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The Great Plains News Feed

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Feedlot Tracking

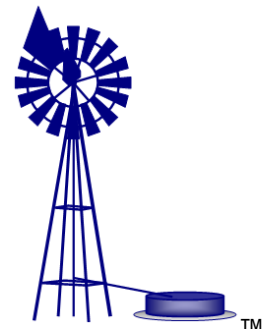
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**September / October
2012**

The Latest Across the Plains

A New School Year Has Arrived

As the fair season is coming to a close, it is just about time to say good-bye to summer and hello to fall. The school year is starting up and the chilly air will arrive before we know it! This time of year also brings on weaning calves and feedlots will start to fill up quickly. Please remember Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc. can help you with any of your weaning and feedlot nutrition needs and we wish everyone the best of luck this fall!

We want to hear from you....

Do you have a question you would like one of the nutritionists to address in depth in our newsletter? Just submit your question through our website www.gplc-inc.com and we will get to work on it.

Weaning and Receiving

Prior to weaning the calves

- ❖ Give them a round of vaccinations, dehorn, worm and then put them back with the cows. This will reduce stress and allow the calves to mount a greater immune response to vaccinations.
- ❖ Creep feed the calves for at least 4 weeks prior to weaning. This will increase the energy intake of the calves prior and during weaning. Calves that know how to eat are a lot less likely to get sick.
- ❖ Newly weaned calves should have 24 inches of bunk space and 2 to 4 inches of waterer space.
- ❖ Questions; call your GPLC Nutritionist

Prepare for new arrivals

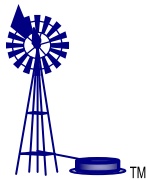
- ❖ Make sure manure is hauled out of the pens.
- ❖ Waterers are clean. They should be cleaned weekly.
- ❖ Fences are fixed and cables are tight.
- ❖ Remove from the pen any sharp or toxic objects.
- ❖ Bunks are clean and straightened.
- ❖ Received calves should have 24 inches of bunk space and 2 to 4 inches of waterer space.
- ❖ If the calves have been creep fed, put a creep feeder in pen for a few days; also feed some of the creep feed over long stem hay in the bunk.
- ❖ Put extra waterers and feed or lick tubs by fences to get calves walking the fence interested in drinking water and eating feed.
- ❖ Questions; call your GPLC Nutritionist

EZ Start Program

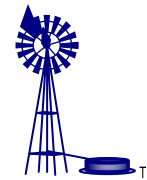
The EZ Start calf starter program is very effective for getting new, stressed calves on the right path. The combination of chromium and Diamond V yeast encourages intake and improves glucose utilization and the inclusion of an ionophore helps ensure appropriate feed intake and digestion. The EZ Start program is fed for the first 28 days and is available as a base mix, protein supplement, or complete feed depending on your feedstuff needs. With the large percentage of light calves entering the feedlot this year and the high cost of gain, building a strong foundation is of utmost importance this year. Contact your GPLC nutritionist for more information.

Calendar of Events

- **Sept 11-13** Husker Harvest Days in Grand Island, NE
- **Sept 18-19** Minnesota Nutrition Conference in Owatonna, MN
- **Sept 19** KBC/BCI Advanced Beef Cattle Care & Health Training Workshop, Hill City Livestock Market, Hill City, KS 785-273-5225
- **Sept 20** Colorado Nutrition Round Table in Nunn, CO
- **Sept 26** Missouri's Cattlemen Foundation Farm Safety College; BRTF – University of Missouri in Columbia, MO
- **Sept 28-Oct 21** Texas State Fair in Dallas
- **Oct 2-6** 2012 World Dairy Expo in Madison, WI
- **Oct 12-21** Arkansas State Fair in Little Rock
- **Oct 18-21** Minnesota Beef Expo, at State Fair Coliseum State Fair in St. Paul, MN
- **Oct 25-Nov 4** Louisiana State Fair in Baton Rouge
- **Nov 12** OSU Cow/Calf Boot Camp 8 am -5 pm in Kellyville, OK
- **Nov 29** Mid-Plains Beef Educational Series, UNL Extension in Mead, NE
- **Nov 29-Dec 1** Winter Academy of Veterinary Consultants Conf., Renaissance Hotel, Denver, CO
- **Dec 5-7** Nebraska Cattlemen Convention at Holiday Inn in Kearney, NE



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Timely Reminders



General

- ✓ Clean water sources on a weekly basis.
- ✓ Clean manure out of pens.
- ✓ Have us sample hay and silage to test for nitrates (silage greater than 4 weeks after harvest).

Beef

- ✓ Prepare supplies and pen conditions for weaning calves.
- ✓ Start thinking about weaning calf diets.
- ✓ Contact your nutritionist for creep feeding options.
- ✓ With high feed prices re-implant cattle.
- ✓ Identify open cows early, and determine how/when you will market them.

