Owyhee County
Cattlemen's Corner Beef Newsletter

September, 2011

University of Idaho Extension

Do You Hear Me Now?

K. Scott Jensen, UI Extension Educator, Owyhee County

Over the past few months, I have had the opportunity to attend and/or be part of several different programs. It is interesting that the messages presented at these programs were not new… just recycled! Why are they recycled? Seems that maybe they are important but for some reason, we just aren't listening.

Case in point… the featured speaker at the Owyhee Cattlemen's Association summer meeting was Dr. Wayne Burkhardt. Somebody did the math and calculated that Dr. Burkhardt had first spoken to the OCA membership over 30 years ago. His message was basically the same. Producers need to monitor their rangeland. Even with this message being preached for over thirty years, how many producers actually monitor their grazing land? I don't have that answer but my guess is not very many! It seems to be one of the things most people know needs done but very few "get around to it".

Why don't producers get around to it? Perhaps some lack the confidence to get started. Perhaps some see it as less of a priority than other things. If lack of confidence or lack of "know how" is the reason, find someone to help you get started. I have offered many times to help producers get started but seldom have any takers. Attend a monitoring workshop. Call your county agent. Ask a trusted range con for help. Hire a consultant. Do something to get yourself off of dead center.

If it is low on the priority list, I suggest you move it up near the top. This is especially true if you are grazing public lands. I am sure you are all aware of those whose life's work is to eliminate grazing on public land. What if I told you that years of monitoring data could help protect your right to graze? Dr. Burkhardt talked about this specifically. If memory serves me correctly, he told a story about some folks he has worked with for several years in Colorado. They had compiled 14 years' worth of monitoring data on their rangeland. When BLM approved their grazing permit renewal, an environmental group filed suit. When this group saw the monitoring data that had been collected over the years, they withdrew their lawsuit.

Obviously, this scenario would have played out differently if there had been problems with the grazing management in place. One of the benefits of having the data available is to use it yourself to determine if there are problems with your current management and to make changes when necessary.

The take-home message is TAKE ACTION. Next time you attend a meeting, listen to a speaker, read a good book/article, put what you have read or heard into action. Thinking about it won't ever get it done.

Inside this issue:

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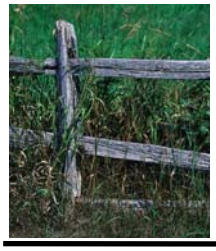


‘Falling’ Herd Health

Shanna Smith, University of Idaho Extension Educator, Adams County

Tis the season to be…preparing! As the cooler seasons approach, make sure you are prepared for whatever the weather might bring. For many cow/calf operations, it is crucial to have a busy fall in order to have a successful spring. Here is my personal top five “to-do” list for this fall.

First, although you might be concentrating on your calves this time of year, don’t forget that your cows are still in need of good nutrition to hold steady through the cooler months of autumn and winter. Doing so will surely provide some long term benefits; health and profitability are just two that come to mind! If you haven’t already done it, get those cows the proper vaccination boosters to prevent as many losses as possible. Also this will aid in protecting the subsequent generation of calves against illness and disease. Consider the prevalent diseases in your area when deciding on vaccinations. Talk with your veterinarian. If it is necessary to provide a vaccine that was given in the spring, again in the fall, do so; the cost is much less than a calf or cow loss.

Second, deworming in the early fall is generally a good practice as the larvae builds up on summer pastures. Reducing parasites, including lice, can increasingly improve cattle condition and health as we approach winter. Body condition should be the best possible for all animals going into colder weather to increase spring health and condition. A simple pour on solution can be beneficial for all cattle going in to winter, but again, planning herd health with a veterinarian is a great idea to customize it for your farm/ranch program.

Third, check your feed supply. Will you have enough to feed your herd? Places in the valley don’t generally require as much feed on hand as the mountainous areas, but it is proactive (smart, less costly and less labor intensive) to have extra feed, than not

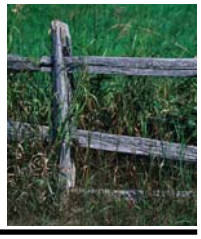
enough feed. No one I know enjoys scrambling for hay in February or April.

