CATTLEMEN'S CORNER BEEF

University of Idaho Extension

JANUARY, 2012

Bull Buying 101

K. Scott Jensen, UI Extension Educator, Owyhee County

Right out of college I went to work for purebred cattle operation in Texas. It was interesting to visit with potential bull buyers and hear what things were important to them in selecting bulls. Some buyers were only interested in price. Anything with two testicles that could walk and was CHEAP was all they were after. What things do you consider when buying bulls?

I recently read an article by Dr. Scott Greiner, an Extension animal scientist at VA Tech entitled "Ten Steps to Buying the Right Bull". He made some great points that I think are worth sharing.

1) Identify Herd Goals. This should be the foundation of your selection decisions. This should reflect where, when, and how you want to market your cattle. What traits are of most relevance? Herd goals should help you make that determination.

2) Assess Herd Strengths and Weaknesses. It is pretty difficult to know what you need to reach your goals if you don't know where you are at! Records on calving and weaning percentages, carcass merit, feed usage, and many others can help you identify herd strengths and weaknesses.

3) Establish Selection Priorities. What traits will have the greatest impact on your profitability? Don't forget that genetics and environment both affect the outcome. Frame 7 or 8 cows might have potential to wean a heavier calf but at what cost in a desert range environment. Heavier weaning weights don't help much if they require a bunch of extra feed.

4) Utilize Selection Tools. Expected progeny differences (EPDs) are available for most traits. EPD indexes have also been developed to assist with simultaneous development of several traits which can impact areas such as carcass merit and post-weaning profit. With the quantity of information that is available though, it is important to determine what EPDs and other information are most important to help you meet your goals and then develop benchmarks relative to each.

5) Establish Benchmarks. EPD values for current and past sires can be used as benchmarks. With these benchmarks, EPD specifications can be set to reflect the desired increase or moderation on performance for a particular trait.

6) Find Source. There are many sources for bulls. Take the time to look for bull sources that have the genetics to take your cattle in the direction of your herd goals. Look for bulls raised in an environment similar to the environment you will put them to work in. Many are the bulls raised in a lush environment on lots of grain who fall apart quickly when the work starts. Buying from a reputable breeder is also important.

. . . continued on page 2

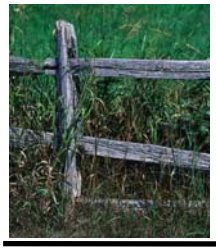
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

BIOLOGICAL CYCLE OF THE BEEF COW	3-4
FEED CALCULATION	4
THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX — OPPORTUNITY MAY BE KNOCKING WITH AGRI-TOURISM	5
RESOLUTION #1 — GETTING CONTROL OF WEEDS	6
WINTER BEEF SCHOOLS	7
UPCOMING EVENTS	8

This newsletter is provided as a public service to producers and others in beef industry related fields. If you do not have an interest in receiving the Cattlemen's Corner Beef Newsletter in the future, please contact the Canyon County Extension Office at 459-6003 and we will remove your name from our mailing list. Likewise, if you know of someone who would like to receive the newsletter, please let us know.

Past editions of the **Cattlemen's Corner Beef Newsletter** are available at:

http://extension.uidaho.edu/owyhee



Bull Buying 101 *. . . continued from page 1*

Will he stand behind his bulls if there are problems? Additionally, it is possible that no one breeder has all the bulls that meet your needs. Better to purchase the right bulls from several sources than take home some that don't quite meet your needs.

7) Do Your Homework. Spend time reviewing the sale catalogs. Search out those bulls who's EPDs match the benchmarks you have set for important traits. Consider also each bull's own performance data. Does it tend to match up with his EPDs?

8) Take a Look. Once you have a list of the bulls that meet your selection criteria on paper, take a look at those animals in the flesh. Your selection list can be further narrowed by removing animals that do not have the phenotypic traits you require. There is no need to bother looking at those not on your original list. One that catches the eye but doesn't meet the EPD benchmarks that you have set will most likely lead you away from your herd goals. .

