

Livestock Manager

September/October 2007 Volume 2 Issue 4

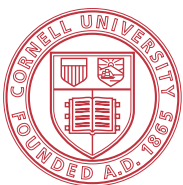


Beef Nutrition Workshop with Mike Baker, Beef Cattle Extension Specialist

Do you have questions about nutrition for your beef animal during the winter or wonder what quality hay is most suitable for your animals? On Thursday, October 11th at 7:00 p.m. Mike Baker, Beef Cattle Extension Specialist, Cornell University will present a workshop at Cornell Cooperative Extension-Broome County on nutrition of the beef animal. He will be looking at several different feed rations that are feasible from our hay and corn products produced locally.

As we look towards the winter months many areas of the state are struggling with their winter supply of forages with a drought occurring in several parts of the state. With limited supply it becomes even more important to maximize the potential out of the forages available.

This workshop promises to be a great opportunity to learn key information about feeding your beef animals as inexpensively as possible while maximizing your animal's growth potential. To register please call Susan at 607-584-9966.



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Agricultural Agencies Round Table

On Thursday October 25th at 7:00 p.m. Cornell Cooperative Extension-of Broome County is sponsoring a Round Table meeting for the agricultural community to inform them about all the agencies, programs and opportunities that are out there to help them. When in the field we hear several times “well who does that or where do I go to learn more about that.” Well here is an opportunity to learn what all these agencies do, the grant programs that they offer and all the educational programs that are available. All agencies that deal with agriculture will be at the table with a short presentation and a display of information. For more information or to pre-register contact Susan at 584-9966.

Horse Pasture Field Day - Saturday, September 22nd **note date change 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Stoltzfus Farm, Nichols, NY (Tioga County) -**

The day will focus on several aspects related to horse pasture and grazing management, including: fencing (options and installation), pasture management, watering systems, grass and weed ID, hay information, and more. For more information, contact Dan Vredenburg at Broome County SWCD at 607-724-9268 or broomesoil@juno.com.

Saturday October 13th at 10 a.m.: Farm Tour at Side Hill Acres, Candor, NY.

Side Hill Acres has been operating since 1987 as a dairy goat farm and since 1994 as a goat cheese processing plant. They have 157 goats and produce many goat products, such as milk, cheese, ice cream, and health and beauty aids. We will tour their facility and see how they have been able to take their dairy goats to the next level. There is no cost for this tour, but you must pre-register to get directions. To pre-register call Susan at 607-584-9966

Saturday November 10th at 1 p.m.: Soap-Making Using Goats Milk CCE-BC 1:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Come and learn from Kelly Tskoumagos of Old Thyme Soaps and Northstar Goat Farm, to learn how to make soap from goats milk using lye and oils. Due to materials used, this class is for adults only. A soap making class for children will be offered in Spring 2008. The cost for this workshop is \$30 per person. Participants will go home with 2-3 pounds of soap. Space is limited and registration is required for this workshop. Please register by November 8th by calling Susan at 607-584-9966.

Carcass evaluation workshops expands skills for meat livestock producers

Understanding when farm-raised live animals are ready for the meat market is the goal of a workshop planned for 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Sept. 15 at SUNY Cobleskill Meat Lab.

Obtaining high yields and quality meat from livestock, grazing technique, meat pricing, and processing information will be covered in the workshop, sponsored by the Northeast Livestock Processing Service Company.

The New York Farm Viability Institute, a farmer-led nonprofit organization that funds research to assist farmers in increasing profits, is providing assistance to the meat livestock project. Earlier this year, the Institute awarded \$72,000 to an effort to assist livestock producers and processors in improving carcass yields, quality control in slaughter, meat cuts and packaging, balancing seasonality of the business and other obstacles to meat raising, direct sales and retail marketing.

The workshop features Dr. Darrell Emmick, a grazing specialist with USDA NRCS, discussing grazing management; Dr. Mike Baker with Cornell University evaluating beef, lamb, pig and goat carcass; meat pricing by Adele Hayes of Sap Bush Hollow Farm; and meat identification by Eric Shelly, manager of the SUNY meat lab.

The Northeast Livestock Processing Service Company was founded by the nonprofit Hudson Mohawk Resource Conservation and Development Council to address issues associated with farm-based meat processing. The Northeast Livestock Processing Service formed a limited liability corporation and is expanding its coverage area beyond the Hudson Valley region.

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“Observing the physical characteristics that livestock take on as they approach readiness for market requires a trained eye. The ability to look at a live animal and know when its ready for slaughter to obtain optimum yield and eating quality is not only a skill but a necessary tool for successful marketing”, said Kathleen Harris, coordinator of the Northeast Livestock Processing Service.

