

COW/CALF CORNER

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Impacts of Winter Weather on Cattle Markets and Oklahoma Producers
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Unusually cold and wet weather has been widespread and prolonged this year. This has resulted in many management challenges and is causing a variety of market impacts in the short run and likely will have longer run impacts as well. Cold, sloppy feedlot conditions have delayed animal finishing and reduced carcass weights. Some of the lost performance will never be recovered and animals will require extra days on feed to finish at acceptable grades. This has helped push up fed cattle prices to \$90/cwt. this week as packers scrambled to find sufficient quantities of finished cattle. Unfortunately most of the higher fed prices will only partially offset the increased feedlot cost of production due to reduced performance, lower feed efficiency and increased sickness and death loss.

Reduced total beef production, mostly due to lighter carcass weights, has helped push boxed beef prices higher this week but the effects of bad weather on demand will show up in the coming days and weeks. Roughly one-third of the U.S. population was severely impacted by snow and

cold in recent days, no doubt resulting in reduced beef sales with restaurant sales especially impacted when travel is curtailed.

Most Oklahoma cow-calf producers have had a long winter of fighting mud to bust ice and haul hay. Cows have been wet and cold for weeks and have lost body condition despite increased hay feeding. Many herds are just beginning to calve and cows will likely lose more body condition rapidly once they begin lactation. Some producers are short of hay and face potentially another six to eight weeks of feeding before any spring forage will be available. Producers needing more and better quality feed to get through the winter should evaluate all possible feed sources to design the most economical feeding programs to prevent excessive loss of cow body condition. Hay may not necessarily be the best answer.

The rigors of the winter are likely to result in poor or delayed conception rates for spring calving cows. The potential silver lining in this winter weather is that we have excellent moisture conditions to grow forage once spring arrives. Cows that finish the winter in poorer than usual body condition may recover quickly with abundant high quality spring forage. However, this may result in cows breeding somewhat later than normal and producers may want to consider possible adjustments in the breeding season.

Stocker cattle have also been affected by the harsh winter. The impacts depend more on the particular location. In some regions stocker cattle have been subject to the same wet, sloppy conditions with stalled out wheat pasture and have not gained well. Many were placed on pasture later than usual and thus are lighter than expected at this time. Farther west in Oklahoma and in the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles, it has been cold but drier and cattle have gained well, albeit with significantly increased hay feeding.

The end of February marks the time when wheat pasture producers must begin monitoring wheat for signs of First Hollow Stem (FHS) and the termination of winter grazing. Wheat is widely variable in stage of development this year due to scattered planting dates and that, combined with cold weather may make FHS more variable and slightly delayed. However, excellent moisture and a few warm days will do a lot to catch the wheat up to normal dates for FHS. Stocker cattle will begin moving off of wheat pasture very soon and most will likely move by the first week of March. Cattle grazing out wheat will have excellent forage conditions as soon the weather warms a bit and the wheat begins growing rapidly.

New Weapons in the War Against BRD

Dave Sparks DVM, Oklahoma State University Area Extension Quality and Health Specialist

Bovine Respiratory Disease (BRD) is very possible the biggest challenge the beef industry faces today. Each year beef producers lose between 1 billion and 3 billion dollars to BRD. The animal health industry has worked since World War II to find new and better weapons to fight against these losses of producer's profits and the world's food supply. Many of the animal

industry's discoveries have led to advances in human medicine. One example is the early antibiotic Streptomycin, which was found to be very effective in the BRD complex of the time and also virtually eliminated tuberculosis in both cattle and people.

Recently the US Food and Drug Administration approved two new additions to the line of animal health products. Both were researched and introduced by Schering-Plough Animal Health. Nuflor Gold is the first antibiotic labeled for combating BRD caused by a variety of organisms including *Mycoplasma bovis*. The other new product is Resflor Gold, billed as a fever reducing, bacteria killing, fast acting, one dose, BRD treatment. It is a combination of the antibiotic florfenicol (marketed by Schering-Plough under the trade name Nuflor), and the anti-inflammatory drug flunixin (marketed by Schering-Plough under the trade name Banamine). While the antibiotic fights the infection the anti-inflammatory reduces respiratory tract inflammation with the resulting improved breathing and increased appetite. This allows producers to attack the disease in two ways with one subcutaneous injection.

To learn more about these new prescription products contact your veterinarian.

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Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Extension Cattle Reproduction Specialist

The eXtension Beef Cattle Clearinghouse Community of Practice conducted a webinar called “**Managing genetic defects in beef cattle: practical advice for protecting your herd and investment.**” This webinar was presented on February 11. Presenters are Dr. Bob Weaber, University of Missouri and Dr. Matt Spangler, University of Nebraska. Topics covered include a review of the mode of inheritance common to many genetic defects, understanding inbreeding, the importance of pedigree analysis, common genetic defects, practical advice for selection and culling to avoid or eliminate genetic defects in your herd.

http://www.extension.org/pages/Archived_Beef_Cattle_Webinars

This is the third webinar that is available at this site. Now you can listen *at your convenience* to this or other important discussions.

The next webinar will examine “**Mating systems to solve problems and add value to beef production systems: crossbreeding and the power of heterosis**”. It is scheduled for February 25 at noon Central time. Again the discussion leaders will be Drs. Weaber and Spangler.

Topics covered will include a review of the fundamentals of heterosis (hybrid vigor), the power of crossbreeding to improve production efficiency, breed complementarity, simple and effective crossbreeding systems for large and small herds and why there's been a surge in popularity of hybrid genetics. *Webinar connection instructions are as follows:*

At the meeting time, simply click on the following link or copy and paste it into your browser to enter the meeting:

<http://connect.extension.iastate.edu/beefcattle/>

When you go to that URL you will find yourself at a login page. Simply enter your name under the "Enter as a Guest" heading. Click on "Enter Room." The instructions that detail how to join the integrated phone audio conference will be on the screen when you join the meeting.

Anytime before the meeting you can visit the following URL to confirm your ability to connect to the Connect server:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/testconnect/>

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