9) Make a Sound Investment. The value of the right bull cannot be underestimated. Investments in good genetics will pay dividends with improved calves on the short term and improved herd genetics on the long term. Remember that whatever bull you buy will ultimately provide 50% of the genetics of his daughters that you retain in the herd.

10) Manage the New Bull Properly. Proper care can have great affect on a bull's longevity. Be sure to bring him home in plenty of time for him to adjust to his new environment. Be sure he is in proper condition and ready to go to work well before the breeding season begins.

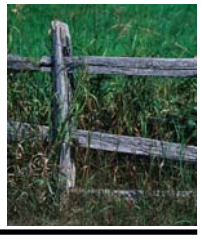
I hope that these ten steps will serve as a reminder of important factors to consider in your bull buying decisions. Two testicles, the ability to walk, and cheap on their own are not good selection criteria!

Ten Steps to Buying the Right Bull

1. Identify Herd Goals
2. Assess Herd Strengths and Weaknesses
3. Establish Selection Priorities
4. Utilize Selection Tools
5. Establish Benchmarks
6. Find source
7. Do Your Homework
8. Take a Look
9. Make a Sound Investment
10. Manage the New Bull Properly

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live.

~George Bernard Shaw



Biological Cycle of the Beef Cow

Ron Torell, Long-Standing Educator and Advocate of Agriculture

One of the most fundamental principles of beef cow management is understanding the biological cycle of the beef cow. This basic principle reveals how a cow's nutrient demands change at each stage of her production. With this specific knowledge under your hat, you as a manager will be better equipped to manage reproduction.

The biological cycle of the beef cow is constant and well-defined. It can be divided into four periods. The first, second and third trimesters of gestation are each 94 days in duration. Given this, the duration of a cow's pregnancy is approximately 282 days. In order for a cow to rebreed and calve at the same time the following year, the postpartum period should be no longer than 83 days.

The postpartum interval is that portion of the biological cycle which is the highest nutrient demanding for a cow. This is the period from calving to first estrus. In addition to the trauma of calving, the cow is lactating. This is a huge draw nutritionally especially if she is genetically a heavy milker. Her uterus is involuting and preparing for estrus. A spring-calving cow is just seeing green grass and may be thin from over-wintering.

The first trimester begins the day the cow conceives. Ideally this should be 80 to 90 days after calving. The first trimester of pregnancy is the third highest nutrient demanding period in the cow's biological cycle. Peak lactation has come and gone but there is still a significant draw for the production of milk. Along with this the cow has the continuous suckling effect which suppresses estrus. By and large spring-calving cows may still have green grass to help meet or exceed their nutrient demands.

The second trimester of pregnancy begins at 94 days after conception and is the least nutrient demanding period for the beef cow. This is especially true if the calf is weaned early on in the second trimester. Peak lactation has come and gone. Weaning generally occurs during this period. The decision of when to wean should depend on the nutrient supply and body condition of the cow. Usually when the grass starts drying up and losing its punch the cow will start losing body condition. Lactation on dry feed can rapidly make a thin cow out of a fleshed cow. On the other hand, given time, a dry cow in the second trimester of pregnancy can actually flesh up on dry feed, provided there is no calf tugging on her. Add a supplement to the equation and you are building body condition that may benefit the cow for over-wintering and breed-back in the following year.

The last trimester of pregnancy begins 188 days after conception. Next to the postpartum period, the last trimester of pregnancy is the highest nutrient demanding period of a cow's biological cycle. Two-thirds of a calf's fetal development occurs in the last trimester of pregnancy. Adequate body condition should be banked on the cow by now. This allows a savings account of energy for her to draw from in time of need. It is not economical to flesh a cow at this stage of production. This puts the thin cow and her fetus at a strong disadvantage going in to the postpartum interval.

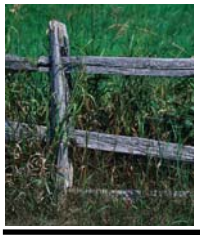
With a renewed understanding of the biological cycle of a beef cow, it's important to have a simplified clarification of nutrient partitioning. This translates in to knowing what nutrient demands are met first by the cow.

1. Maintenance - this entails all the energy necessary for breathing, digestion, walking, maintaining body temperature, and other body functions.