For more information or to register, contact the Northeast Livestock Processing Service at (518) 673-5193 or nelpsc@frontiernet.net. Cost is \$25, or \$20 for Northeast Livestock Processing Service members. Registration is due by Sept. 10.

2007 In State Beef Tour, October 5 - 6, 2007

“Beef Production in Northern New York”

Facilitated by:

Cornell Beef Cattle Extension Program, Department of Animal Science

Cornell Cooperative Extension in Jefferson, St. Lawrence, Franklin and Lewis Counties

New York Beef Producers Association

Come and enjoy the company of fellow beef producers and the beautiful farms of Northern New York State during a most spectacular time of year. Whether you are new to the business or a seasoned veteran, you are bound to learn something new at the scheduled farm stops and while traveling between stops.

Tentative schedule (exact times may vary slightly)

Leave Syracuse Friday, October 5th, 8:00 am

Return Syracuse, Saturday, October 6th, 6:00 pm

Highlights include:

- Commercial cow/calf operation
- Red Angus seed stock operation
- Small slaughter house
- Farm that markets to small restaurants
- Maple Ridge Wind Farm
- Feedlot

Enjoy a specially prepared meal made with locally grown foods and lodging in the historic Hotel Saranac.

The estimated cost (based on double occupancy), is \$150 per person which includes lodging, transportation from Syracuse, breakfast and dinner.

For more information, contact Mike Baker at 607-255-5923 or email mjb28@cornell.edu or print our reservation form: 2007 NNY Tour and Agenda

Sponsor: Novartis Animal Vaccines

October 23rd, 7pm, \$5/per person : Marketing Your Freezer Trade Meats

CCE-BC

Workshop given by Laura Biasillo, Agricultural Economic Development Specialist with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County, on marketing your freezer trade meats. Call Susan at (607) 584-9966 to register or for more information.

October 27. Empire Heifer Development Program Bred Heifer Sale.

The Empire Heifer Development Program bred heifer sale will be at the Beef Unit of Cornell Teaching and Research Center. Dryden, NY. 607-255-5923, mjb28@cornell.edu for more information

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2007 Cornell Sheep & Goat Symposium

The 2007 Cornell Sheep & Goat Symposium will be held on Friday and Saturday, 26th & 27th of October, in the Livestock Pavilion and Morrison Hall on the Cornell University campus in Ithaca and at the Cornell Sheep Farm near Harford, NY. The symposium features educational presentations on management, a trade show, and practical demonstrations about goat and sheep management. The annual meeting of the Empire Sheep Producers Association will be held in conjunction with the symposium at noon on Saturday the 27th of October. A program for youth will be held from 9 am to noon on Saturday the 27th of October as part of the symposium. Complete information and a registration form can be found at <http://www.sheep.cornell.edu/> or by contacting Victoria Badalamenti at 607-255-7712 or by email at vb65@cornell.edu. Registration forms must be received by the 15th October.

Cornell faculty and staff will speak on: 1) accelerated reproduction; 2) management to reduce mastitis in sheep and goat dairies; 3) fermentable fiber for lactation; 4) how to get and use veterinary help; 5) carcass evaluation; 6) how to minimize losses at birth; and 6) managing goats and sheep on pasture. Bernadette Logozar, CCE educator in Franklin County NY, will present a "Livestock Marketing Toolkit." Dr. Keith Inskeep from West Virginia University will address the participants on "Factors Affecting Embryonic Mortality" and Richard Brzosowski and Tom Settlemire, both from Maine, will discuss "Natural Parasite Resistance in Katahdin Hair Sheep." We are honored to have Robert Swize, Director of the American Boer Goat Association as our after-dinner speaker.

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The symposium will start promptly at 8 am on Friday the 26th of October in the Livestock Pavilion with Cornell Sheep Farm manager Brian Magee shearing a sheep for the beginning of a “Sheep to Shawl” demonstration. This demonstration will continue throughout the symposium with volunteers carding and spinning wool and knitting a shawl. After being welcomed by Dr. Ron Butler, Chairman of Animal Science, participants will be able to observe a slaughter demonstration by Denny Shaw. Participants will then be able to view video on Cornell STAR Accelerated Lambing followed by a discussion with the developers of the system, Doug Hogue and Brian Magee or learn from Linda Garrison-Tikofsky about management options to reduce mastitis in sheep and goat dairies. Then a panel of goat and sheep farmers will talk about: “How I manage successful out-of-season breeding.” The Friday morning session will be topped-off by Dr. Keith Inskeep’s presentation of information he and his team at West Virginia have gathered on factors that affect embryonic mortality.

