



Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc.

500 S. 4th St.
P.O. Box 377
Eagle, NE 68347

The Great Plains News Feed



Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc.

Phone: (402) 781-9378

Fax: (402) 781-9379

www.GPLC-Inc.com

March/April
2009

The Latest across the Plains



Best of Luck

Believe it or not, spring is here! The winter weather has yet again given farmers and ranchers a reason to stay in the shop and prepare machinery for another season or time to catch up on that pile of papers on the desk. Calving weather has been good for some and bad for others; nonetheless, we hope everyone has a safe and successful calving season whether you are finishing up or just getting started.

New Markets

Many of you are aware that we changed our website a few months ago. We have continued to update our website to bring you the resources you need to help you and your operation run effectively. We have teamed up with Agricharts™ to supply the most up-to-date markets possible in a clean and user friendly manner. Features of our new "Marketing Site" include Livestock and Market Overviews, Cash Grain Bids which can be looked up by zip code, Futures, Options, Daily Market Charts, Historical Data, Ag News, USDA Reports, and Weather and Maps. Producers have called and requested improvements and we appreciate the comments and suggestions very much. We continue to make updates and if you ever have a suggestion or question regarding our website please give Brent Nelms a call in our office.

Staff



Ki Fanning, Ph.D., PAS

Ruminant Nutritionist

Cell: (402) 890-5505

Ki.Fanning@GPLC-Inc.com



Jeremy Martin, Ph.D.

Ruminant Nutritionist

Cell: (402) 890-5507

Jeremy.Martin@GPLC-Inc.com



Bill Chapman, M.S., PAS

Dairy Nutritionist

Cell: (402) 416-3277

bill@cmpdairy.com



Stan Smith

Office Manager

Stan.Smith@GPLC-Inc.com



Brent Nelms

Office/Marketing

Brent.Nelms@GPLC-Inc.com

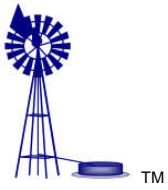
Calendar of Events



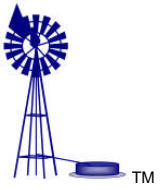
- **Mar. 26** Nebraska Cattlemen, *Colorado Nutrition Roundtable*, University of Nebraska Panhandle Research & Extension Center, Scottsbluff, NE

- **Mar. 30** MO Extension, *Beef Production Systems Workshop*, Springfield, MO
- **Apr. 1** ISU Extension, *The Sheep Industry: Options & Opportunities Workshop*, Washington, IA
- **Apr. 9** A.I. Workshop, Dixon Springs, IL
- **Apr. 11** Nebraska Beef Ambassador Contest, Kearney, NE

- **Apr. 16** *2009 Roundup*, KSU Agriculture Research Center, Hays, KS
- **Apr. 18** Iowa Cattlemen's Association Bull Sale, Dunlap, IA
- **Apr. 21-23** University of Nebraska, *Pork 101 Workshop*, Lincoln, NE
- **Apr. 25** 1st Annual NWMSU Block & Bridle Heifer/Steer Show, Rock Port, MO



The Great Plains News Feed



Timely Reminders

General

- ✓ Realize there are two fears in any market; fear and greed.

Beef

- ✓ Semen check bulls.
- ✓ Place cows on a High-Mag mineral.
- ✓ Haul as much manure as possible out of pens this summer and stockpile for fall spreading.

Swine

- ✓ Make plans for summer marketing; 70-75% of yearly profits are made in summer months.
- ✓ Check fat levels in diets or plan when to use fat in diets for summer due to limited pig space.

Unused Feed

- ✓ If you decide to give a critter an attitude adjustment don't be surprised if they learn their lesson.

Top Ten Feedlot Profitability Tips



by Dr. Ki Fanning, Ruminant Nutritionist and

Dr. Jeremy Martin, Ruminant Nutritionist

Two things that we cannot control are the weather and the price of cattle; however, the following are ten things that we can control to improve profitability.

1. Weather does affect feed intake of cattle; therefore, if you adjust daily pen intakes taking into account the affect of weather conditions you may be able to prevent getting too far ahead or behind the cattle (i.e. if the temperature has been in the high 30's for the last five days and is expected to jump up to the 70's tomorrow you may want to pull a pound per head of feed out in anticipation of reductions in intake.
2. Keeping the pens scraped and in condition to minimize mud will minimize the energy losses due to the energy expended walking through the mud and the intakes of cattle will be increased if it is easier to get to the feed bunk.
3. Muscle (meat) is mostly made up of water. Water is also a major mechanism for cooling during the summer. Feed intake (dry matter) is positively correlated to water intake, in other words, if you increase water intake you increase feed intake. Clean fresh water is consumed at higher rates than dirty and/or stagnant water.
4. Hay length in a TMR is the most common mistake we see made in the feedlot industry. Hay longer than the distance between a bovine's nostrils can be sorted; therefore the most aggressive cattle will be eating a higher concentrate diet (higher energy) than expected and the timid cattle will be eating a diet higher in forage diet (lower energy) than expected. Worse yet, bloats, founders, erratic intakes, and digestive deads can result.
5. When building housing for confined cattle the objective is to keep the cattle out of the mud and dry hided. This will maximize the amount of energy that the animal will convert to tissue as opposed to trudging through mud and staying warm from wet hides. DO NOT build the building to keep the cattle warm such as high walls that are permanent. This will

also keep the cattle warm in the summer. Additionally, by blocking the air flow the bedding stays wetter.

