

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

June 27, 2008

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The latest USDA Quarterly Hogs and Pigs Report is kind of a good news, bad news story. The bad news is that the current inventory of market hogs is 7 percent above last year. The hog industry has ridden a tremendous amount of momentum since the fall of 2007 when an expanding breeding herd combined with disease control that has resulted in double digit pork production increases for several months. Today's report confirms that pork production will continue at large levels in the second half of 2008.

However, there is a glimmer of hope that pork production will eventually moderate. The latest report indicates a slight reduction in the breeding herd and farrowing intentions down two to four percent for the rest of the year. The other good news is that strong pork exports have continued to move much of the increased production of recent months offshore, moderating the impact on domestic meat markets.

Can We Select Cattle to Reduce Pinkeye Incidence??

By Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

Pinkeye has long been a costly nuisance to cattle producers. Eye infections sometimes lead to partial or complete blindness in one or both eyes. Reduced beef production in the form of lowered weight gain, milk production, body condition, and eventually even poorer reproduction can result from eye infections and lesions. One of the culprits that initiates and spreads eye problems between herds and among herdmates is "Pinkeye" or more properly called Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis. An excellent Oklahoma State University fact sheet about the prevention and treatment of "Pinkeye" is available online at:

<http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-2689/VTMD-9128web.pdf>.

Iowa State University animal scientists analyzed field data from ISU herds and cooperator herds in 2003 and 2004. They sought to estimate the genetic measurements that could aid in the selection of cattle resistant to Infectious Bovine Keratoconjunctivitis (IBK), commonly known as pinkeye. They found a decrease in weaning weight of 20.9 pounds per calf infected with pinkeye. The analysis of the field data revealed an estimate of 0.18 for heritability of resistance to pinkeye. **This estimate is considered to be of low to moderate heritability, which indicates that slow to moderate progress can be made based on selection for IBK resistance.** It does mean that, over time, if we select replacements from cows that are not prone to having eye problems (especially pinkeye) we should be able to gradually reduce the incidence of pinkeye in our herds.

Also they studied the immune components involved in eye disease defense mechanisms. Tear samples were collected from the eyes of 90 calves in 2004 in order to quantify immunoglobulins (commonly called antibodies). The result of this analysis indicated that as the amount of Immunoglobulin A in the tears increases, the likelihood of infection and/or the severity of infection decreased. **This information would suggest that properly fed, properly immunized cattle, with a strong immune system will be more resistant to pinkeye.** Source: Rodriguez and co-workers. Iowa State University Animal Industry Report 2006.

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