After lunch and a time to visit trade show vendors, Melanie Schotthofer will present results from her M.S. experiment to determine suggested optimum levels of potentially-fermentable NDF for lactation. Then, Bernadette Logozar will present a marketing toolkit, as well as an industry collateral review and some training on marketing that will include a marketing activity that helps people to think about product descriptions and how their products are viewed by their customers. The afternoon will be rounded off by a presentation on “Natural Parasite Resistance in Katahdin Hair Sheep” by Richard Brzosowski and Tom Settlemire. This will be followed by time for socialization at the trade show and a lamb and goat dinner. Robert Swize, Executive Director of the American Boer Goat Association will address the participants after dinner on “Challenges Facing the U.S. Goat and Sheep Industries.”

Alternative evening programs will feature either Denny Shaw, Manager of the Cornell Meat Program, demonstrating carcass cutting and evaluation or a presentation about “Goat & Sheep Cheese Around the World” with Kelly Tskoumagos of North Star Farms in Afton, NY and a demonstration of spinning and weaving with Marlene Halstead of Rocky Top Farm, Ottsville, PA.

Saturday morning Melanie Schotthofer and fellow graduate students will lead a separate youth program while the adults will learn about “How to Get and Use Veterinary Help for Goats & Sheep” with Drs. Belinda Thompson and Mary Smith of the Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine. Richard Ehrhardt will then discuss: “How to Minimize Losses at Birth in Sheep and Goats.” Following lunch and the Empire Sheep Producer’s Association Annual Meeting, Tatiana Stanton will present information about how to manage goats and sheep on pasture.

The program will culminate at the Cornell Sheep Farm near Harford, NY where Brian Magee will demonstrate activities associated with practical flock management.

NEW AGRICULTURAL WEBSITE LAUNCHED

A new agricultural website focusing on Broome County has been launched. <http://www.farmbroome.com>. This website was a collaborative effort between multiple agencies devoted to the sustainability and profitability of agriculture in our county. It features technical information, an events calendar, production information, natural resources information and forums for producers. Information on the website will be continuously updated so visit often.

Please visit the website and click on the "Contact Us" link to sign up for information in your interest area. There is also an area to leave comments.

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Forest Management for Beginners: Saturday, October 6, 2007

CCE-BC - 9 a.m. to Noon

\$10 per person

Pre-registration requested by calling Susan at 584-9966

Topics to be discussed:

- Developing Goals & Management Plans
- Finding & Working with a Forester
- Arranging a Timber Sale

Speakers:

Kevin Mathers, *Natural Resource Educator, CCE-Broome County*

Roy D. Hopke, *NYS Consulting Forester, TBD Broome County Master Forest Owner, Volunteer*

Chainsaw Safety & Maintenance: Saturday, October 6, 2007

CCE – BC 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Free, but pre-registration requested by calling Susan at 584-9966, limited seating.

Ben Crago, instructor for STIHL Northeast, will discuss and demonstrate personal protective gear, chain safety & sharpening tips, chainsaw maintenance, tree felling technique, and hazard tree identification.

Mushroom Identification: Tuesday, October 16, 2007

CCE-BC 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

\$10 per person

Pre-registration requested by calling Susan at 584-9966

Learn to macroscopically identify a few kinds of great edible wild mushrooms. Also learn how to take a piece of a mushroom, mount it on a slide and view the spores through a microscope.

Speaker:

Richard Progovitz, *Certified & Registered Mold Inspector with NACHI Registered Environmental Expert Witness*

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Forest Income Opportunities: Saturday October 27, 2007

CCE-BC 9 a.m. Noon

\$10 per person

Pre-registration requested by calling Susan at 584-9966

Topics to be discussed:

- Forest Crops
- Recreational and Natural Gas Leases
- Real Property Tax Exemption Programs

Speakers:

Rebecca Hargrave, *Natural Resource Educator, CCE, Chenango County*

Bob O'Brien, *Cotton-Hanlon Forester*

Laura Biasillo, *Agricultural Economic Development Specialist, CCE-Broome County*

Grass Bioenergy: Profitable and Practical, but not Political:

Saturday November 10, 2007

CCE-BC 9 a.m. – Noon

\$10 per person

Pre-registration requested by calling Susan at 584-9966

The Northeast USA has millions of acres of land suitable for grass biomass production, without interfering with traditional agricultural crops. Direct combustion is the most straightforward energy conversion option; it is by far the most energy efficient process. Grass can be pelleted for residential use or burned without densification in light industrial sized boilers. Mobile grass pelleting units are now being manufactured in PA. More combustion appliances capable of burning grass are becoming available. The primary stumbling block is the lack of an organized political lobby. Grassroots support is plentiful, but a small amount of organized support is essential to jumpstart any new energy industry. Positive grass bioenergy characteristics include:

- Nearly greenhouse gas neutral
- Compliments farm nutrient management plans
- Ideal for soil conservation
- Compatible with wildlife nesting
- Ideal for maintaining open spaces
- High rural economic development potential
- Efficient use of marginal cropland
- High grower acceptance

Speaker:

Dr. Jerry Cherney, *Professor of Agriculture, Cornell University*

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Mushroom Log Inoculations Demonstration: Thursday November 15, 2007

CCE-BC 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

\$10 per person

Pre-registration requested by calling Susan at 584-9966

Learn the best types of wood, when to cut down the trees and how to inoculate logs with spawn plugs of Shitakes and a few other fine edible mushrooms.

