



Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc.

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The Great Plains News Feed



Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc.

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The Latest across the Plains



Back to School

Now that fair is done, the kids' summer activities are over, and everyone took a nice vacation with those cheap gas prices it's time to hit the grind stone. The house may be a little quieter during the day while kids are at school, but that quiet will soon be replaced by the sound of weaning livestock. We wish everyone the best of luck this fall.

Football Fever!

Everyone at Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc. is excited for the upcoming college football season as many others surely are too, but we are even more excited for the next part of beef season. Some football teams have a few new faces on the sidelines this year and we want to show you the faces for our GPLC roster. To learn more about our staff you can find more information on our website. Feedlots are going to fill up with cattle and GPLC is ready to serve you and all your livestock nutrition needs. We are ready for you and your calves to help take the stress off both.

Keep Up-to-Date

We hope many of you take advantage of our FREE classified advertising and business advertising to our clients on our website. It is an inexpensive way to get your livestock, grain, hay, or whatever you want put out there. If you are interested point your browser to www.GPLC-Inc.com to submit a form or contact Brent Nelms in our office. Keep in mind the services we offer at our website are for you. We will continue to make additions and improvements to our website to better serve you.

Staff



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Calendar of Events



- **Sept. 5-14** Kansas State Fair, Hutchinson, KS
- **Sept. 9-11** Husker Harvest Days, Grand Island, NE
- **Sept. 25-28** Ak-sar-ben 4-H Livestock Exposition, Qwest Center, Omaha, NE
- **Sept 16** Risk Management Workshop, Chariton, IA; sponsored by Iowa Beef Center, IA Cattlemen's Assoc., & others
- **Sept. 18** NCBA's Stockman and Stewardship Tour, Maryville, MO
- **Sept. 18** Beef Day, by the University of MO Extension, South Research farm south of Columbia, MO
- **Sept. 24-26** Beginners Grazing School, by the University of MO Extension, Linn County Research Center
- **Oct. 1-2** National Pork Producer's Oktoberfest, National Pork Board Office, Des Moines, IA
- **Oct. 2** Kansas State Beef Stocker Field Day, Manhattan, KS



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Timely Reminders

General

- ✓ Be sure to get your commodities and byproducts booked and contracted.
- ✓ Have us sample hay and silage (silage greater than 4 weeks after harvest).

Beef

- ✓ Prepare supplies and pen conditions for weaning calves

Swine

- ✓ Check ventilation and heater settings for winter months

Unused Feed

- ✓ If you get to thinkin' you're a person of some influence, try orderin' somebody else's dog around.

Successfully Weaning and Starting Calves in the Feedlot



by Dr. Jeremy Martin, Ruminant Nutritionist

Although we see fewer and fewer bawling calves entering feedlots, a number of you will still experience some unweaned calves entering the feedlot this fall. Now is the time to get prepared for these calves to ensure the best possible performance. Management of bawling calves is highly dependent on the source and level of stress, but there are some general guidelines you should keep in mind.

Now is the time to prepare pens for fall-arriving calves. Hydration is extremely important, so make sure water sources are clean and readily accessible to calves. Pay special attention to approaches to water sources and feed bunks so that calves can comfortably access both. Adjust floats and neck rails to make sure your facilities are well-suited to calves.

Immune function is highly dependent on nutrition. There are a number of antibiotics that can help prevent acute disease outbreaks, but they cannot be expected to work if the calves are not eating. Trace mineral nutrition is critical in animal health, please see the previous newsletter for more information (previous newsletter can be found on our website or call our office for another copy). Providing long-stem grass or prairie hay in the bunk and the pen upon arrival is a good idea since calves are accustomed to grass and will usually begin consuming high-quality grass hay soon after arrival. However, we do not like to be too conservative because grass hay alone will not meet the protein and energy requirements of the calves, and getting calves on feed in a reasonable amount of time can shorten days on feed and improve efficiency. We recommend reviewing your intake guidelines, and would be glad to provide intake guidelines for your situation.

Rations high in starch or fermented feeds such as corn silage are not recommended immediately upon arrival. However, balanced rations including wet by-product feeds (gluten and/or distillers) can contribute valuable protein and abundant energy. These energy sources are low in starch, and thus better suited to calves accustomed to a forage-based diet. As a bonus, both are highly palatable and our experience has been that calves should be offered a limited amount of starter ration containing these byproducts within 12-24 hours of arrival. Typically, these calves start on feed more easily, gain faster, and remain healthier than calves that remain on hay alone for an extended period of time. In many cases, calves will be lined up at the bunk and will have made the transition to the mixed ration alone within just a few days. Remember, the goal is to achieve your intake goals as quickly as possible without creating digestive disorders.

Calf health is obviously a big concern when unweaned, highly-stressed calves enter the feedlot. We recommend working with your veterinarian to determine the best strategy for your calves. Make sure that everyone involved in doctoring is clearly aware of your metaphylactic treatment strategy, if applicable. Even more importantly, make sure your crew has guidelines for further treatment. A number of medicated options are available in the feed, and we routinely use many of these medications in starter rations. We would be happy to work with your veterinarian to customize your medicated feeding program, and look forward to seeing you soon.

