

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

September 17, 2012

In this Issue:

Oklahoma Wheat Pasture Update: Weather and Cattle Markets

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

Stockmanship and Stewardship with Curt Pate

Jeff Jaronek, Oklahoma Beef Council

Growing Bred Replacement Heifers

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Oklahoma Wheat Pasture Update: Weather and Cattle Markets

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

Drought conditions in Oklahoma remain very severe. The latest Drought Monitor shows that, while a smaller portion of the state is in the worst drought category D4 (40 percent versus 69 percent last year), a larger portion of the state, 95 percent is in combined D3 and D4 categories, compared to 85 percent last year. The water level in stock ponds is decreasing rapidly and lack of water may force destocking soon in some areas. However, much of state received some rain

in the last week with total ranging from less than one half inch to over one inch in some areas. A few counties in the northeast corner of Oklahoma received over two inches of rain. This rain will be reflected in the new Drought Monitor but may not change overall drought conditions much.

The rain is, however, very timely for winter wheat planting and will likely get wheat drills running across much of the state. The recent rains provide some topsoil moisture to plant and germinate a crop but subsoil moisture is still very limited. Wheat planted now for grazing will be vulnerable and will require additional timely moisture to continue development and provide fall forage. Nevertheless, producers will be thinking about how use any wheat forage that is available. In some instances, wheat forage this year, like last year, may be needed to support cows and replacement heifers this winter. Limited access wheat grazing for cows combined with limit feeding of hay can stretch winter forage very effectively. The extra labor required is likely to be well rewarded given the alternative of purchasing very expensive hay and/or supplement.

Other producers will be looking at stocker cattle for the winter grazing season. Feeder cattle prices across all weights have rallied since the late July lows. Feeder prices still show a break with calf prices at a sharp premium up to the upper 500 pound range for steers followed by a much smaller price rollback for heavier weight feeders. The most recent combined auction market report for Oklahoma shows a \$19/cwt price drop from 419 pound steers to 523 pound steers. Also in this report, as weight increases from 523 pounds to 625 pounds the price drops about \$5/cwt. and from 625 pounds to 726 pounds, the price decreases by \$2.66/cwt. Though the feeder price patterns still favor heavier beginning stocker weights, a slight reduction in the four weight stockers and a slight increase in heavier feeder prices in the past couple of weeks enhances the stocker value of gain for those 400-500 pound stocker that are so popular in Oklahoma. Moreover, Feeder cattle futures for 2013 all reflect expectations for higher feeder cattle prices with prices ranging from about \$153/cwt. for March contracts to over \$156/cwt. for May Feeder futures. Stocker producers have considerable flexibility in implementing a wide variety of stocker programs with good potential value which can be locked in, thereby reducing risk. Marketing stocker cattle will be relatively easy but production challenges remain.

Stockmanship and Stewardship with Curt Pate

Jeff Jaronek, Oklahoma Beef Council

Beef producers have an opportunity to fine tune their cattle handling skills with one of the nation's most sought after clinicians, Curt Pate.

Hosted by the Oklahoma Beef Council through the beef checkoff program, the Elk City Livestock Auction, and Simmons Ranch the clinic will focus on low-stress cattle handling techniques with the intent of enhancing profitability by working with the natural instincts of cattle.

The clinic will be held at the Elk City Livestock Auction on Thursday, September 27, 2012 at 5:30 PM and a meal will be provided prior to the clinic.

“Curt is great at thinking outside the box and challenges other producers to do the same,” said Jeff Jaronek, director of industry relations for the Oklahoma Beef Council. “He is able to use personal experiences and knows the economic benefits of handling cattle correctly.”

Topics covered at the clinic include:

- Working cattle in corrals and alleyways.
- Sorting and processing techniques.
- Strategies for receiving cattle.
- Low-stress loading procedures.
- Proper use of equipment to assure low-stress handling.

“We encourage producers of all ages to come out and learn from one of the best stockmen around,” Jaronek said. “Opportunities like this don’t come around very often.”

For more information and to RSVP please contact Jeff Jaronek at (405) 840-3777 or by email at jeff.jaronek@oklabeeff.org.

Growing Bred Replacement Heifers

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Bred replacement heifers that will calve in January and February need to continue to grow and maintain body condition. Ideally, two year old heifers should be in a body condition score “6” at the time that their first calf is born. This allows them the best opportunity to provide adequate colostrum to the baby, repair the reproductive tract, return to heat cycles, rebreed on time for next year, and continue normal body growth. From now until calving time, the heifers will need to be gaining about 1 pound per head per day, assuming that they are in good body condition coming out of summer.

Heifers will need supplemental protein, if the major source of forage in the diet is bermudagrass or native pasture or grass hay. If the forage source is adequate in quantity and average in quality (6 - 9% crude protein), heifers will need about 2 pounds of a high protein (38 - 44% CP) supplement each day. This will probably need to be increased with higher quality hay (such as alfalfa) or additional energy feed (20% range cubes) as winter weather adds additional nutrient requirements. Soybean hulls or wheat-mids may also be used to insure adequate energy intake of pregnant heifers.

Wheat pasture (if adequate rainfall produces growth) can be used as a supplement for pregnant replacement heifers. Using wheat pasture judiciously makes sense for pregnant heifers for two reasons. Pregnant heifers consuming full feed of wheat pasture will gain at about 3 pounds per head per day. If they are on the wheat too long the heifers can become very fat and cause calving difficulty. Also the wheat pasture can be used for gain of stocker cattle or weaned replacement heifers more efficiently. If wheat pasture is used for bred heifers, use it judiciously as a protein supplement by allowing the heifers access to the wheat pasture on at least alternate days. Some producers report that 1 day on wheat pasture and two days on native or bermuda will work better. This encourages the heifers to go rustle in the warm season pasture for the second day, rather than just stand by the gate waiting to be turned back in to the wheat. Whatever method is used to grow the pregnant replacement heifers, plan to have them in good body condition (BCS = 6) by calving so that they will grow into fully-developed productive cows.

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services. References within this publication to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, service mark, manufacturer, or otherwise does not constitute or imply endorsement by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.