Fourth, get the fencing, corrals, feed bunks, feed trucks, etc. ready for the winter months of extensive usage. Take the time to check your equipment. There isn’t much exciting or fun about putting up fence in January.

There is much more to do, but my last point is to check your watering systems; this definitely falls under the equipment category, but I separated it to make a point. Whether automatic, or trough, make sure your pipes, hoses, valves, etc., are in good working condition. Continuously check watering systems throughout the winter, whether breaking ice or using water heaters; all are important so your herd is getting their most important nutrient, water.

They used to say . . . and probably not bad advice today . . .

Fences need to be
horse high,
pig tight,
and bull strong!



Idaho's BVD Risk Analysis Survey

Rikki Wilson, University of Idaho Extension Educator, Gem County

Bovine Virus Diarrhea, commonly referred to as BVD is a common and widespread virus that infects cattle and wild ruminants. It is spread by respiratory secretions with a ten day incubation period. After the virus has infected the cells of the respiratory system, in then invades the bloodstream and spreads to all tissues in the animal. BVD also has the ability to permanently infect some cattle, which are called persistently infected or PI animals. Persistently infected calves occur when a non-immune, pregnant cow is exposed to the virus between (50-100) days of gestation. Many PI calves appear normal at birth, but begin to shed the virus to herd mates through nasal fluids. Most PI calves die before they reach the age of two. Cattle herd problems associated with BVD include abortion, weak calves, chronic sickness, poor feedlot performance, increased respiratory disease, and diarrhea.

In 2010 University of Idaho Extension Specialists and Educators conducted a research study surveying cattle producers around the state to determine their BVD Risk Analysis. Several producers were given the survey at county beef schools.

The survey questionnaire was adapted from a Kansas State University BVD Risk Analysis survey and was changed to fit Idaho Cattle producers and asked questions involved with the number of animals in each herd, any purchased cattle, neighboring herds close to their operation, and current management practices. We received 85 completed questionnaires back from the study. These questionnaires represented 25,000 head of cattle in 13 Idaho counties. Data received from these surveys was transferred to an online computer program to be analyzed for risk. Risk summaries were then prepared for each submitted questionnaire. This assessment helped determine the likelihood of a herd becoming infected with BVD in the next 10 years based on the management program for each operation

The survey results showed that Idaho beef producers have a good long-term vaccination program in place. Eighty-nine percent of respondents indicated complete, annual vaccination of their herd. Of those, ten operations had done previous BVD testing, with six of those having a positive infected animal. Within the study, operations with a BVD risk greater than 50% were offered the opportunity to conduct the whole herd testing at a reduced cost. In the identified high risk cattle herds, the majority of producers reported that extensive BVD programs are in place.

Vaccinating for BVD will reduce the production and reproduction effects of having a persistently infected animal in the herd, therefore all producers are highly urged to participate in an annual vaccination program to limit and reduce BVD risk as well as determining management factors that can help limit the operations exposure to the BVD virus.

Past editions of the *Cattlemen's Corner Beef Newsletter* are available on our webpage at http://extension.uidaho.edu/owyhee

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 Extension Office 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.
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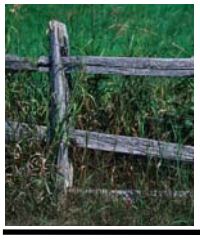

Replacement Rate

Ron Torell, Long-Standing Educator and Advocate of Agriculture

A philosophy subscribed to by many ranches around the country is that great cow herds are culled, not bred. If a cow's calf is killed on the railroad, the cow is culled for it was her fault for having the calf there to begin with. This is a hard line approach to building a great cow herd. It comes at the cost of a higher replacement rate and requires a refined management and genetic program, a balanced feed resource, and an economically viable operation with dedicated and well-educated managers. This higher culling rate allows the beef herd to make genetic progress at a faster pace in the areas of convenience and economically important traits.