Corn Silage; when is it ready and how should it be chopped?



by Bill Chapman, M.S., Dairy Nutritionist

Corn silage season is here again. Here are some considerations to help us avoid the corn silage slump this fall, because once it's in the pit we're stuck with it. The first thing to consider is if the silage is going to be processed with a roller. If the silage is processed then the recommended chop length is 3/4 inch Theoretical Length of Cut (TLC). With corn silage that is not processed the recommended chop length would be 1/4 to 1/2 inch TLC. I like to see the whole plant moisture 65 to 68%. I would rather see the silage a little too wet, 70% moisture, than too dry. However, harvesting at moisture levels above 70 % will result in excessive loss of valuable nutrients through seepage while moisture levels less than 50 % provide a greater opportunity for mold growth from insufficient packing. Also, corn silage that is too dry is unavailable to the cow and passes right through the digestive tract, however, the analysis shows that the silage is extremely high in energy. The bottom line is that the energy is not getting to the cow. Whole plant moisture should be the ultimate indicator on when to chop corn silage. Milkline marks can be used as a guide, but total plant moisture is the ultimate indicator.

There is some thought that if corn silage is processed then moisture content is not a factor. In fact, waiting until blacklayer will increase the energy because there is more starch in the kernel. According to research, there is no advantage allowing the corn to mature past 3/4 milkline. The danger of waiting is that the processor misses more kernels as the grain matures, and hardens. Other factors can affect how well the silage is processed 1) Speed in the field 2) Space between the rollers 3) Chop length 4) Size of the chopper head 5) Variety of corn 6) Hours on the rollers 7) Tons/Acre. All of these factors can have an effect on the processing of corn silage, so why put moisture as another factor when you can avoid it?

If a custom harvester is putting up the silage and you don't have as much control over the moisture, monitor the silage and make sure that the majority of the kernels are being crushed. If the kernels are coming to the pit whole have the chopper slow down and tighten the rollers.

One of the questions always asked by producers is: Is my corn silage processed correctly? The typical lab analysis determines the chemical composition of the feed which would include Protein, ADF, NDF, Starch, Minerals, etc. Standard lab analysis tells us what is in the feed, but does not give us any indication on what is available to the cow. Physical characteristics such as chop length and kernel processing also play a role on starch utilization and energy available to the cow. To further evaluate your corn silage on the physical characteristics, some labs offer a test for corn silage processing score. Corn silage processing score will take the physical characteristics of your silage and assign a number that will allow you to compare different samples and assign a grade to the processing.

This article focuses on when to chop, what chop length and kernel processing. There are several other factors that also need to be done correctly to assure high quality forage, feel free to call us and discuss these further.

Benchmarking as a Tool for Swine Producers



by Dr. Jason Schneider, Monogastric Nutritionist

"You can't manage what you don't measure."—Pete Drucker

I think starting out this newsletter about the use of benchmark data with that quote is especially fitting. As any swine producer knows their operation is basically a manufacturing company that is designed to produce as much pork as possible. This is true regardless of whether your individual operation is designed to be farrow to finish, wean to finish, or feeder pig production. Thus, to run a successful company, producers need to stress pig throughput to be as efficient as possible. This is where benchmarking becomes a great asset to the swine industry by acknowledging the areas of production that need to be improved. However, the sheer amount of data generated can be intimidating and confusing to some producers who do not know exactly what to examine. According to Mark Greenwood of AgStar Financial Services, some of the first benchmark data that should be examined is the number of pigs per sow per year (PSY). By examining the PSY record the cost per weaned pig can be calculated. For example, the combined total cost per sow per year is very close to \$800 and for every two more weaned pigs achieved it will cost an extra \$20. Thus, increasing your herd's PSY from 20 PSY to 30 PSY will cost a total of \$900 per sow per year, yet the cost of weaned pigs will decrease from approximately \$40 to \$30. I also want to stress that it is not just about producing that extra pig, but producing good quality, highly viable pigs. Furthermore, the number one benchmark record that producers should be paying attention to is the pounds of carcass sold per sow per year. This calculation shows your effective rate of throughput and is the key driver of long-term success. For instance, the average amount of carcass lbs. per sow per year is approximately 3,380 lbs, so if a 2,500 sow farrow to finish farm can increase the carcass lbs. marketed throughput to a goal of 4,600 lbs. at an average of \$ 0.70 per carcass the farm can yield more than \$ 2,000,000 in revenue. In today's turbulent economic times that can mean the difference between staying profitable and losing money.

However, a disadvantage of benchmarking is they are by definition retroactive and the time lag between production records and what is actually occurring in your facilities can be an extended period of time. Regardless, properly using benchmark data will increase your profitability and guarantee long term success in the swine industry.