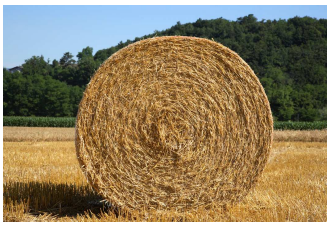
Agricultural Newsletter



March-April 2009 **Blaine County Cooperative Extension Service, 212 N Weigle, Watonga OK 73772**
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Winter Wheat Grazing Comes to an End

Dr. Derrell Peel
OSU Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

It is the time of year when Mother Nature, by way of the winter wheat plant, puts a rather abrupt end to the winter wheat grazing season. According to OSU's extension wheat specialist, several wheat varieties had reached First Hollow Stem (FHS) by late last week and the rest should follow soon. Grazing wheat past FHS begins to significantly impact wheat yield very quickly. Producers who intend to harvest grain must either market cattle or move cattle to an alternative production program.

The volume of feeder cattle reported in the combined auction total in Oklahoma this week was up seasonally but smaller than the same time last year. Cattle moved off wheat earlier than normal this year because of dry conditions and limited forage. Reported auctions totals for the month of February were up 14 percent compared to February 2008. I expect the auction total to continue below last year's levels in March as most of the seasonally available feeder supplies have already been marketed this year. Tighter feeder numbers may help market prices a bit in the coming weeks but the real key is still the weakness in beef demand as reflected in weak fed cattle prices. Improvement in fed cattle prices would be reflected very quickly in higher feeder prices while lower fed prices will continue to pressure feeder prices.

Another State Adopts Trichomoniasis Prevention Program

Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

Texas Animal Health officials have adopted a Trichomoniasis prevention program similar to those already in place in other states such as Nebraska and North Dakota. Beginning April 1, 2009, breeding bulls entering Texas from any other state must be either 24 months of age or younger and certified as a virgin, or be tested negative for cattle trichomoniasis within 30 days prior to entry. The entry requirements are part of a regulatory package adopted by the commissioners for the Texas Animal Health Commission to address trichomoniasis, a veneral disease of cattle that causes infertility and abortions, and results in extended breeding seasons and diminished calf crops, which costs livestock producers valuable income. Cattle trichomoniasis is not a human health issue. The second phase of the program which will address in-state movement of Texas breeding bulls, will go into effect January 1, 2010. (Source: News Release Texas Animal Health Commission, Bob Hillman, DVM, Executive Director.) Oklahoma seedstock producers that plan to sell bulls for interstate commerce will want to check with their veterinarian about the tests required and the certification necessary for shipment into other states.

Keep Replacement Heifers Growing

Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

Replacement heifers that have just reached puberty and started cycling may be vulnerable to any drastic change in feed intake. A small trial conducted at Oklahoma State University illustrates the impact that sudden severe reduction in energy intake can have on cycling activity in replacement heifers. Nineteen heifers were divided into two groups. Both groups were fed at 120% of the maintenance requirements needed for yearling heifers. By the use of hormone assay and ultrasonography, it was determined that all heifers were cycling when the treatments began. Nine of the heifers were continued on the 1.2 X maintenance diet. The other ten heifers were placed on a diet that was 40% of the requirement for maintenance. They remained on this diet for 14 days. At the conclusion of the 14 day treatment period, only 3 of the feed restricted heifers were still cycling, whereas all of the heifers receiving the 1.2 X maintenance were still cycling.

Table 1. Impact of sudden, severe reduction in feed intake on cycling activity of yearling heifers

	Treatments			
	1.2 X Maintenance		0.4 X Maintenance	
Day of treatment	Day 0	Day 14	Day 0	Day 14
# of Heifers	9	9	10	10
Weight	704	711	691	658
# cycling	9	9	10	3

This small, but impressive, data set illustrates clearly that we must be cautious about any disruption in the feed intake of replacement heifers at the start of their breeding season. Movement from high quality cool season grass (in the spring) to dormant winter native range may cause such a weight loss in a short period of time. Making changes in supplement programs at the start of the breeding season should be done carefully and gradually to avoid any chance of digestive disorder and the possibility of the heifers going "off-feed".

One Calving Season versus Two Calving Seasons

Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

Deciding on the use of one calving season or two calving seasons is a big first decision when producers are choosing calving seasons. Many fall calving seasons have arisen from elongated spring seasons. Two calving seasons fits best for herds with more than 80 cows. To take full advantage of the economies of scale, a ranch needs to produce at least 20 steer calves in the same season to realize the price advantage associated with increased lot size. Therefore having forty cows in each season as a minimum seems to make some sense.

Using two seasons instead of just one can reduce bull costs a great deal. Properly developed and cared-for bulls can be used in both the fall and the spring, therefore reducing the bull battery by half.