2. Growth - once maintenance needs are met, energy goes to growth. A young female is still growing after her first and even second calf, so she will require more energy compared to a female that has reached mature size.

3. Milk Production - after growth, nutrients and energy are then used for milk production.

. . . continued on page 4



Biological Cycle of the Beef Cow *. . . continued from page 3*

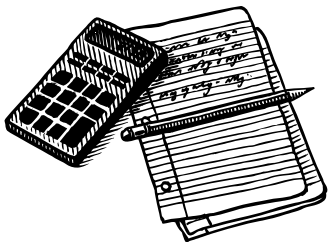
If all the female's energy goes into maintenance and growth, then she will not produce enough milk for her calf.

4. Reproduction - only after the requirements of all other functions have been met will a female's reproductive system develop and function.

It must be reinforced that the ability to match the nutritional requirements of cows in herds with long calving seasons is unlikely unless the cows are grouped according to actual calving dates. For this reason every effort should be made to maintain a tight calving interval. This enables cattlemen to manage on a herd basis rather than on an individual basis.

Feed Calculation

Shanna Hamilton, UI Extension Educator, Adams County



This time of year many producers are feeding hay. Here are some questions we should have already asked ourselves to prepare for winter:

How do we know how much hay is needed for the winter?

How long is winter going to be this year?

Is the hay we are planning to feed good quality?

Are our cattle in good body condition*?

*(*Important to know BCS to determine estimated body weight percentage to feed)*

Calculating the amount of feed needed to ensure we don't have to purchase additional hay is important for two reasons. First, many of us have limited budgets and second, hay can be very difficult to find. Here is a quick way to figure out how much feed you'll need to last through the typical hay feeding months.

For cattle in good body condition, you can estimate, roughly, that hay is needed at 2% of body weight per day, for approximately 150 days. For warmer climates you may use fewer days (120 avg.) for your feeding period length. If your cattle are looking a little thin, you might need to increase the feeding rate to 2.5-3% of body weight.

In my case, if we feed our small herd on average at 25 pounds of hay, per head, per day, for 150 days with 16 head of cattle, 3,750 pounds of hay will be needed per head for the 150 day feeding period. If we multiply the 3,750 pounds of hay per head by the number of head on average, 16, it shows 60,000 pounds of hay we will need.

Whether feeding small bales, approximately 85 lbs. per bale, or large round bales at approximately 1200 lbs., the calculation is the same. For our small operation, calculating 16 head to feed for 150 days, we would need 705 bales, while feeding round or large bales, an operation would need 50 large/round bales to feed 16 head at 25 pounds per day for 150 days. Whether you put up your own hay or purchase, use this easy formula to estimate how much hay you need.

Break down to remember:

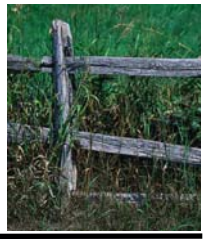
25 lbs. *(2% body weight/day)* **x 150** *(days on feed)* = 3,750 lbs., of hay per head

3,750 x 16 *(# of head)* = 60,000 lbs. of hay

60,000 / 85 lbs. *(hay bale weight)* = 705 small bales

60,000 / 1200 lbs. *(hay bale weight)* = 50 large bales

Once you figure the approximate quantity of hay it will take to feed all winter, it is recommended that you get an analysis of your hay to make sure what, if any supplements will be needed for the herd. The few dollars spent on an analysis can help avoid unnecessary supplementation costs or the wrecks that can come from not meeting your cattle's nutritional needs.



Thinking Outside the Box — Opportunity May Be Knocking with Agri-Tourism

Rikki Wilson, UI Extension Educator, Gem County

Have you ever wondered what more you could do with your land? If you had something to offer that is unique? Maybe your ranch has the potential for a new agriculture enterprise, one that is rising in demand and is becoming a profitable new venture? Have you ever thought about agri-tourism? Agri-tourism is the business of providing tours and services to people who travel to rural areas for pleasure. It includes resort stays, heritage tours, bird watching, hospitability business, special events, and a variety of other activities.

