

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Follow BQA Guidelines When Treating and Selling Cows

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Summer time often brings a few infectious ailments to beef cows. Common problems include eye infections and foot rot. Treatment of affected cows will often involve the use of antibiotics. 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. If ever in doubt, rely on the veterinarian-client-patient relationship you have established with your veterinarian.
2. Use only medications approved for cattle and exactly as the label directs or as prescribed by your veterinarian.

3. Do not market animals for food until the withdrawal time listed on the label or as prescribed by the veterinarian has elapsed.
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 in the Oklahoma Beef Quality Assurance Manual website at the menu item "[Record Keeping Forms](#)". Records should be kept for 3 years after sale of the animal.

Pasture and Hay Conditions Are Key to Beef Herd Recovery

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

The U.S. beef herd is likely getting smaller again in 2013 due to unexpectedly large beef cow slaughter in the first half of the year. The 3.4 percent year-to-date increase in beef cow slaughter masks a more dramatic increase in beef cow culling since mid-March. After decreasing nearly 9 percent in the first ten weeks of the year, beef cow slaughter has averaged over 12 percent above year earlier levels for the last 15 weeks. The rate of beef cow slaughter has slowed the last three weeks, averaging only 2.3 percent above the same period last year, with one week slightly lower than last year. Although beef cow slaughter is expected to drop below year earlier levels in the second half of 2013, it would take a severe decrease for the remainder of the year – certainly averaging more than ten percent below last year – to avoid net beef cow herd liquidation in 2013.

Although forage conditions are better now in many locations, it is the residual effects of drought the last two years combined with the long and severe winter that forced more herd culling so far this year. At the current time, 51 percent of U.S. pastures and ranges are in good or excellent condition, compared to only 25 percent at this time last year. By contrast, this year 25 percent of pastures and ranges were in poor or very poor condition, compared to 43 percent last year. The Drought Monitor indicates that about 28 percent of the U.S. is in D2-D4 drought, slightly less than the 29 percent level one year ago. However, 49 percent of the U.S. currently has no drought at all, compared to 29 percent with no drought this time last year.

Drought conditions currently are confined to the western half of the country, where conditions are worsening in many regions; while most of the eastern half of the U.S. has no drought at all. Regional pasture and range conditions illustrate the dramatically different situations east and west with the western U.S. currently worse than last year at 54 percent poor/very poor compared to 45 percent last year. California, Colorado and New Mexico all have more than 70 percent of pastures and ranges in poor to very poor condition. The middle of the country straddles the drought boundary and shows some improvement in pasture and range conditions with the Great Plains at 30 percent poor to very poor compared to 45 percent last year, and the Southern Plains at 31 percent compared to 33 percent last year. Kansas, Nebraska, Texas and Wyoming all have 35-45 percent of pastures and ranges in poor to very poor condition. Farther east, the Corn Belt currently has only 4 percent poor to very poor pastures compared to 46 percent one year

ago. Similarly, the Southeast has only 3 percent poor to very poor pastures compared to 34 percent one year ago at this time.

Total forage production, both pasture and hay, is expected to increase significantly this year compared to drought-reduced production last year. However hay stocks were record low in December and May reflecting reduced production and increased use the past two years. Moreover, the cold spring has delayed pasture and hay production thus far, resulting in continuing short forage supplies. Hay prices are expected to average lower this year compared to last year, but are currently above last year's level. USDA-NASS reported preliminary June prices that are up nearly 10 percent for alfalfa hay and up 11 percent for other hay. The U.S. average alfalfa hay price was \$220/ton and the price of other hay was \$147/ton. Hay prices are up the most in the central and northern Plains and the Midwest compared to the southern Plains. In many states, prices for other hay are up relatively more than alfalfa hay prices.

Forage conditions and supplies are expected to improve significantly in the second half of 2013 in many regions, partially offset by persistent drought conditions in the Western half of the country. However, the lack of forage has already provoked enough additional beef cow slaughter and likely diversion of potential replacement heifers into feeder markets to result in additional herd liquidation in 2013. A sharp decrease in beef cow slaughter and increased heifer in the second half of 2013 may set the stage for potential beef cow herd recovery to begin in 2014.

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