Another small advantage to having two calving seasons is the capability of taking fall-born heifers and holding them another few months to go in to the spring season and visa versa. Because of this, replacement heifers are always 2 1/2 years at first calving instead of 2 years old. These heifers should be more likely to breed early in the breeding season and have slightly less calving difficulty. Research has shown that these differences are very small, therefore the cost of the other six months feed must be minimal to make this a paying proposition. A disadvantage to breeding heifers to calve at 30 months is found when “open” heifers are culled. They are too old to go the feedlot and produce high grading carcasses that are available for some international markets. Therefore, the older heifers will be discounted heavily when marketed after an unsuccessful attempt to get them bred.

Many producers like the dual calving seasons because of the spread of the marketing risk. Having half of the calf crop sold at two different times allows for some smoothing of the cattle cycle roller coaster ride. It is important that an adequate number of calves be born together to a make a marketable package that will not be discounted because of small lot size.

Cattle Care Before and After The Storm

Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

Spring time is thunderstorm season across the Plains. Spring storms occasionally bring severe straight line winds or tornadoes. Cleaning up after a severe storm is difficult enough. Losing valuable cattle brings additional financial hardship to the situation.

Cattle loss can occur in several scenarios. Livestock may be killed, lost, or stolen during a stormy situation. An accurate accounting of livestock and property is essential to a cattle operation's storm preparedness. Keep a **CURRENT** inventory of all animals and the pastures where they are located. Individual animal ID tags on all animals have several other purposes, but can become extremely valuable if cattle become scattered or even stolen. If the cattle inventory records are computer based, consider having a "back-up" copy stored at a neighbor's or a relative's house. Even handwritten records stored in more than one location may become valuable, if the unthinkable (loss of home or outbuildings) occurs. These records will be very important when insurance claims need to be made, or if proof of ownership is required to reclaim livestock that has been misplaced by the storm.

The Texas A&M Extension Disaster Education Network has an excellent fact sheet by David W. Smith (Extension Safety Program Specialist) on farmstead preparedness and care after a storm. It can be found on line at:

http://texashelp.tamu.edu/005-agriculture/farmstead-preparedness-recovery.php

A few of their suggestions for protecting cattle from the aftermath of storms include:

- Gather and dispose of trash, limbs, wire, and damaged equipment that could harm livestock. Clear and repair damaged fences.
- Make sure livestock have plenty of water and food that have not been contaminated by pollutants. In some cases, it is necessary to truck in water and food, or to remove livestock from contaminated areas.
- Properly and immediately dispose of dead carcasses. If rendering plants are still available in your area, they may process some dead animals. Those not processed should be buried away from water bodies at least 3 to 4 feet deep and covered with quick-lime to accelerate decomposition.
- Observe livestock for signs of infectious disease such as pneumonia or foot rot. All animals that die immediately following a disaster should be necropsied by a veterinarian.
- Spray livestock with insect repellent in case of floods to protect against mosquitoes that may carry disease.

There are other things to consider when clearing the storm debris. Be mindful of such things as fiberglass insulation that is often scattered across pastures. Gather as much of the big pieces as possible so that cattle do not consume large amounts of the insulation. Also plastic bags may be ingested by cattle and cause compacted intestinal tracts. Avoid junk or debris that could be a source of lead. (This could really be an issue after a severe thunderstorm or tornado with wind damage which results in roofing debris spread across the pasture.) DO NOT allow cattle access to pastures where old car batteries or sources of crank case oil (old abandoned vehicles or machines) may cause lead poisoning.

This newsletter is one way of communicating educational info to the citizens of Blaine County in the Areas of Agriculture & Rural Development. For free subscriptions, contact the Extension Office at 580-623-5195. The information given is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service is implied. This inform was produced at a cost of 1 cent per page for a total of $12.00.

Editor,

Alvin Woodruff -Extension Educator-Ag/4-H

Setting a Realistic Yield Goal

Traditionally, crop nitrogen requirement is based on crop grown and expected yield goals. Soil testing labs cannot provide N recommendation if yield goal is not provided. Even if you use a sensor to estimate potential yields in season, it is advantageous to base on yield goal for pre-planting N application.

What is a realistic yield goal?

A yield goal is the yield you hope to harvest. However, what you hope to grow and what you end up with are two different things. Crop yields are largely determined by your management style, crop varieties, soil properties and weather conditions. Therefore, your yield goal should be practical and achievable. This is the so called *Realistic Yield Goal*. Since soils vary in their physical and chemical properties considerably from farm to farm and field to field on the same farm, it is important to set a realistic yield goal for each field every year.

Why use a realistic yield goal?