6. Feeding cattle too long is rarely profitable. At the end of the feeding period, gain and efficiency of gain are reduced. Make sure you have a projected harvest date for each lot and try to abide by those projections.
7. Starting cattle on feed is an art and learning this art can be tricky, but is important. The appropriate strategy will depend on the cattle, their previous history, and their future. While we generally want to be fairly aggressive about getting cattle on feed, there are exceptions. In some situations, starting cattle more slowly can help them perform better on feed. Consult your nutritionist for specific recommendations.
8. Most of the profit in cattle feeding is made when cattle are bought or sold. Control all the risk you can by avoiding cattle that are already sick when they are bought. Although some health problems are unavoidable, cattle should not be sick coming off the truck. If they are, you need to re-evaluate your buying process.
9. Monitor implant programs closely. When cattle arrive at the feedlot, determine what implant strategy will be employed and make sure cattle receive a traditional implant every 80 to 100 days, depending on the implant. Longer-term implants are available, and may be appropriate for certain cattle.
10. Take advantage of programs that offer a good return on investment. Source and age verified cattle, NHTC cattle, and natural cattle can be profitable if conditions are right and incoming cost is kept under control. Be aware of these opportunities so you can capitalize on them when the time is right.

Top Ten Cow/Calf Profitability Tips



by Dr. Ki Fanning, Ruminant Nutritionist and

Dr. Jeremy Martin, Ruminant Nutritionist

1. Good fences make good neighbors. Keeping your neighbors bulls and cows out of your pasture and vice-versa will help minimize hurt animals, loss of animals, and disease transfer (i.e. Trichomoniasis is a sexually transmitted disease that is becoming more prevalent in the west and causes open cows to have abortions).
2. Keep records of animal performance by age group, pasture, etc. By keeping records, informed decisions can be made to improve herd performance. Cow herds records should include, but are not limited to: pregnancy, cycle conceived (1st, 2nd, or 3rd), birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight, and the date bulls were turned out.
3. Feedlots do pay more for calves that have been weaned and had shots. To capture these increases in calf prices the sale barn needs to be notified in advance that the calves will be brought in, what was done to the calves, and how they were fed. This gives the barn time to notify buyers of your calves. Weaning calves also gives you the opportunity to put extra weight on the calves inexpensively. High grain diets are not typically recommended.

4. You get what you pay for, so don't buy cheap bulls. Unlike most cows, a bull will be responsible for 25 to 50 calves each year and can also be responsible for the direction of your future genetics. By purchasing bulls from a sale barn or leasing bulls you are not only purchasing poor quality genetics, but you may also be introducing sexually transmitted diseases into your herd. It is best to buy bulls from a reputable breeder and buy very good genetics (you do not need to buy the highest priced bull, but do not look for the one sold for killer price).
5. Cull cows are a commonly missed opportunity. Cull cows can put weight on very fast for the first couple of months. By feeding cull cows a high concentrate diet in confinement for a month or two, 100 to 200 pounds can be easily and inexpensively add.
6. Develop a grazing plan. Forages are the primary, and one of the more expensive costs incurred by a cowherd on an annual basis. Determine major grass species in your pastures and construct a sustainable grazing plan to manage forage availability throughout the year.
7. Consult your herd veterinarian to make sure your health protocol is up to snuff. We encourage testing for persistently-infected (PI) BVD animals and eliminating them from the herd. Know your scheduled vaccinations and administer them at the correct time.
8. Body Condition Score (BCS) is an important indicator of long-term nutritional status of the cowherd. We recommend producers condition score cows 3 to 4 times per year. Key times include pre-calving, post-calving prior to turnout on spring pasture, at weaning, and midway between weaning and calving. Ideal BCS will depend on your system and time of year, but generally a BCS of 5 to 6 at calving is desired, and a BCS of 4 should be the minimum at any time of the year.
9. Many producers believe feeding cows well during late gestation increases birthweight of calves and leads to more calving difficulty. Research proves that calf birthweight can increase if cows are dramatically overfed during late gestation. However, increased calving difficulty does not become a problem unless cows become obese. In fact, cows in good condition (5-6) that are receiving adequate protein and energy often calve easier than thin cows because they have more energy reserves to support the calving process. You cannot starve birthweight out of a calf and still get a strong, healthy calf out of the process.
10. Last, but certainly not least, keep track of expenses. Identify areas with room for improvement; areas where costs can be cut without concomitant reductions in income. Profitability is simple: income – expenses. If you do not have an accurate record of both it's hard to determine whether your business is sustainable.



“Turning Science into Money”