

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

October 14, 2013

In this Issue:

Livestock Data I Miss the Most

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

Knowing Hay Quality Affects Supplementation Strategy

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Livestock Data I Miss the Most

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

The lack of data that has accompanied the federal government shutdown has many impacts directly on cattle and beef industry participants. Many business transactions depend on publically reported markets for pricing points that determine transaction values. Lack of data also has many impacts on market analysts who synthesize a great deal of data into information about current and future market conditions for the benefit of the beef industry. I monitor many different data all the time but at specific times or in specific market conditions, some data is more critical for me than others. The following is a partial list of data that is particularly important from my perspective at this point in time.

Feeder Cattle Auction Data

Feeder cattle auction data that is missed is lost forever. With historically low feeder cattle supplies and counter-seasonal strength in prices prior to the shutdown, feeder prices at the current time are particularly important. October and November have the largest volumes of feeder cattle trade of the year and typically seasonal low prices. The lack of market data is particularly critical to cow-calf producers selling weaned calves and stocker and feedlot producers determining when to buy.

Cattle on Feed Report

Missing a single monthly Cattle on Feed (COF) report is often not especially important. However, the October COF report is particularly important due to falling feedlot inventories and expectations for sharply lower fed marketing late in the year and into 2014. Perhaps most importantly, the October COF report would include the quarterly on-feed breakdown by animal class. The number of heifers on feed was expected to provide valuable indications of heifer retention and herd rebuilding. Sadly, the data will likely not be provided or, if late, will be difficult to interpret.

Slaughter Data

Daily and weekly slaughter and carcass weight data provide some of the most timely production data in the beef industry. Beef production is projected to drop sharply for the remainder of the year so monitoring slaughter changes is critical. Carcass weights may offset or exaggerate changes in cattle slaughter to cause more or less change in beef production. There is considerable uncertainty about the impact of the Zilmax withdrawal from the market and the lack of slaughter and carcass weight data is compounding the uncertainty. Additionally, weekly cow and heifer slaughter data provide another clue to the magnitude and pace herd rebuilding.

Boxed Beef Prices

For many months the growing question of beef demand has occupied industry participants and analysts. Daily monitoring of boxed beef prices and the Choice/Select spread is the best timely

measure of beef demand. After peaking at record levels in May, the Choice cutout is expected to push past \$200/cwt. again in the coming weeks. The ability of beef wholesale and retail prices to achieve and maintain new record levels, perhaps this fall, is of paramount importance to the entire beef industry and boxed beef price data is essential to assess what is happening.

These are only a few of the many important data that facilitate more efficient beef market behavior...data on feed market conditions, international trade and a host of other factors is badly needed. It should also be noted that some of the impacts of data loss will not go away when market prices and statistics are once again available. Research relies on comprehensive data sets over time and the loss of some data will affect agricultural research for years.

Knowing Hay Quality Affects Supplementation Strategy

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Cattle producers in many areas of Oklahoma have been fortunate this summer to receive timely rains. Many big round bales of hay have been stored for winter feeding. Meeting the supplemental protein needs for the cows and replacement heifers consuming that forage must be done properly and economically. Protein is a vital nutrient for the ruminant because protein is necessary for the multiplication of, and the feed digestion by the microbes in the rumen. The microbial population in the rumen of cows is largely responsible for digesting cellulose in standing or harvested forages.

Higher quality forages are more readily digested in the rumen and have higher rate of passage through the digestive tract of the cow than do lower quality roughages. Therefore the cow can consume more of the high quality forage on a daily basis and receives more total digestible nutrients (TDN) from each pound of feed consumed. If adequate protein is available to cows consuming lower quality roughages, then the rate of passage and the digestibility is improved compared to cows that are inadequately supplemented while consuming the same low quality forage.

Producers may be surprised to know the large differences in protein supplement needed to meet the cow's requirement depending on the quality of forage that makes up the majority of the diet. Below is a table of the pounds of 40% protein supplement needed daily for moderate-sized (1100 pound) beef cows in different stages of production and consuming differing quality of grass hays. (Table is adapted from Richards, Lalman, and McKinney; *Cattleman's Management Record Book*.)

Needed 40% protein supplement (lb/hd/day) to meet protein requirement of 1100 pound mature beef cow			
Stage of Production	Hay Protein Concentration (%)		
	4%	6%	8%
Mid Gestation, Dry	2.2	1.1	0
Late-Gestation, Dry	3.1	1.7	0
Early Lactation	4.7	3.3	1.5
Late Lactation	3.5	2.1	0.4

Larger cows and cows that produce above average milk production will consume more forage and need even more supplement to match their requirements. The table above describes the protein-only needs of the beef cow. Energy deficiency may occur and result in some weight

and body condition loss. Energy needs will be increased if cows are already in thin body condition and must be improved before calving next spring. Also winter weather conditions can greatly increase energy needs. In many instances, the energy requirements can be met with lower protein supplements (for example 20% protein range supplements) fed at about twice the rate as noted in the table above.

Forage quality differences are important, whether the supplement choice is high protein (40%) or lower protein (20% protein). Learn about testing hay for protein content by visiting with your [OSU County Extension office](#) or downloading [Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet PSS- 2589 Collecting Forage Samples for Analysis](#).

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.