

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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Better Forage Conditions in Many Drought Regions

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

I have had the opportunity to travel nearly 4000 miles in the month of August over a good deal of the drought areas of the Southern Plains and western Great Plains. In one trip I traveled across the Texas Panhandle and made a loop covering much of central and eastern New Mexico. In another trip I traveled across south-central and southwest Nebraska, central and western Kansas, the Oklahoma Panhandle and northwest Oklahoma. Most all of this region is shortgrass native range and a mixture of dryland and irrigated farming.

Recent rains have resulted in significant short term improvement in range conditions in much of these regions. The warm-season grasses that make up native ranges in the central and southern Plains typically receive monsoonal summer moisture and will respond with forage growth resulting in high quality forage in the fall and winter. The recent rains do not imply that drought is erased from many of these regions nor that forage production is back to normal after sustained damage from several years of drought. However, the forage growth that does occur will help stabilize the severely reduced herd numbers in the region and may allow for limited heifer retention this fall. Full recovery of these native ranges will require several years but this could be an important first step in that process. With respect to crop production, the recent rains will do little to change the damage already incurred on summer crops, especially corn, though it may help soybean and grain sorghum production in Kansas and southern Nebraska.

In southwestern Kansas and northwestern Oklahoma, I saw a lot farming activity as producers were preparing wheat ground for seeding. The improvement in western Oklahoma, combined with the removal of drought in much of central and eastern Oklahoma, provides the best opportunity in several years for wheat pasture grazing in the state. Along with improved moisture conditions, moderate temperatures resulting in cooler soil temperatures provide a better opportunity for wheat producers to plant early for forage production.

Improved wheat pasture prospects means that good stocker cattle demand will continue to support strong stocker prices this fall. Feeder cattle supplies are limited by a smaller calf crop, more retained heifer demand and fewer imported feeder cattle. Current feeder cattle markets offer good value of gain, especially for feeder cattle marketed at relatively heavy weights. Stocker producers should evaluate a wide range of potential stocker sizes depending on the amount of time (and total gain potential) available. The market generally favors holding lightweight stockers to heavier weights or starting with somewhat heavier beginning weights. Though it isn't apparent yet, I expect to see heifer prices at less of a discount than typical to

steers by next spring. Despite the challenges of high purchase prices and limited feeder supplies, there is considerable opportunity for a wide variety of winter wheat grazing programs.

Oklahoma Quality Beef Network Preparing for Fall Sales

Gant Mourer, Oklahoma State University Beef Value Enhancement Specialist

With the start of school and football season, many cattle producers are gearing up for weaning of their spring born calves. This time last year many producers already weaned due to drought, but what a difference a year makes. With ample amounts of moisture in eastern Oklahoma and timely rains in western Oklahoma, cattlemen have been able to keep calves on the cow longer. Also, with access to hay and pasture as well as feed prices somewhat lower, producers who were not able to precondition calves prior to sale are finding it easier and cost effective to do it this year.

The Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (OQBN) is available to aid producers in making preconditioning decisions and capturing value of preconditioned calves when it becomes time to market. The Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (OQBN) is a program, which began in 2001, and is a joint effort by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES) and the Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association. At its core, OQBN provides improved communication among producers of all segments of the beef industry and allows for increased education while providing tools to improve access to value-added programs. One way in which this is done is through the OQBN Vac-45 health verification program. Cattle meeting the management requirements are verified through OCES and can be marketed as OQBN Vac-45 cattle. Once verified producers have the option but are not obligated to market cattle in a certified OQBN sale.

The program benefits both buyers and sellers in several ways, including reduced shrink, improved immune system, and weight gain during the weaning period increased market demands and feedlot performance. 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 for a stocker or feedlot program. In 2012, OQBN participants realized over \$9/cwt premium over cattle that had no weaning or health history. Large feedlots have also confirmed the effectiveness of preconditioning prior to entry. The USDA Reports that over 80% of yards find introduction to bunks, vaccinations, weaning at least 4 weeks and castration are extremely or very effective for reducing sickness and death in the feedlot (USDA-APHIS-VS-NAHMS. Feedlot 2011, Part III: Trends in Health and Management Practices on U.S. Feedlots, 1994-2011. July 2013.)

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 Vac-45 program, follow one of three health protocols, weaned by the deadline, and third party verified by extension personnel.

Location	Sale Date	Wean Date
Cherokee Livestock	October 30, 2013	September 15, 2013
Elk City Livestock	November 1, 2013	September 17, 2013
Jordan Livestock, Caddo	November 5, 2013	September 21, 2013
OKC West	November 6, 2013	September 22, 2013
McAlester Stockyards	November 19, 2013	October 5, 2013

Blackwell Livestock	November 23, 2013	October 9, 2013
Tulsa Stockyards	December 2, 2013	October 18, 2013
OKC West	December 4, 2013	October 20, 2013
Durant Livestock	December 5, 2013	October 21, 2013
Pawnee Livestock	December 7, 2013	October 23, 2013

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

Preventing Respiratory Acidosis in New Born Calves

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

We have previously discussed the research that indicates that the average length of time that a mature cow is in stage 2 of calving is less than half an hour. The average length of time that a first calf two-year old is in stage 2 of labor is about an hour. Remember stage 2 of calving is considered the time from the first appearance of a water bag and ends when the calf is completely delivered. What happens if a cow or heifer is allowed to stay in labor for a much longer time?

Every baby calf has a certain degree of respiratory acidosis. Acidosis is the result of the deprivation of oxygen and the accumulation of carbon dioxide that results from the passage of the calf through the birth canal. The excess of carbon dioxide results in a build-up of lactic acid (therefore the acidosis.) In order to correct the lack of oxygen and the excess of carbon dioxide and its by-products, the healthy calf will pant vigorously shortly after birth. The panting will allow the calf to take in more oxygen and release more carbon dioxide and the blood gas concentrations soon return to normal. Some calves, if they have been subjected to a lengthy stage 2 of calving, may be sluggish and slow to begin this corrective process. Depending on the severity of the respiratory acidosis, total correction may take place too late to prevent some damage to key organs. Oxygen deprivation to the brain may result in what ranchers have termed “dummy” calves.

In moderate respiratory acidosis, the calf may be slow to rise to its feet and therefore slow to find the teat and nurse. Colostrum intake in the first 6 hours of life is critical to the disease defense of the calf and any delay in the intake of colostrum may reduce the amount of passive immunity that the calf receives from its mother. Compounding the problem is the ongoing acidosis.

Research has shown that calves that are acidotic will be less able to absorb the antibodies that are contained in the colostrum even if it is ingested on time.

As we observe cows and especially first calf heifers in this fall calving season, it is to our economic advantage to save as many calves as possible. Providing timely assistance to a cow or heifer struggling with the delivery process can be important in getting the most possible calves to market next year at sale time.

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