Agri-tourism, direct farm marketing and on-farm value added product operations are growing rapidly across the country. They are a unique industry that helps connect urbanized people to rural settings. Many people living in the hustle and bustle of the city want to feel the fresh air, connect with nature, understand agriculture, take in some "country fun" and educate their children about rural life. Agri-tourism serves as a link and provides a chance for rural advocacy since many urbanites have neither the knowledge nor experience to make informed decisions about policies that affect agriculture. Studies have been shown that tourists across many regions appreciate our agriculture producers and the quality of life they live. As a result, opportunity knocks at the door of many farmers and ranchers.

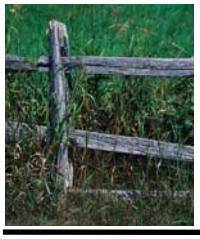
To begin in the venture of Agri-tourism, it's important to first look at your assets. What do you currently have? What land resources do you own? What is the climate and weather patterns at your ranch? What structures exist at your operation? What other attractions do you have, i.e. rivers, fishing, livestock, etc. What are the people resources you have? What skills and strengths do your family members add?

Once you have a list of assets, you should then write down the goals you have for the operation. It's important to note both short and long-term goals. This will help you define your priorities while starting this new business. After writing your goals, begin researching other Agri-tourism industries, and find out what people are spending their money on. Maybe it's a corn maze, a nature trail hike, riding horses, or taking pictures of your land and livestock. Researching will help give you a greater knowledge and a sense of products, prices, and seasons. Also check into visitor guides, and travel magazines, these help give a great insight into the different destination sites in your area.

Next is the challenge of marketing and deciding on liability. It's important to have liability insurance to cover any unforeseen accidents that can happen. It's best to talk with your insurance agent to find out the best coverage for your operation and the type of activities you may provide.

The best marketing tool is word of mouth, therefore once you've established an agri-toursim stop, start telling your friends, family, strangers, and everyone about it. Make a simple brochure or develop a small website to promote your ranch. It's also important to contact your county Chamber of Commerce, as they are great resources in promoting your operation. Also check with local sources to see if there is a farm loop tour, or agri-toursim brochure you can be added too.

In this business of agriculture it's imperative that we begin to "think outside the box". Why not open your ranch up to a whole new business adventure. You might make some new friends, add a little more cash in the pocketbook, and promote the agriculture industry and the rural way of life. It's time to take the next step...is there something knocking at your door?



Resolution #1- Get Control of Weeds!

Stephanie Etter, UI Extension Educator, Canyon County

If doing a better job of weed control is on your list of New Year's resolutions, don't wait for them to appear to plan your attack. Take advantage of the dark winter evenings to research and plan your assault so you aren't scrambling next spring when they appear.

The first step of any weed control program is to identify what type of weeds you have and learn more about them. Weeds can be classified as annuals, biennials, or perennials. Once you understand the life cycle, you can learn when the best time to attack each weed is. Unfortunately there is no one magic day to control all weeds. As you are learning more about the weed also pay attention to how the weed reproduces, is it by seed only or do they produce rhizomes or both?

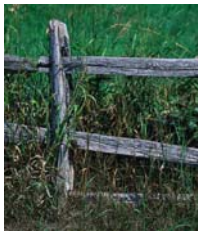
Once you have identified and learned about your weeds, the next step is to figure out which control methods are most effective. Although most of us jump straight to herbicides when we think of getting rid of weeds, there are three types of control methods we can use, mechanical, cultural and chemical control. Mechanical control is anything that will physically disrupt the plant like pulling, tilling, mowing. Cultural control is changing the environment to make it undesirable for the weed to grow. This may involve a change in management such as adjusting timing of grazing or haying. Certain methods are not recommended for certain weeds, which is why you have to do your research. While we may think of chemical control as the cure-all, a good weed control program will incorporate multiple control methods for best control.

Being weed-free may be an unrealistic goal, but with a good control plan, persistence and a healthy environment you can get your weeds to a manageable level.