Speaker: Richard F. Progovitz, *Certified & Registered Mold Inspector with NACHI Registered Environmental Expert Witness*

ANNOUNCEMENT OF 2007 EHDP, VALUE DISCOVERY AND POOLED WEANING PROGRAMS

Dear Beef Producer,

Below, please find a summary of three programs designed to increase the competitiveness and profitability of your operation. Whether you sell feeder cattle, finish your own beef or sell seed stock, product evaluation and marketing are key components to your success. Each of these programs has been designed and developed for the New York beef cattle industry with the goal of helping you learn more about your cattle and ultimately increase their value.

We would be happy to visit with you individually and/or provide you with contact information of past participants. Prices for beef cattle have been at all time highs. Now is the time to explore new avenues of evaluation and marketing. These programs help you do that.

PROFIT OPTIMIZATION AND EVALUATION PROGRAMS

a) Cornell Feedlot and Carcass Value Discovery Program – EARLY BIRD ENROLLMENT BY SEPTEMBER 15 \$25, AFTER SEPTEMBER 15 \$30/head.

Purpose: Teach cow/calf producers the value of their calves based on performance in the feedlot and on through the packing plant. Cattle can be fed conventionally or “natural” and marketed accordingly. Calves are accepted in November and fed till their most optimal profit potential during March-July. For more information contact Mike Baker, Cornell Beef Specialist mjb28@cornell.edu, 607-255-5923.

b) Empire Heifer Development Program – EARLY BIRD ENROLLMENT BY SEPTEMBER 15 \$25, AFTER SEPTEMBER 15 \$30/heifer.

Purpose: A management and marketing program for cow/calf producers to evaluate replacement heifer prospects and offer a marketing opportunity for quality heifers. Calves are accepted in December. Heifers can be bred artificially at the heifer rearing facility, or returned home for breeding. Eligible heifers can be sold in April. For more information, contact Martha Wright, Empire Heifer Development Program Manager, maw32@cornell.edu, 585-770-4664.

c) New York Pooled Weaning and Marketing Program - EARLY BIRD ENROLLMENT BY SEPTEMBER 15 \$25, AFTER SEPTEMBER 15 \$30/head.**

Purpose: Provide a uniformly managed group of feeder calves, commingled from several producers, in a truck load lot, which can be marketed at optimum value. Calves are accepted in October and marketed in December. For more information contact Mike Baker, Cornell Beef Specialist mjb28@cornell.edu, 607-255-5923.

MORE DETAILS ON THESE PROGRAMS AND REGISTRATION FORMS CAN BE ACCESSED AT:

<http://www.ansci.cornell.edu/beef/index.html>, and click “Software & Reports”

****NOTE:** To market most effectively, the Pooled Weaning Program will not be conducted unless 60 cattle are consigned.

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USDA to help defray costs of organic certification in 15 states

By Ann Bagel Storck on 8/30/2007 for Meatingplace.com

USDA on Wednesday announced the availability of \$1 million to defray annual organic certification costs in Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia and Wyoming.

This funding is particularly important to smaller producers so that they can meet the voluntary uniform standards set forth by the National Organic Program.

The Agricultural Management Assistance Program will allocate funds to the 15 states in proportion to the number of organic producers in each state. The states, in turn, will reimburse each eligible producer for up to 75 percent of its organic certification costs, not to exceed \$500. Each state is allowed to retain 4 percent of the total amount granted as an administration fee. This program is separate from the National Organic Certification Cost Share Program.

In a news release, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns noted that the 2007 Farm Bill proposal recommends that this program be re-authorized and expanded to include all 50 states and permit producers and handlers to be eligible as well as increase the cost-share reimbursement.

ANNOUNCING NORTHEAST GRASSTRAVAGANZA 2008

March 28th 29th, 2008 @ The Holiday Inn, Binghamton, N.Y.

Hosted by the Central New York RC&D Project Inc.

The Featured speakers are:

Kathy Voth, Colorado-based consultant and owner of Livestock for Landscapes, a business that teaches using animals for weed control, local food production, fire prevention and improving biodiversity, Research Associate with Utah State University's BEHAVE Program and Stockman Grass Farmer contributor.

