

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Winter Wheat Grazing Update: Problems and Potential

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

The rollercoaster world of wheat and winter stockers continues to be volatile. Producers face many decisions about grain only wheat production versus dual-purpose wheat and cattle grazing. In some sense, wheat producers are in the enviable position of having the market bidding for both wheat for grain and wheat for forage, making dual purpose production of both look very attractive. Mother Nature is complicating things a bit with dry conditions across much of Oklahoma and pest problems in some regions making it difficult to establish wheat forage. The one thing that is clear in all of this is that producers, along with their lenders, need to look at all the alternatives before committing to a particular enterprise. If one only looks at the price of wheat it might be easy to dismiss the potential for grazing or vice versa.

This last week, the price of a 525 pound steer in Oklahoma was about \$115/cwt. or \$604/head. The March Feeder cattle futures contract price, at the time of writing, was \$112/cwt. With 250 pounds of gain and a zero basis (OKC, March), a 775 pound steer would have a total value of \$868/head. This results in a gross margin of \$264/head or a value of gain of \$1.06/lb. Using a price of \$0.50/lb of gain for wheat pasture cost and typical animal production costs, a stocker budget suggests about \$50/head in net return to the cattle. Additionally, 250 pounds of gain at \$0.50/lb pasture cost generates another \$125/head return to the wheat pasture. Assuming the marginal costs of growing the wheat forage is \$0.30/lb of gain, there is a net return of another \$50/head to the wheat. Thus results in a combined net return to wheat and cattle of \$100/head. or roughly \$67/acre.

Producers need to evaluate the potential returns to both wheat and cattle. While individual circumstances could cause a producer to favor grain only production, it appears that dual-purpose grain and cattle production has considerable potential for attractive returns to both enterprises.

Follow BQA Guidelines When Culling Cows

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

October and November are typical months for calf weaning, pregnancy checking of cows, and cow culling. On very rare occasions violative residues of pharmaceutical products have been found in carcass tissues of cull beef cows. Violations of drug residue regulations can result in expensive fines (or even worse, jail time) for the rancher and a “black-eye” for the entire beef industry. It is vital that cow calf producers have a close working relationship with a large animal veterinarian in their area. If a cow has an infection or disease that must be treated, her owner should closely follow the veterinarian's directions, and also read the label of the product used. Most of these medications will require that the producer keep the treated animal for the label-directed withdrawal time. The Oklahoma Beef Quality Assurance Manual contains the following discussion of medication withdrawal times.

"A withdrawal time may be indicated on the label of certain medications. This is the period of time that must pass between the last treatment and the time the animal will be slaughtered or milk used for human consumption. For example, if a medication with a 14-day withdrawal period was last given on August 1, the withdrawal would be completed on August 15 and that would be the earliest the animal could be harvested for human consumption. All federally approved drugs will include the required withdrawal time for that drug on the product label or package insert. These withdrawal times can range from zero to as many as 60 days or more. It is the producer's responsibility to be aware of withdrawal times of any drugs used in their operation. Unacceptable levels of drug residues detected in edible tissues collected at harvest may result in traceback, quarantine, and potential fines or jail time. Substantial economic losses may result for the individual producer as well as negative publicity for the entire beef industry..."

Producers are responsible for residue problems and should follow these four rules:

1. Do not market animals for food until the withdrawal time listed on the label or as prescribed by the veterinarian has elapsed.
2. Use only medications approved for cattle and exactly as the label directs or as prescribed by your veterinarian.
3. If ever in doubt, rely on the veterinarian-client-patient relationship you have established with your veterinarian.
4. Keep well organized, detailed records of pharmaceutical products given to individually identified animals. Include in the record, the date of administration, route of administration, dosage given, lot or

serial number of product given, person delivering the product, and label or prescription listing of withdrawal dates. Examples of Beef Quality Assurance records can be found at www.beefextension.com at the menu item "[BQA Record Forms](#)". Records should be kept for 3 years after sale of the animal.

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