When selecting any herbicide, make sure to read, understand and follow all the label directions. The label is the law! Make sure the weed(s) you are hoping to control are listed on the label as is the site you are spraying. For best control, treat the weed at the point of its life cycle where it is most susceptible. This may be listed on the label, but it may also be something you learned in your research. When planning any herbicide program it's best to rotate the chemicals you use to avoid any herbicide resistance. You should avoid using chemicals from the same group more than once within three years. More information about herbicide resistance and a chart of common chemicals and their groups can be found in the publication "Herbicide Resistance Weeds and their Management" at http://www.cals.uidaho.edu/edComm/pdf/PNW/PNW0437.pdf.

Although most of us jump straight to herbicides when we think of getting rid of weeds, there are three types of control methods we can use, mechanical, cultural and chemical control.

The final two steps of any weed control program are persistence and creating an environment that works with you to get rid of weeds. Even if you do everything right in 2012 you are still going to have weeds in 2013 because of the seed bank already in the soil. Unfortunately some of those weed seeds can live for many years in the soil but by not adding more seeds to the soil, the number each year will start to decrease. Lastly, while we may have killed the weed, we still need to identify and correct the problem that caused it to grow there in the first place. Could there a soil fertility problem or have we overgrazed that section of pasture? Being weed-free may be an unrealistic goal, but with a good control plan, persistence and a healthy environment you can get your weeds to a manageable level.



2012 Winter Beef Schools

Wednesday, January 18
6:00-8:30 p.m.
Payette County 4-H Building, New Plymouth

- Chute-side Practices, How Are You Handling Vaccine? By Rikki Wilson
- Developing Feeding Rations Using the COWculator by Dr. John Hall and Dr. Benton Glaze

Dinner Served - sponsored by Boehringer Ingelheim Health
RSVP to 365-6363

Thursday, January 19
9:30 a.m.
Washington County Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall, Cambridge

- Dr. Hill from MERCK will be giving examples, using audience participation, on preggin' cattle or not, using ear implants, and weaning calves to the bunk or heading straight to the sale.
- Dr. Benton Glaze, University of Idaho, "Interpretation and Use of the Sale Catalog"
- Courtney Kealey, IGENITY, "Incorporating DNA Technology Into Your Beef Business"
- Sterling Solutions, a USDA process verified program that is age and source verified, and traceable from birth through harvest and fabrication — how the program and process works

Weiser River Cattle Association is pleased to sponsor the 2012 Winter Beef School.
Their Annual Meeting and updates for the Weiser Area will follow the Beef School and lunch.
The Trade Show and Registration begin at 9:30 a.m. (donuts and coffee served);
Speakers being at 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, February 4
10:00 a.m. - 12:30
(prior to Owyhee Cattlemen's Association Winter meeting - see page 8)
Community Hall, Oreana

- Using EPD's in Balanced Trait Selection to Match Cattle to Their Environment, Dr. Benton Glaze
- Effective Trace Mineral Supplementation, Dr. John Hall
- Capitalizing on Value Added Programs, Scott Jensen

Lunch free to all those attending the Winter Beef School

University of Idaho Extension
Canyon County
PO Box 1058
Caldwell, ID 83606

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
CALDWELL, IDAHO
PERMIT NO. 6

The University of Idaho provides equal opportunity in education and employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam-Era veteran as required by state and federal laws.

Society for Range Management 65th Annual Meeting
Spokane, Washington
January 29 - February 3, 2012

"Lessons from the Past - Strategies for the Future". Over 40 symposia, workshops and forums will address the broad spectrum of rangeland interests. The Ranchers' Forum will break new ground with thought-provoking topics and will be available remotely for the first time in SRM Annual Meeting history. Registration and more information on the program is available at: http://www.rangelands.org/spokane2012

Owyhee Cattlemen's Association
Winter Meeting
Oreana Community Hall
(immediately following the Winter Beef School - see page 7)
Saturday, February 4

1:00 p.m. Registration
1:30 p.m. Meeting begins

AI School, Owyhee County Extension Office, Marsing and local dairies
February 28 - March 2

Contact Scott Jensen, 896-4104 or scottj@uidaho.edu
Brochure available on our website http://extension.uidaho.edu/owyhee