Kevin Fulton, Nebraska beef farmer, competitive power lifter and coach that custom grazes and grass-finishes over 1000 head on 2300 acres of native prairie grass and cropland. He is one of the few that have lifted the legendary Dinnie Stones in Scotland. Kevin is passionate about the Paleo Diet for good health.

Janet McNally, Minnesota sheep producer and owner of Tamarack Lamb and Wool Co. She is nationally known for practical small ruminant grazing production and profit strategies. Janet is also a regular columnist for the GRAZE magazine.

David Smith, Maryland based farmer grazier, marketer and president of the American Pastured Poultry Producers Assoc. The 67 acre multi-generational family farm has been in operation since the 1700s. David has a wealth of knowledge about on-farm marketing and working with the media.

Dan Barber, Chef/owner, Blue Hill & Blue Hill at Stone Barns Creative Director, Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Pocantico Hills, N.Y. Dan has been featured in the New Yorker, Gourmet Magazine, CBS Sunday Morning, New York Times, House and Garden, Martha Stewart Living, Breathe, and named as the next generation of great chefs for Bon Appetits 10th annual restaurant issue.

PLUS!!! Over 35 practical workshops, Local grass-fed meats, Vendors and Surprises!!!

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New Alternative Swine Production Health Reference

AMES, Iowa - In recent years there has been dramatic growth of specialty markets for meats produced on farms that satisfy new sets of consumer preferences. These production systems bring special opportunities and also unique challenges. A new guidebook, *Managing for Herd Health in Alternative Swine Systems*, draws on the knowledge of veterinarians and experienced producers who are successfully working in alternative production systems. “Alternative swine systems” often differ from a typical, “conventional” operation both in the inputs they use and in the way pigs integrate with the overall farm. There is likely to be tighter integration, with crops providing bedding and in turn relying on swine manure returned to the field. Swine pasture may rotate with other crops. Alternative swine systems are often tied to specific premium markets that determine some of their production practices. Typically this includes the avoidance of antibiotics. It may also include practices to assure animal comfort and restrictions on synthetic wormers. For these reasons, applying basic principles of herd health in alternative swine systems calls for creative management and sound veterinary science.

Managing for Herd Health represents a three-year effort by swine producers, field veterinarians, ISU scientists, and the nonprofit organization Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI, www.practicalfarmers.org). The work was supported by a major grant from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) of the United States Department of Agriculture. Since 1988, SARE has advanced farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound, and good for communities (www.sare.org). Support for the guidebook also came through the Value Chain Partnerships for a Sustainable Agriculture, which is led jointly by PFI and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. *Managing for Herd Health* balances veterinary science and practical management tips. Real-world examples and producer profiles are spread throughout, as are “words of wisdom” from experienced hog farmers. The guide includes: Principles and Strategies; Biosecurity, Pig Flow & Introduction of Stock; Breeding Herd; Farrowing; Nursery and Grower Pigs; Diagnostics & Veterinary Services; Vaccinations & Testing; Table of Significant Diseases; and Additional References. A forthcoming resource from Iowa State University, the *Niche Pork Production Handbook*, will deal with managing specifically for production, topics not covered in detail in the herd health guide.

Copies of *Managing for Herd Health in Alternative Swine Systems* are available without charge from Practical Farmers of Iowa. Contact the PFI/ISU Extension Farming Systems Coordinator Rick Exner, 515-294-5486, dnexner@iastate.edu. The 50-page guide is also available at www.pfi.iastate.edu/pigs.htm, where you can download updated versions of guide chapters and also leave your comments and suggestions for future revisions.

Natural Certification Available to Farmers

Certified Natural New York is a certifying group that ensures the following: Animals are free from antibiotics, added hormones, being fed animal by-products (the farm feed tags are checked twice per year); The raising and producing of animals under humane practices, (certified and audited once per year by the Animal Welfare Institute); Animal identification program that is documented to the customer; A meat grading system to present to your customers (a score based on flavor, color, p.h., marbling, and texture); A source to network animal numbers, for needs, or over supply; A network of family farms to share in markets, genetics, management, husbandry, and overall sustainable farming practices. Certified Natural New York is NOT a co-op, or a buyer or seller of your products.

There are currently 3 different regional Whole Foods Markets interested in purchasing products under this program. Steve Winkler is working to compile a listing of pork, beef, and lamb farmers who are interested in taking part. But it is a multi-species program and will include poultry and meat goats as it progresses.

If you would like more information on the Certified Natural New York Program contact Steve Winkler at lucki7@gisco.net.

