COW/CALF CORNER

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North American Cattle and Beef Production Down in 2013

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USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) forecasts global beef production to increase again in 2013, following an increase in 2012 from the 2011 low. In contrast, North American beef production is expected to decrease in 2013 with lower production in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. Total cattle inventories are forecast to be lower in the U.S. and Mexico while Canadian cattle inventories may show modest growth after stabilizing in 2012.

Total beef exports among major world exporting countries are expected to increase in 2013. Several major beef exporting countries are to see increased exports including India, now the largest beef (mostly water buffalo) exporting country, Brazil, Australia, and Canada. Mexico, which has increased beef exports dramatically in the last three years is also expected to see continued growth in beef exports.

U.S. beef exports for the year to date are down 12 percent from the 2011 record levels. Exports are down to most of the major U.S. export customers including Mexico, down 21 percent; Canada, down 17 percent and South Korea, down 26 percent. Only Japan is up year over year by a modest 3 percent. However, U.S. beef exports are up to Hong Kong, Russia and Vietnam. . U.S. beef exports are expected to decline again in 2013, following decreased exports in 2012. Lower total beef production and high U.S. beef prices will continue to challenge U.S. beef exports. With lower beef production in the U.S., exports as a percent of production will likely hold constant.

Beef imports in North America are expected to increase in 2013 with larger imports in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. Total beef imports among major importing countries are also expected to increase in 2013 with larger imports in Russia, Japan, and South Korea along with the North American countries. U.S. beef imports are up 13 percent so far in 2012. Year to date beef imports are larger from Australia, Brazil, Uruguay and Mexico, but are partially offset by decreased imports from Canada. U.S. beef imports are supported by a strong hamburger market, reduced cow slaughter and increased lean demand as a result of the product deficit left by not using lean finely textured beef.

Live cattle trade in North America is also expected to decrease in 2013 with reduced cattle exports for both Mexico and Canada. So far in 2012, U.S. cattle imports are up 16 percent, mostly from increased imports of Mexican cattle. However, much of the increased Mexican cattle imports in 2011 and 2012 were the result of drought liquidation in Mexico. Mexican cattle inventories, exportable cattle supplies and total production are all expected to be reduced in 2013. Reduced cattle imports will further squeeze feeder cattle supplies in the U.S. in 2013.

Bull Management in Multi-sire Pastures

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Before the fall breeding season begins, a few simple management procedures involving the bulls can increase the likelihood of a high pregnancy percentage among the cows.

1) In multi-sire breeding pastures, make certain that the bulls that will be pastured together have been in a common trap or pasture prior to the breeding season. Bulls WILL establish a social hierarchy. They will fight to find out who is "king of the mountain". It is better to get this done before the breeding season begins, rather than wait until they are first placed with the cows.

2) Put young bulls with young bulls, and mature bulls with mature bulls. Mixing the ages will result in the mature bull dominating the younger bull completely, and in some instances causing a serious injury. If the plan is to rotate bulls during the breeding season, then use the mature bulls first, and follow with the yearling bulls in the last third of the breeding season. In this way, the young bulls will have fewer cows to breed, and will be 1 - 2 months older when they start breeding.

3) Breeding soundness exams will be a cost-effective way to help weed out those bulls that may be dominant in the bull pasture, but due to poor semen quality, could cause a lowered pregnancy rate or elongated calving season next fall. Visit with your local large animal veterinarian about testing the bulls soon, so that if replacements are necessary, there is enough time and opportunity before the fall breeding season is to begin. If the bulls need to have the feet trimmed, now would be the time to have them trimmed so that the feet will not be sore during the first week of the breeding season. Also, be certain to ask your veterinarian about the need to test the bulls for the reproductive disease, trichomoniasis.