Swine

- ✓ Check ventilation and heater settings for winter months.

Equine

- ✓ Keep an eye on hay/forage quality.

Unused Feed

- ✓ Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance.

Management Tips for Feeding Alternative Forages



By Luke Miller, M.S., Ruminant Nutritionist

As pastures continue to dry up and more cattle start to go on feed, it's crucial to utilize the feedstuffs that are available as efficiently as possible. It's no secret that feed resources are not only going to be expensive, but shear availability may be an even bigger concern in many areas. Producers with the flexibility to think outside the box and utilize alternative roughage sources are going to be at a definite advantage this year. Corn silage from failed corn is going to be the predominant ingredient utilized on many operations this year. Initial tests have shown relatively low levels of nitrates in most of the silage tested, although there have been isolated cases of high nitrates in some fields. If you didn't test your silage at the time it was chopped, be sure to do so after it has ensiled for at least 28 days. It only takes a few days to run a test, and is a minimal cost compared to dead cattle.

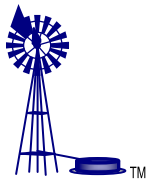
If using silage to stretch hay on a cow/calf operation, be careful not to get too carried away. Even drought stressed silage with little to no corn will contain at least 15% more energy than average quality hay. Silage that would have made 40-50 bu/acre corn will have even more energy. A cow will typically consume 2.5% of her body weight (DM) in roughage per day. "Limit feeding" cows to meet their energy requirements with corn silage will help stretch feed this year, and keep cows from getting too fleshy going into the calving season. Depending on how your silage tests, you

may be able to feed 15-25% less dry matter and still maintain/increase cow body condition by limit feeding silage. Offering low quality forage such as CRP hay, corn stalks, or straw at 5-6 lbs per day, along with silage, will help keep cows content and maintain a healthy rumen. As always, be sure to monitor cow body condition. Mid to late gestation is an ideal time to bring cows up to their ideal body condition before calving (5-5.5). However be sure not get them overly fat, because that scenario can create as many problems as having thin cows. If you have a fall calving operation, added energy from silage should cut back on feed costs this winter. Early lactating cows require more protein than gestating cows, so be sure to talk to your nutritionist about the best option to bring dietary protein up, if needed.

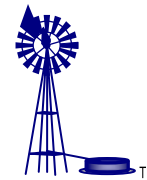
The soybean crop appears to be marginal, at best, in many areas this year. Utilizing soybean plants as a roughage source can be another beneficial way to add value to a failed crop. As with any legume, the primary challenge with harvesting soybeans for roughage is maintaining a high leaf:stem ratio, as well as getting as much digestibility from the stem as possible. Chopping soybeans for silage, or baling wet and wrapping them, are the best ways to maintain a high quality and consistent feed. However, putting them up dry often creates easier handling and more opportunity to haul greater distances. Recent tests from dry soybean bales have shown 15-16% crude protein and TDN at 55-57%. These tests show dry soybean hay could provide a similar amount of energy and digestibility to average quality grass hay, but would also provide an added source of protein. Soybean silage will typically have a much higher energy value, and could contain as much as 20% protein.

Another economical source of protein is urea. Urea can easily be added to any supplement, and currently costs about \$0.12/lb of protein. On a protein basis, this is about 15-20% the current cost of soybean meal, DDGS, or corn gluten feed. We can typically add enough urea to a supplement to raise the dietary protein content 1-2 percentage points. If low quality forages are going to be the primary feed available on your operation this year, urea may be a good option to help increase rumen degradable protein. Maintaining an adequate level of degradable protein in the rumen is key to increasing the digestibility and energy utilization of poorer quality roughage sources.

Often when feed and forage prices get high, producers start to cut back on additives and supplements. However, this is typically when technology will give you the highest return. If you have not considered adding an ionophore to your supplement in the past, this may be the year to do so. Rumensin or Bovatec have been shown to increase feed efficiency by 4-8%. With hay prices at \$100/ton or higher, this can lead to substantial savings. As an example, if 50 head of 1200 lb. cows consume 30 lbs. of hay per day, you would save \$500 over a 200 day period (after the ionophore cost). So far mineral prices have stayed relatively consistent. Previous newsletters have discussed in detail the benefits of mineral supplementation on energy utilization, herd health, conception rates, etc. Keep in mind that mineral supplementation this fall can lead to healthier calves when they hit the ground next spring. Don't forget that doing a lot of little things right can usually make a big difference!