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Excerpts from the BEEF Cattle Comments

Prepared by: Mike Baker, Beef Cattle Extension Specialist, Cornell University

FEEDERS CORNER

a. Dressing Percentage of Slaughter Cattle

Dressing percentage is one of many factors affecting the value of a slaughter animal. A basic knowledge of dressing percentage is important in understanding slaughter cattle pricing system and pricing variability. This module explains why dressing percentage is important and discusses factors affecting it.

Dressing Percentage in Perspective

Dressing percentage is calculated by dividing the warm carcass weight by the shrunk live weight of the animal and expressing the result as a percentage. For example, suppose that an animal delivered to the packing plant weighs 1300 pounds. After being killed, the hide, head, feet and gut are removed. The carcass then weighs 767 pounds. The dressing percent of this animal would be 767 divided by 1300 multiplied by 100 equaling 59 percent. This “59 percent” represents the meat and skeletal portion of an animal compared to its live weight. Note that the animal is weighed after transportation to the packing plant so that live weight is a shrunk weight. Also note that the carcass is weighed warm as opposed to cold. The dressing percentage for a cold carcass can be 2.0 per cent lower than the warm carcass dressing percentage for the same carcass. Dressing percentages are highly variable because they are influenced by factors such as live weight, fat level, age, gender, diet, breed, distance trucked, and the type of market where cattle are sold.

Effect of live weight and fat level on dressing percentage

Dressing percentages increase as live weight or as fat depth increases in feedlot cattle. As feedlot cattle approach finishing weights and condition, the amount of body fat increases at a faster rate than other body components (i.e., muscle, bone, hide, viscera, or gut contents). Body fat is deposited within the body cavity, within the muscle or meat (known as marbling), and immediately under the hide. Since much of this body fat stays with the carcass at slaughter, increasing body fat results in higher dressing percentages.

Breed Effects

Meaningful comparisons of dressing percentages among breeds are difficult to make without knowing the reasons for the differences. For example, one breed may typically have a higher dressing percentage because that breed tends to carry more finish at a given weight. If body fat is trimmed off, then the dressing percentage of two breeds may be similar. Dairy cattle commonly yield three per cent less in dressing percentage than beef cattle. Dairy cattle tend to lack both finish and muscularity, and therefore have a lower dressing percentage.

While dressing percentage differences can be related to mature size, there are other factors such as the weight of the hide, head, feet and viscera, which all have an impact. Breeds such as Hereford or Simmental, which tend to have a heavier hide, head, feet and viscera will have a lower dressing percentage since these body parts are excluded from the carcass weight. By contrast, Angus or Limousin breeds tend to have higher dressing percentages because of the relatively smaller portion of their live weight composed of hide, head, feet and viscera.

Gender Effects

Heifers usually have a 1.5 to 2.0 per cent lower dressing percentage than steers at a similar fat level. As a whole, heifers tend to carry more waste fat in the udder, around the internal organs and on the carcass than do steers. The difference in dressing percentage narrows as heifers become fatter than steers. Since heifers mature earlier, they are usually marketed 100 to 150 pounds lighter than steers. There is a risk that heifers are pregnant at the time of slaughter. Pregnant heifers have a lower dressing percentage than open heifers. The drop in dressing percentage relates to the size of the fetus, embryonic tissue and fluids. At similar weights, steers have more thoracic, abdominal and kidney fat than bulls. Steers can be expected to have a lower dressing percentage than bulls at similar external fat levels because fat distribution on steers and bulls are different.

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Diet Effects

Cattle on a high roughage diet, such as hay, silage or pasture, have a lower dressing percentage than cattle on a high proportion grain diet, even if the cattle are marketed at very similar fat levels. A study at the University of Alberta also fed bulls and steers a diet containing either 20, 50 or 80 per cent roughage and slaughtered the cattle at 1265 pounds live weight. Researchers found that dressing percentages decreased with increasing roughage levels in the diet. The reasons for the decrease were the increased gut fill and reduced amounts of carcass fat with higher roughage levels. Study results are shown in the table below.

Treatment Number Dressing, % Fat Depth, in.

20% roughage 11 60.3 0.51

50% roughage 12 59.2 0.44

80% roughage 12 57.2 0.34

Source: University of Alberta

The Pembina Forage Association marketed 18 steers weighing from 995 to 1220 pounds directly off a grass pasture. The steers had been on pasture for approximately 100 days. All carcasses graded A1 except for one carcass, which was discounted for being a dark cutter. The dressing percentages varied from 52.9 to 56.9 per cent with the average being 54.5 per cent. If feedlot finished steer carcasses dress from 57 to 59 per cent, then this data suggests there can be a 3.5 per cent reduction in dressing percentages of carcasses marketed directly from pasture.

