

# **COW/CALF CORNER**

## **The Newsletter**

**From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service**

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## **Trichomoniasis Testing of Breeding Bulls is the Law in Oklahoma**

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Most states in the western part of the United States have developed “Trich” regulations to help control the disease. Many other states are recognizing the seriousness of the disease and are currently developing or implementing regulatory programs. Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry worked with the Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association, Livestock Marketing Association, veterinarians, producer groups, and lab personnel to develop Oklahoma Trich regulations. The new rules took effect on July 1, 2010. Enforcement of the new regulations will not begin until Jan 1, 2011 to allow sale barns and producers time to become familiar with the new rules. Although the primary impact of

Trichomoniasis is on female cattle, these cows can spread Trich infection to bulls. Oklahoma Trich regulations focus on breeding bulls, the reservoir or carrier of the disease.

### **Oklahoma Requirements for Change of Ownership of Breeding Bulls**

Effective January 1, 2011, any bull changing ownership within the state of Oklahoma by private sale, public sale, lease, trade, or barter must have a negative test for Trichomoniasis within 30 days of change of ownership. Exceptions are:

- Bulls that are less than 24 months of age and can be certified as virgin bulls.
- Bulls that are being sold directly to a slaughter establishment
- “Cutter Bulls” that will be castrated and put on feed within 10 days of purchase.

Untested bulls consigned to livestock markets can be sampled at the market at the buyer’s expense and transported to the buyer’s premise under quarantine until negative test results have been reported. The livestock market will not be liable for bulls that test positive after the sale. Those bulls must be castrated or sold for slaughter only within 10 days of notification.

If a bull tests positive he must be sold directly for slaughter or castrated within 10 days of notification. The herd of origin will be notified that a bull from the herd tested positive for Trich. The herd owner will be advised to contact their veterinarian for assistance in managing and eradicating the disease from the herd.

### **What is Trichomoniasis?**

Bovine Trichomoniasis (Trich) is a venereal disease of cattle caused by the protozoan *Tritrichomonas foetus*, which is about the size of a sperm cell. Infected bulls carry the protozoan on their penis and prepuce. As a bull ages the conditions on the surface of the organs become more favorable allowing the organism to survive and multiply.

Trichomoniasis, or “Trich”, is transmitted to cows through breeding. Cows usually abort early in the pregnancy and become temporarily infertile. Cattle producers can lose valuable income from the resulting extended breeding season and diminished calf crop. In a herd with a compact breeding season, decreases in calving percentages can reach 50%.

***You can't tell by looking!*** Infected breeding bulls continue to appear and act normally. Only testing will confirm the presence or absence of the disease causing protozoa. Once infected, bulls remain infected and capable of spreading infection.

**No approved treatment or vaccine exists for bulls.** The majority of infected cows will clear the infection if given 120-150 days (4-5 months) of sexual rest. A vaccine can also be administered to cows to help prevent the disease. There is evidence that a very small percentage of cows may carry the infection through a gestation or a dry period and reinfect virgin bulls the next breeding season.

Producers with infected herds should work with their veterinarian to determine the most appropriate measures to eliminate the disease from their cattle herds. More information on management of the disease can be obtained from your local veterinarian, OSU county extension office, or the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry.

## **The Value of Forage-Based Stocker Gains**

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

Efficient markets allocate production resources to their highest and best use. As a practical matter, that means that industries, and the individual producers within the industry, must bid resources away from other alternative uses. Because cattle are ruminants, the beef industry can utilize a wide variety of forage and feed resources to produce the end product of the industry, a slaughter ready animal with a carcass of acceptable quality.

The U.S. cattle industry has fundamentally changed since 2007. Growing and probably permanently higher demand for corn for industrial use has successfully bid away some of the available feed supply of this country and raised corn prices to a higher base level, about \$1.50/bu. higher in recent years compared to many years prior. Permanently higher corn prices implies a series of short and long run adjustments in the cattle industry. Among those adjustments, higher input (i.e., corn) prices will cause a decrease in beef production. This also means that market signals will emerge to encourage the beef industry to switch away from the more expensive grains and utilize more forage to the extent possible.

These market signals are best seen in the form of the marginal value of weight gain for stocker cattle. The gross profit potential for stocker production is reflected in the value of gain, which is calculated as the ending value (sale weight times sale price) minus the beginning value (beginning weight times beginning price) divided by the total weight gain. For example, using Oklahoma combined auction prices averaged over the last four weeks, the price of a 500 pound steer was \$125.71/cwt. or \$629/head. The price of a 750 pound steer was \$115.06/cwt. or \$863/head. The gross margin is \$234/head or \$0.94/lb of gain.

In general, the value of gain depends on the beginning weight of the animal, the amount of weight gain, the time of year and the average level of feeder prices. Sometimes the value of gain varies sharply over different beginning weights and/or amounts of weight gain. However, in the current market the value of stocker gain is high over a wide range of weight. The average value of gain is mostly in a range of \$0.85-0.95/lb. for beginning weights ranging from 400 to 650 pounds and for gain of 150 to 400 pounds. These values are based on current price only and do not reflect time of year in which seasonal price patterns between the time of purchase and time of sale can make the value of gain either higher or lower.

The overall message for the cattle industry is clear and likely will not change over the long run. Higher feedgrain prices, supported by decreased cattle inventories that raises average cattle price levels, makes forage-based stocker gains more valuable. Short run market volatility is a fact of life and means that generally better stoker margins should not be taken for granted. Nevertheless, despite the need for risk management, the market is providing incentives for more forage based-stocker gains.

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