The primary reason for setting a realistic yield goal is economics and environment. Yield goals are needed if you are going to decrease the cost of production to improve farm profitability. For example, fertilizer deficiencies for nitrogen and sulfur are identified not only on the results of soil testing but also on expected yield goals. The soil testing lab can not make those interpretations if crop code and yield goal are not marked on the soil sample bags. Many soil samples received by the lab do not have a yield goal marked, and some county extension offices and coops use the same yield goal for a crop for everyone who submits a sample. If yield goals are too high, money can be spent needlessly on fertilizer.

Over applying nutrients in the form of fertilizer and animal manure can have a negative impact on the environment. Fertilizer use can be a significant part of your production cost. On the other hand, if the yield goals are too low, nutrients recommended are not sufficient for the most profitable yield and farm profitability may be reduced. Therefore, yield goal has a direct impact on your projected cost of production

How to set a realistic yield goal?

Aim for above average yields so crop yields will slowly increase over time and a good year of production will not missed. Keep a good production record of each field on the farm for at least five years. Some fields may produce more than others because of differences in soil quality and other factors. Adjust the past average to set a yield goal. The practical range for a yield goal should be somewhere above average to near the maximum yield in the last 3 to 5 years. Two common methods for calculating realistic yield goals are: 1) to add 10 to 30% to the recent average yield; 2) to take the average of the 3 highest yields in the last 5 consecutive years. These two methods are illustrated in the following table. Regardless of the method you employ, it is important to be consistent from one year to the next.

Example of setting a realistic year goal based on yield history

Year	Winter Wheat (Bu./acre)	Bermudagrass (Tons/acre)
2004	45.3	3.0
2005	46.0	3.3
2006	38.8	2.5
2007	53.2	4.1
2008	56.3	4.5
Average	47.9	3.5
5 year average + 20%	57	4.2
Average of 3 highest years	52	4.0

OSU Variety Test Plot Tour

May 5, 2009
Kingfisher County Fairgrounds

Breakfast – 7:30 a.m.

Speakers:	**Topics:**
Jeff Edwards –	Current Wheat Conditions
Roger Gribble –	Varieties
Brett Carver –	Wheat Nursery

Wheat Plot Tour

May 13, 2009
1:00 p.m.

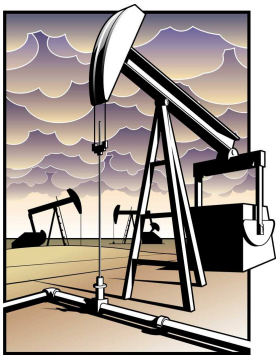
Location
Mike Helm's Farm at Greenfield, Okla.
Speaker: Roger Gribble

Cattleman's Spring Tour

April 16, 2009

The Blaine County Cattlemen's Spring Tour is scheduled for Thursday, April 16th. We will depart from the Blaine County Courthouse (southside) in Watonga at 6:30 a.m. and return around 9:30 p.m. Priority given to Blaine County Cattlemen's Assn. members and spouses. Seating limited. Public invited at a cost of $25 a couple. Scheduled visits: Noble Foundation, Ardmore, Okla. (Topics of discussion: Biofuel, Cattle Operations & Receiving, Wildlife, Research); and Mesonet in Norman, evening meal & entertainment**.** Cattleman members will receive a detailed letter. Mark your calendar's now and for additional information and sign up**, RSVP by calling the Extension Office at 580-623-5195 by Tuesday, April 15th, 4:30 p.m.**

Blaine County Mineral Owner's Annual Meeting



The Blaine County Mineral Owner's Annual meeting will be held Monday, April 13, 2009, 6:30 p.m. at the Blaine County Fairgrounds, Foley Building, Watonga, Okla. Meal to be served. Guest Speaker: State Representative Ryan McMullen. RSVP by calling the Extension Office at 580-623-5195 by Friday, April 10th, 4:30 p.m.

Ag Appreciation Banquet

Thursday, April 30, 2009

The Blaine County Ag Appreciation Banquet sponsored by the Blaine Co. OSU Extension Service, Blaine Co. Conservation Dist, Central North Canadian River Cons. Dist, Cimarron Valley Cons. Dist., and the Canton, Geary, Okeene & Watonga Chambers of Commerce will be held Thursday, April 30th. We will also be recognizing the Blaine County Farm/Ranch Families of the Year and honoring Hall of Fame nominees. Dinner will be served.

April 30, 2009
Blaine County Fairgrounds, Foley Bldg, Watonga
Doors Open: 6:00 p.m. - Dinner: 6:30 p.m.

Lahoma Wheat Tour

May 15, 2009

The Lahoma Wheat Tour will be held on May 15, 2009 at the North Central Research Station. The station is located one mile west of Lahoma on Highway 412. Registration for the tour will be 8:30 – 9:00 a.m.