Seasonal Effects

Dressing percentages will vary by 1.5 to 3 per cent throughout the year. The period of highest dressing percentages occurs from May through August. This is a period when feedlot conditions are dry, when calves have been on feed for an extended time, and when calves have a light hair coat. Dressing percentages start declining in September as hair coats on cattle thicken and more tag accumulates. Also, yearlings that have been in the feedlot for only 60 to 80 days start coming to market at this time. The lowest dressing percentages tend to occur in December and January. Marketings during this period consist mainly of yearlings that have been in the feedlot for less than 100 days, and which have a heavy hair coat and accumulated tag. Dressing percentages increase through March and April as animals shed their winter hair coat and last year's calves begin coming to market. Last year's calves have been on higher grain diets for periods greater than 150 days. Any weather conditions that affect the hair coat of an animal can have an impact on that animal's dressing percentage. For example, rainy weather can dramatically lower dressing percentages, especially if the hair coat is thick.

Other Factors

Marketing procedures affect beef carcass yields. A feedlot that is 30 km from a packing plant can have lower dressing percentages than a feedlot 400 km from the plant. The difference in dressing percentages will be related to the difference in shrinkage that occurs while the animals are being transported. But, if the shrinkage is only gut shrinkage and not tissue or carcass shrinkage, then the difference in dressing percentages is not important for animals sold on a rail grade basis. Studies at the Lacombe Research Station demonstrated that slaughter weight steers and heifers that fast for 48 or 72 hours prior to slaughter had warm carcass yields nearly 1.0 to 1.5 percent lower than equivalent cattle slaughtered after a 24-hour fast. This weight loss was attributed to losses in carcass lean, fat and water. Management practices such as quiet, efficient sorting and loading, limiting time in transit, loading trucks to recommended weight, and proper delivery timing at the plant will help reduce the interval that cattle are without feed, and lessen the stress level for long haul animals. This ultimately increases the value of the animal.

(Source: "Ropin' the Web", November 2006. Canadian Agriculture Food & Rural Development)

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b. Differences in Source of Vitamin A Supplementation

An experiment was conducted to evaluate the bioavailability of 5 sources of vitamin A fed to cattle on high concentrate diets. It has been reported that there is an 80% loss of vitamin A when cattle were fed 70% concentrate diets, but when fed high-forage diets, losses were only 20%. It was hypothesized that some vitamin A products have protective coatings that are more resistant than others to rumen destruction and that such protection would result in greater tissue concentrations of vitamin A.

Fifty-three yearling Angus x Brahman cattle, consisting of 39 steers and 14 heifers, were used to evaluate vitamin A supplemented from the following sources: Microvit A (Adisseo, Acworth, GA), Rovamix A (DSM, Parsippany, NJ), Sunvit A, Lutavit A, and Microvit A DLC (Adisseo). The vitamin A treatment groups were fed daily 80,000 IU of vitamin A/animal in a low-vitamin A concentrate diet (78.5% oats, 10% cottonseed hulls, 8% molasses, and 2% cottonseed meal; DM basis) and a free-choice, poor quality (low carotene-a precursor for vitamin A) hay for 84 d. Every 28 days, BW was determined and liver biopsies and plasma were collected and analyzed for vitamin A concentrations. All vitamin A treatments showed significant increases in liver vitamin A concentrations compared with control animals (no vitamin A supplementation, $P < 0.0001$), which steadily decreased over time. At all collection times, Microvit A led to numerically, but not significantly, greater concentrations of vitamin A in liver than did all other treatments. However, at the end of the experiment, there was no significant difference in liver vitamin A concentration among Microvit A, Rovamix A, Lutavit A, and Microvit A DLC diets. The authors concluded that when liver vitamin A concentrations at all collection times were considered, Microvit A and Rovamix A appeared to provide the most bioavailable vitamin A.

(Source: C. E. Alosilla, et al., 2007. JAS 85:1235)

CALVING EARLY-WHAT DO I LOOSE?

Given the miserable late winter/early spring weather, I have received questions regarding moving the calving season later. There has been a lot of research conducted on this question. Below is a summary of what I found in the literature.

1. Researchers in Nebraska have evaluated March vs June calving seasons. They report more feed fed (2 t. vs .1 t), more labor (.66 hour vs .18 hr) and lower returns (\$86 vs \$151-\$161) in the March vs June calving season. This occurs even though weaning weights are lower in June calving compared to March. March calves are sold in Oct/Nov, which typically sees a lower price for feeder calves, compared to calves born in June and sold in January (January, on average has higher feeder calf prices).

2. Another Nebraska study documents no difference (485 lb vs 472 lb, $P = 0.11$) in weaning weights or cow productivity for March vs Apr calving, if calves are weaned at the same age.

