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COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

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Beef Trade Continues to Boost Cattle Markets

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

The latest trade data (for January) shows that the strong beef exports from 2010 have carried over into 2011. January beef exports totaled 190.553 million pounds, up 24 percent from January 2010, and the highest January export level since 2003. January beef exports increased to most major markets including Canada (up 20.4 %); Japan (up 61.6 %); South Korea (up 66.7 %); Hong Kong (up 128.2 %). Beef exports in January dropped to Taiwan (down 14.7 %) as a result of the on-going dispute over ractopamine; and also to Vietnam (down 16.2 %). Among the leading export markets, Mexico continues to be the weakest market with beef exports down 8.4 percent compared to January of 2010. Mexico continues to struggle with general economic weakness. Data from the Mexican Secretary of Economy shows that average slaughter cattle prices in central Mexico averaged 12 percent lower than U.S. fed cattle prices in February, while wholesale beef price averaged 10.4 percent lower than U.S. Select boxed beef prices.

Beef imports, on the other hand, continue to decrease. January beef imports were down 20.1 percent from year earlier levels. Total beef imports in 2010 were down 12.5 percent year over year. Beef imports were down in January from the two of the three largest sources, Canada (down 21.5 %); and Australia (down 46.3 %), though imports from New Zealand were up 7.8

percent. These three countries accounted for 80 percent of U.S. beef imports in January. Other significant beef import sources include: Mexico, Nicaragua, Uruguay, Argentina and Costa Rica. Additionally, January cattle imports were up 20 compared to a year ago. Cattle imports from Canada were down 12.3 percent, as a result of decreased cattle inventories and the relative attractiveness of cattle feeding in Canada. Cattle imports from Mexico were up 66.6 percent in January compared to last year. It is no surprise that record high U.S. feeder cattle prices are pulling additional cattle out of Mexico. However, Mexican cattle inventories will not sustain this rate of exports for many months. Moreover, large cattle exports increase the likelihood that Mexico will begin to import more beef to meet domestic market demands in the coming months.

There are several factors that contribute to both the growth in exports as well as the decrease in U.S. beef imports. The continued weakness of the U.S. dollar is certainly an important factor in making U.S. beef more exportable and the U.S. market less attractive for imports. Add to that decreased exports from Australia, limited cattle numbers in Canada and Mexico and the rapid growth in Asian markets and the result is more U.S. beef exports and reduced beef imports. Both trends are expected to continue to in 2011.

Choosing the Estrous Synchronization Protocol For Your AI Program

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Beef producers that use artificial insemination in their breeding program use estrus synchronization to better utilize their labor resources both during breeding and calving seasons. Choosing the synchronization protocol that best fits each individual situation is challenging because so many options are currently available. The Beef Reproductive Task Force is a committee of animal scientists from eight land grant universities in the United States. This committee is made up of beef reproduction scientists and extension specialists that have been instrumental in conducting research and evaluating estrus synchronization protocols. Each year they review the research and make recommendations of estrus synchronization systems that the committee agrees will give producers the best choices for their situations.

Producers need to decide how much “heat detection” that they feel that they can do successfully. Some producers can take the time to do “heat detection” for a couple of weeks. Other producers can find the time to be good at “heat detection” for only a few days, while many other producers would prefer not to “heat detect” at all. Therefore the Beef Reproductive Task Force has categorized different estrus synchronization protocols accordingly. Also the committee has made appropriate recommendations for synchronization systems for yearling replacement heifers and for adult cows (currently nursing calves).

Beef producers can download the 2011 Estrous Synchronization Protocols for Heifers and Cows as well a free estrus synchronization planner by clicking on the [Applied Reproductive Strategies](#)

[in Beef Cattle website](http://beefrepro.unl.edu/resources.html) brought to you by the Beef Reproduction Task Force. The URL is <http://beefrepro.unl.edu/resources.html> . If you utilize artificial insemination or estrus synchronization with natural service you will find this information quite valuable. Keep in mind that some of the synchronization products are only available by a prescription from your local food animal veterinarian.

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