

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Will Fall Beef Cow Culling Follow Seasonal Patterns?

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

The fall cow culling season is upon us. The weeks from mid-October through mid-December typically has the highest beef cow slaughter of the year (except for Thanksgiving week), with most of the increase in the four weeks prior to Thanksgiving. Whether or not we follow the typical seasonal pattern for the remaining weeks of the year will determine whether or, more

likely, how much net beef cow herd liquidation has occurred in 2012. There are reasons to argue that fall cow culling will be less than normal, more than normal, or just about average.

Much of the challenge of determining what is happening with the beef cow herd in 2012 comes from the fact that we are comparing to a very unusual base in 2011. For the year to date, beef cow slaughter is down nearly 13 percent from the drought enhanced 2011 level. The year over year total has been falling in recent weeks with sharply lower beef cow slaughter this summer. Since mid-July beef cow slaughter has been down 20 percent from 2011, thus pulling down the year to date totals. A comparison to 2010 may be more revealing; the 2012 year to date total is down 9.6 percent from 2010, while the summer period is down 4.2 percent.

It is hard to isolate obvious drought impacts in the 2012 beef cow slaughter so far, though there is no doubt that there are some effects. The current slaughter rate suggests that net beef cow culling rate for the year will be about 11 percent. This value depends on both total beef cow slaughter for the year and also the rate at which replacement heifers entered the herd. The long term average beef cow slaughter rate is 9.6 percent and is typically higher than this level during liquidations and lower during herd expansions. Given the year to date slaughter totals, beef cow slaughter would have to drop to about 50 percent of last year for the remaining weeks of the year to lower total beef cow slaughter to pull cow culling down enough to prevent net beef cow herd liquidation. That seems very unlikely. Fall beef cow culling could be lower than usual if the drought forced significant early cow culling leaving fewer cows to be culled in the traditional seasonal peaks. On the other hand, fall cow culling could increase more than seasonally in the next few weeks if producers have not yet culled enough cows to match limited hay supplies. The situation is quite murky right now but the next four or five weeks of cow slaughter data may provide a better look at what to expect for net changes in the beef cow herd in 2012.

Oklahoma Quality Beef Network Vac-45 Fall Sales Starting Soon

Gant Mourer, Oklahoma State University Beef Value Enhancement Specialist

Successful cow-calf producers strive to receive the highest possible value for their calves at sale date. The Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (OQBN) is a program, which began in 2001, and is a joint effort by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and the Oklahoma Cattlemen's

Association. OQBN offers unbiased information on beef cattle value enhancement. It provides producers and others in the beef industry education and tools to improve access to value-added programs. In the beginning of OQBN, the program was designed to be a process verification and certification program for preconditioned calves. Today, the OQBN is the “complete” value-added program as it is a network of Oklahoma State University, Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association, beef producers, and allied beef industry. It offers participation in value-added markets such as health management verification, age verification, source verification, production system verification, and genetic verification.

The OQBN Vac-45 is an example of a health management verification option for beef producers to participate in a value-added market. The OQBN Vac-45 is still a viable and important program as it benefits buyers and sellers in several ways. In addition to healthier, heavier calves when sold, sellers may earn higher prices per/cwt. Research has found buyers paid \$3-6/cwt more for preconditioned calves in recognition of buying healthier, higher-performing calves in a stocker or feedlot program. In 2011, OQBN participants realized \$6.54/cwt premium over cattle that had no weaning or health history.

There are several benefits to participate in the OQBN Vac-45 program. Benefits include reduced cattle stress and shrink, improved immune system, increased sale weight of cattle, increased market demands, brand-neutral (you and your veterinarian select the products to be used and the timing of vaccinations), and OQBN can be dual certified in other health management verification programs.

The following is a list of several OQBN sales scheduled this fall across the state. For a producer to take advantage of these value-added opportunities, the cattle must be enrolled in the OQBN, follow one of three health protocols, weaned by the deadline, and third party verified by extension personnel.

OQBN Location	OQBN Sale Date	OQBN Weaning Deadline
OKC West	November 7, 2012	September 23, 2012
Durant Stockyards	November 8, 2012	September 24, 2012
McAlester Stockyards	November 13, 2012	September 29, 2012
Blackwell Livestock	November 17, 2012	October 3, 2012
Pawnee Livestock	December 1, 2012	October 17, 2012
Tulsa Stockyards	December 3, 2012	October 19, 2012
OKC West	December 5, 2012	October 21, 2012
Durant Stockyards	January 10, 2012	November 26, 2012

For additional information or questions about the Oklahoma Quality Beef Network, contact your local OSU Extension Office or Gant Mourer, Beef Value Enhancement Specialist at 405-744-6060 or at gantm@okstate.edu . Additional information may be found at www.oqbn.okstate.edu.

Why is 45 Day Weaning So Important to Feeder Calf Health??

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Animal Science Professor Emeritus

Most of the “Value-Added” calf sales require that the calves are weaned at least 45 days prior to sale date. Some cow calf producers may wonder why the post-weaning period needs to be so lengthy. Data from Iowa from over a nine year period in a couple of their feedout tests compared the health status of calves weaned less than 30 days to calves weaned longer than 30 days. Data from over 2000 calves were summarized. Calves that had been sent to a feedlot at a time less than 30 days had a higher incidence of bovine respiratory disease (28%) compared to calves weaned longer than 30 days (13%). The percentage of calves that required 3 or more treatments also was significantly different (6% versus 1%) in favor of calves that had been weaned more than 30 days. In fact the calves weaned less than 30 days were not different in health attributes than calves that were weaned on the way to the feedlot.

A summary of this lengthy study can be found on line at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/ansci/beefreports/asl-1648.pdf>. Vac-45 calves apparently have a real advantage in terms of health compared to calves weaned for less than a month or those weaned on the way to the livestock market for sale date. Certainly part of the “value” in value-added calves can be attributed to properly applied vaccinations. However, there is little doubt that a portion of the improved health is due to the length of time between weaning and the movement of calves to the next owner.

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