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Management Decisions Will Make a Difference in Profitability



By Jeremy Martin, Ph.D., Ruminant Nutritionist

The next year should prove to be an exciting one in the cattle feeding business. Now more than ever, management decisions will make a difference in profitability. It is time to do the little things right if you hope to thrive through the next year. I know you all hear us state these things on a regular basis, and we do so because they have been proven to affect performance and profitability.

Buy Them Right

As nutritionists we cannot change the feeder cattle market, but we can keep you aware of predicted cost of gains in your operation. Our weekly breakeven sheets are based on what we consider average prices and performance for our regions, but we would be glad to provide you with information specific to your operation. Armed with knowledge of your previous closeouts and your specific environment, these breakevens can be tailored to fit your situation and keep you as informed as possible while buying feeder cattle. This is probably not the time for a ready, fire, aim approach to purchasing feeders.

Keep Them Healthy

Cattle that are not healthy cannot perform their best. Health starts before the cattle arrive, with a plan for processing and vaccination, cleaning and disinfecting waterers before arrival, and developing a starter ration designed to get them off to a good start. I personally have come full circle on starter supplements. A few years ago I would have told you starter supplements added unnecessary cost with limited benefit in by-product rations. In short, I was wrong - particularly in respect to bawling calves and high-stress cattle. Our own research trials and experiences have convinced me starter supplements in the form of highly fortified balancers, or higher feeding rate starter pellets, are worth the money. At this point, I would expect such supplements to contain chelated trace minerals, chromium, and yeast products. Cattle started this way typically achieve optimum intake more rapidly, experience fewer health problems, and reduced mortality.

Beyond the starting phase, it is important to protect profitability by managing the small problems. Prevent footrot to the extent possible by managing pen conditions and minimizing hoof damage during processing and re-implant. Be particular about bunk management to avoid acidosis and bloat. Work with your veterinarian to develop and implement a protocol for treating sick cattle, and then follow the protocol to ensure maximum treatment effectiveness.

Manage the Bunk

This one really should be first, but the truth is if they are too high-priced or sick, managing the bunk won't necessarily make them profitable. It can, however, help you control breakevens once the cattle are in the yard. Consistency is key in feeding cattle. Read the bunk consistently, feed at the same time each day, accurately load and deliver the ration each feeding, and store ingredients to maintain consistency. In general, we prefer

managing for slick bunks, although the aggressiveness of bunk management varies with each operation. Now is a good time for us to review your bunk management protocol with you.

Consider limit-feeding cattle that are being grown prior to finishing, or for sale at a later date. Limit-feeding requires adequate bunk space and careful management of the cattle, but will improve efficiency of gain. With feed prices as high as we have ever seen, this is one strategy to make the wisest use of your resources.

Manage the Pens

I know we are all tired of drought, but if there is a silver lining in drought it is that pen conditions are as good as ever right now, aside from the dust. Almost all of the pens I encounter are dry, solid, and well-packed. A little bit of work now will minimize the amount of work needed over the winter. Now is the time to fill in holes, clean out drains, and put some extra dirt along fencelines and around watering points. It is also a great time to pour extra concrete to lengthen aprons, repair bunks, or increase pad size around waterers.

Manage the Feed

A lot of you have chopped silage already and will be harvesting high-moisture corn in the near future. Considering the value of crops this year, please take the extra time to inoculate, pack well, and harvest at the correct time. If by-product prices remain high relative to corn, rations could look quite a bit different this fall than the past 5-10 years. Put yourself in a position to utilize your home-grown feeds to their fullest extent by managing the harvest process. Follow up on this plan by covering those crops harvested at high moistures and minimizing shrink by keeping the face of the pile vertical as you feed.

Implant Correctly

A correctly-designed implant program starts at the end. Determine the likely harvest dates or sale dates and calculate backwards so terminal implant effectiveness is maximized. Implanting correctly does not always mean implanting more aggressively, but instead means managing implant windows, targeting your implant strategy towards your marketing goal, and executing your plan in the most sanitary and effective manner.

Know your Additives

If you have read past newsletters, you know we strongly recommend the use of ionophores to improve feed efficiency. We also recognize the value of antibiotics and other additives. Used within label guidelines, chlortetracycline is a useful tool for managing cattle health and minimizing footrot, pinkeye, etc. New on the market for this fall is Pulmotil, a feed-grade form of Micozil that should prove useful in certain situations. Additionally, good data exists to support the use of Tylan, even in rations containing high levels of byproducts. Don't forget about MGA either, as suppressing estrus in feedlot heifers improves cost of gain.

If you have any questions regarding these points, please contact your GPLC nutritionist. We would be glad to provide any assistance possible with any of these processes. We cannot guarantee feeding cattle will be profitable, but we enjoy being part of your team and are confident following these pointers will improve your profitability. Have a safe harvest season.