versions include the Fleatrol™ Flea Egg Collar and Relieve™ Collar, sold in pet stores and discount chains. Once installed, the egg-inhibiting substance releases from the collar and rapidly distributes over the fur of the entire animal, killing flea eggs on contact. This breaks the life cycle and infestations never become established. The methoprene and pyriproxyfen-impregnated collars are virtually 100% effective at preventing new flea eggs from hatching for at least 6 months (essentially season-long) on both dogs and cats.

Spot-Ons- Another effective, convenient treatment method involves applying a few droplets of material between the shoulder blades of the animal. Two veterinarian-supplied products, Advantage™ and Frontline™, control

adult fleas on pets for at least 1 month. On dogs, Frontline Top Spot lasts up to 3 months. Another ‘spot-on’ product, available through retail stores, is Biospot™, which contains the egg-inhibiting ingredient pyriproxyfen.

The best way to use any of the above-mentioned products is to initiate treatment before flea season begins, typically in the spring. By doing so you will greatly reduce the chances of developing a serious flea problem later in the summer. Any stray fleas the pet happens to pick up around the home or at the kennel will be unable to lay viable eggs. Breaking the cycle of flea development on the pet also reduces the need to apply insecticides throughout the living areas of the home. (Each of these on-animal products is of negligible hazard to people and pets, and there is seldom any adverse reaction with other pet medications.) Methoprene or pyriproxyfen-based products may need to be supplemented, periodically, with a topical spray or dip to knock down any adult fleas irritating the pet, especially if the animal is flea allergic. This should not be necessary with Advantage and Frontline. In any case, the occasional adult flea spotted on the pet will be unable to reproduce and soon will die off.

If you were frustrated by fleas last year, give this preventative approach a try. In Kentucky, the treatment regimen need not be maintained beyond November unless fleas continue to be a problem. Always read and follow label directions and the advice of your veterinarian.

For further information see [ENTFACT-602, Ridding Your Home of Fleas](#).

Keenan Bishop

Keenan Bishop
County Extension Agent for Agriculture and
Natural Resources



Cooperative Extension Service
University of Kentucky
Franklin County
101 Lakeview Court
Frankfort, KY 40601-4950

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KSU Small Farm Conference

November 17-19

Capital Plaza Hotel & Mills Lane Research Farm

For details and more information contact Edwin Chavous at 695-9035 or Louie Rivers at 597-5905, his email is louie.rivers@kysu.edu.



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