3. Finally, researchers in Montana reported no difference in weaning weight of Feb vs April calving if weaned at the same age, but when weaned at 140 vs 190 days there was a difference (584 lb vs 540 lb, $P = 0.001$) of 44 lb in weaning weight. They also reported calf mortality of 3.5% in Feb. calving compared to 1.5% in April and June calving.

Bottom line, it appears there is an advantage to moving the calving season out of late winter to early/mid spring. However, each operation must evaluate their own set of feed, labor and facility resources to determine the best season for their conditions. Also, calving later means calves will be too light for marketing in the traditional months of October and November.

References:

Adams, et al., 2001. *June Versus March Calving for the Nebraska Sandhills: Production Traits. Nebraska Beef Report.*

Carriker, et al., 2001. *June Versus March Calving for the Nebraska Sandhills: Economic Comparisons. Nebraska Beef Report.*

Deutscher, et al., 1991 *Effects of breeding season length and calving season on range beef cow productivity JAS 69:3453.*

Grings, et al., 2005. *Calving system and weaning age effects on cow and preweaning calf performance in the Northern Great Plains. JAS 83:2671*

Livestock Manager

EFFECTS OF TRANSPORTATION ON PREGNANCY RATE IN BEEF COWS

Objectives of these studies were to determine the effects of flunixin meglumine (FM, a generic form of Banamine™ administration on early embryonic mortality and cortisol concentrations in transported and non-transported cows approximately 14 d after AI.

Elevated serum cortisol concentration has been used as an index of stress in cattle. Treatments were transport (n = 129), transport + FM (n = 128), no transport (n = 130), and no transport + FM (n = 96). Flunixin meglumine (approximately 1.1 mg/kg of BW; i.m.) was administered before the cows were separated into transportation groups. Transportation included 4 to 6 h of transportation, without calves, via semitractor trailer. Nontransported cows remained penned, with their calves in adjacent pens, during the same period as the transported cows. Cows that received transportation + FM tended ($P = 0.07$) to have greater AI pregnancy rates (74%) than those that did not receive FM (66%), irrespective of transportation. Cortisol concentration was greater ($P < 0.05$) for transported cows than for nontransported cows. Cows receiving FM had greater ($P < 0.05$) AI pregnancy rates than non-FM cows (71 vs. 61%, respectively).

The authors concluded that transportation of cows approximately 14 d after AI increased serum cortisol concentrations but did not affect AI pregnancy rates. However, treatment of cows with FM increased AI pregnancy rates, irrespective of whether they were transported.

(Source: Merrill et al., 2007. JAS 85:1547)

Livestock Manager

Calendar of Events

September 2007

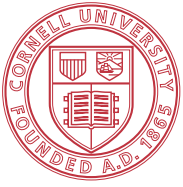
- September 9 – Family Day in the Garden-CCE-BC
- September 15 – Pooled Weaning Program Deadline
- September 15 – Carcass Evaluation Workshop-SUNY Cobleskill
- September 22 – Horse Pasture Field Day-BC-SWCD

October 2007

- October 5&6 – NNY Beef Production Tour
- October 6 – Farm Management for Beginners-CCE-BC
- October 6 – Chainsaw Safety and Maintenance-CCE-BC
- October 11 – Beef Nutrition Workshop with Mike Baker-CCE-BC
- October 11 – Road Kill Composting Workshop-Syracuse NY -255-1187
- October 13 – Side Hill Acres Goat Farm Tour-CCE-BC
- October 14 – Northeast Small Farm and Rural Living Exposition and Trade Show, Ulster County Fairgrounds
- October 16 – Mushroom ID Workshop-CCE-BC
- October 20 – Otsiningo Park Farmers Market-CCE-BC
- October 23 – Marketing Your Freezer Trade Meats-CCE-BC
- October 25 – Agricultural Agencies Round Table-CCE-BC
- October 26&27 – Sheep and Goat Symposium- Cornell University
- October 27 – Forest Income Opportunities Workshop-CCE-BC
- October 27 – Empire Heifer Development Program Bred Heifer Sale-Cornell University

November 2007

- November 1 – Forestry Financials-CCE-BC
- November 5 – Computer Class on Word-CCE-BC
- November 8 – Scaling Up for Farmers CSA's-CCE-BC
- November 10 – Bio-Energy Workshop-CCE-BC
- November 10 – Soap Making Using Goats Milk-CCE-BC
- November 12 – Computer Class-Excel-CCE-BC
- November 13 – Making the Organic Transition -Dairy-CCE-BC
- November 14 – Making the Organic Transition-F&V/Meat-CCE-BC
- November 15 – Log Inoculation Demonstration-CCE-BC
- November 19 – Computer Class-Email and Internet
- November 26 – Computer Class-Publisher-CCE-BC
- November 27 – Scaling Up for Farmers: Production Methods-CCE-BC



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