Genetic progress is realized when replacement rates account for cows with bad dispositions, poor mothering ability, marginal or inadequate bags, bad eyes, lump jaw, dink raisers, and those that don't hold their flesh or are lacking in conformation. Professionals encourage a limited calving interval of 45-60 days as well as elevated feedlot and rail performance. This sets the bar unrealistically high especially for a desert range environment and most certainly during drought years. If all the above mentioned criteria were included in a culling program, a replacement rate of 20% or higher would be required to maintain carrying capacity on a desert range environment ranch.

The best managed and most profitable ranches generally subscribe to selling all open and dry pregnant cows. If a cow does not trail home in the fall of the year with one calf following and another in-utero, she herself becomes the paycheck. Generally a 10-15% replacement rate is required to maintain stocking rates when following this "three-in-one package" culling criteria.

All cows are not created equal, which is self-evident by high fallout rates. Consequently the quality of replacement heifers retained or purchased should be far superior to the market ready cows (culls) they are replacing. Improving efficiency of a cow herd through culling is effective to a point, however, only if prudent bull selection is used to sire replacements. It's unrealistic to expect different results when continuing to follow the same failed management and genetic program. Management and/or available feed resources of a ranch influence economically important and convenience traits. If a large percentage of cows often fall out of your program, consider a change in genetics and management or try adding additional resources to your ranch.

A CONSTANT INFUSION OF QUALITY REPLACEMENTS IS REQUIRED TO HOLD YOUR COW HERD TO A HIGHER STANDARD OF PRODUCTION.

Higher replacement rates capitalize on the principle of the economic unit which maintains that *"it takes the same amount of annual inputs to feed a good one as it does a marginal or poor producing cow."* The average annual cow carrying costs for much of the west, including fixed as well as variable costs, range from between $500 to $700 per head per year. Cattle Fax data supports this figure and lists similar but varying input costs for other regions of the United States. Each animal on your ranch should be viewed as an economic unit including pet cows. Each fall, in spite of poor performance or a history of producing outlier calves, many pet cows avoid the terminal trip to McDonalds. It makes no economic sense why these cows are given a free pass based on sentiment, color pattern or simply an experience the owners had with the pet when it was a calf. None of these reasons justify fixed and variable carrying costs knowing a quality replacement animal could supersede the pet cow.

Counter to this discussion is the replacement strategy of retaining a higher percentage of heifers during poor market years and a lower percentage during high

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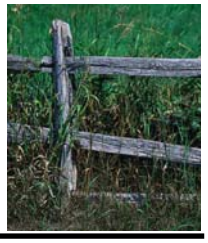


Replacement Rate *. . . continued from page 4*

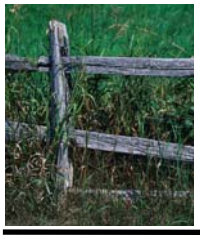
market years. The theory to this strategy is heifers retained during low market years will be producing calves during the high market years resulting in a more profitable cow herd over time. This strategy certainly has validity and should be considered in the decision making process. Keep in mind reduced heifer retention, even for a few years, requires lowering the bar on your culling protocol. Soon you have a lower quality aged cow herd. A constant infusion of quality replacements is required to hold your cow herd to a higher standard of production.

If your ranch resources will only allow you to run 250 momma cows, make them 250 good ones. Maintain a zero tolerance retention strategy. Replace those poor producing economic units with cows that produce with the herd. First and foremost, remove the free loaders. Replacement rates are going to vary from ranch to ranch and from year to year. They are largely dependent on resources, management, goals and objectives, and the short and long term financial stability of a ranch. One thing is for sure, if cows have been given an adequate environment (such as health, reproduction, and nutrition), a “three-in-one package” should be demanded every year. If you want a great cow herd, a stringent and unforgiving culling program is essential and will require a high replacement rate.

