

# COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

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## **Latest meat trade data encouraging**

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The latest trade data for April generally showed relative improvement in meat trade despite a variety of continuing challenges. The strong U.S. dollar continues to work against U.S. meat exports and support increased imports. The avian influenza outbreak continues to grow and impact poultry trade; while high prices and limited supplies are the biggest challenges for the beef sector.

Despite bans or restrictions in most markets for U.S. poultry, broiler exports in April were fractionally higher than year ago levels holding year to date broiler exports to a decrease of 8.4 percent compared to last year. Most importantly among broiler export markets is Mexico, which was up 1.5 percent year over year in April and is up 4.8 percent for the year to date. Mexico is by far the largest broiler export market, accounting for 21 percent of total 2014 broiler exports. Year to date broiler exports to China and South Korea are down over 90 percent along with zero exports to Russia (banned in 2014 prior to avian influenza). Turkey exports were down 27.2 percent in April contributing to an 11.4 percent year to date decline compared to last year.

Pork exports were up 10.9 percent in April, cutting the year to year date pork export decrease to 7.4 percent. This is the first year over year increase in monthly pork exports in 2015. Increased pork supplies and lower pork prices are overcoming the negative impacts of the strong U.S. to boost pork exports. Among major pork export markets, year over year April exports were stronger to Japan (up 16.2 percent) and Mexico (up 15.2 percent), China (up 1.4 percent), and South Korea (up 43.2 percent) while Canada was down 13.9 percent.

April U.S. beef exports were down 3.6 percent year over year, the smallest monthly decrease so far this year. Year to date beef exports are down 8.4 percent compared to 2014. Increased year over year April exports to Japan (up 4.8 percent) and South Korea (up 21.7 percent) contributed to year to date increases in U.S. beef exports to both countries. However, North American beef

trade is more troubling with April decreases to Canada (down 10.4 percent) and Mexico (down 25.2 percent) contributing to year to date decreases in beef exports to both countries. The looming threat of tariffs related to Country of Origin Labeling adds to the prospects for weaker exports to Canada and Mexico in the coming months.

April U.S. beef imports were up 27.5 percent compared to one year ago, the smallest monthly increase year over year so far this year. Year to date beef imports are up 40.9 percent compared to one year ago. Australia (up 36.7 percent) and New Zealand (up 28.2 percent) were the leading sources of beef imports in April along with Canada (up 4.6 percent) and Mexico (up 61.4 percent) compared to April, 2014. Beef imports from Brazil, though less than 4 percent of total beef imports in April, were up 95 percent year over year and are up 135 percent for the year to date compared to last year.

## **What to do with the bull after the breeding season?**

Glenn Selk; Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

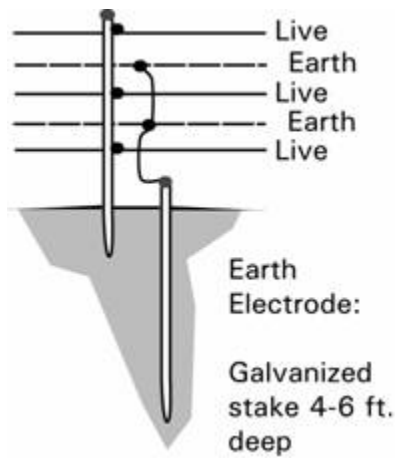
Maintaining a 60 to 75 day breeding and calving season can be one of the most important management tools for cow calf producers. A uniform, heavier, and more valuable calf crop is one key reason for keeping the breeding season short. Plus, more efficient cow supplementation and cow herd health programs are a product of a short breeding season.

However, many small producers lose all of these money-making advantages, just because they do not have a pen or trap that will hold the bull away from cows and heifers for 9 to 10 months of the year. In an effort to learn what others do to overcome this obstacle, we had an email conversation with a Clemson University beef cattle specialist who passed along the method of fencing that they use to separate bulls from their cows.

They use a minimum of 2 acres per bull for their bull pasture. Well fertilized introduced pastures (such as bermudagrass) in Eastern Oklahoma (with adequate rainfall) can stand this stocking density. However, native grass situations will require more acreages per bull unless the producer wants to feed a great deal of hay and supplement during much of the year.

They use a five strand, high tensile fence with the strands spaced at 10 inches apart. High tensile wire is a heavy gauge, smooth wire that can be made as a permanent system with in-line wire stretchers. The first strand is 10 inches above the ground. The end result is a fence that is 50 inches tall.

The fence, of course, must be electrically charged. A GOOD high voltage, low amperage fence energizer or charger provides the energy source. The Clemson design uses the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th wire as charged wires, with the first and the 4th wire attached to grounds. See diagram below. The grounds will be most effective if they are set deep into the soil. This will allow for good “grounding” even when summer droughts cause top soil to become quite dry. Different designs may fit different situations. Some designs electrify the first wire (from the bottom) and make the second wire a ground. Talking to a commercial representative from a reputable fencing supply company can be very helpful.



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