Early Castration *. . . continued from page 6*

Perhaps the most important fact gleaned from the many studies conducted on castration is: the earlier the better. Calves castrated from 1-7 days old showed very few behaviors associated with pain and their plasma cortisol levels were essentially the same as the calves left intact. The risk of hemorrhage and infection is much lower, the risk of injury to the person performing the castration is lower, and the procedure is relatively quick and easy. The issue of pain control during and after castration is one of growing importance in the United States. Application of local anesthesia prior to castration is mandated in some countries because it significantly reduces the cortisol response to castration. This effect only lasts as long as the anesthetic but, when combined with a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as ketoprofen or flunixin meglumine (Banamine®), the cortisol response can be virtually eliminated in young calves, regardless of the castration method used. These calves also show increased feeding activity and fewer pain associated behaviors. The major obstacle in the US to pain relief for castration is no approved drug exists that is actually labeled for this use. Any NSAID used for pain would be considered extra-label use and must be administered only under the direction of a veterinarian with a valid veterinary/client/patient relationship. However, as research continues to validate methods of measuring pain, then drugs will begin to be approved for pain relief because their effect will be measureable.

Castration is considered to be a necessary management practice for cattle. Work with your local veterinarian to establish the optimal herd health program for your farm and institute an early castration program to minimize the pain, stress and complications that go along with this procedure. As we move toward more validated tests to determine pain and stress response, the fewer excuses we have not to do what is within our abilities to minimize it. A proactive approach diminishes the likelihood that the government will dictate what we have to do at the farm level. The corporate world and consumers are watching for our response. What will you decide?



Why is Early Castration of Bull Calves Important?

James J. England, DVM, PhD, Caine Veterinary Teaching Center

In the United States, more than 17 million bulls are castrated yearly that range in age from 1 day to 1 year old. It is well known that this procedure is painful and causes a period of slowed growth rate and poorer feed efficiency, especially if the procedure is delayed until the calves get older and heavier. If castration is performed at the feedlot or backgrounding operation, these calves have a marked reduction in weight gain and are twice as likely to get sick as steers (one study found 28% sickness in steers vs 60% sickness in bulls castrated on arrival). The benefits of castration for feedlot owners and those who retain ownership through the feeding phase far outweigh the negative effects and include:

1. Reduced aggressiveness and sexual activity by lowering testosterone levels
2. Decreased number of "dark cutters" due to high muscle pH
3. Higher quality grade-more consistent, marbled, and tender beef
4. Steer carcasses command higher prices at market

Although these advantages are clearly proven, many cow-calf producers do not castrate because they are afraid steers will not wean off as heavy as bull calves despite the fact that research has proven this to be untrue. Even though steers command a higher price at the market, the difference in price has not been enough to overcome the reluctance of many to adopt this as a routine practice. However, the rapidly changing situation of the welfare implications of cattle castration may ultimately move the industry to demand early castration or adopt some method of pain control if castration is delayed.

Several methods of castration are commonly used. The three most common castration procedures for cow-calf producers are surgical removal of the testes, banding of the scrotum with rubber bands, or crushing of the testicular chords with a burdizzo clamp. The method chosen often depends on multiple factors including the potential risk of injury to the operator, the size of the calf, the handling facilities, and experience with a certain technique. Possible health complications include hemorrhage (bleeding), excessive swelling, infection, and poor wound healing. Poor technique, especially common with the burdizzo clamp, may result in castration failure. Failure may also occur during banding if only one testicle is in the scrotal sac when a band is placed. The calf will become a "stag" with the characteristics and actions of a bull due to the retained testicle. There is virtually no difference in performance of the calf if knife cut, banded, or clamped at a young age. In a study at Oklahoma State reported in 2001, it was found there was absolutely NO advantage in the growth rate of bulls before weaning compared with bulls that were castrated (by any method) at 2-3 months of age and given an implant. In a similar study conducted in 1989, bulls castrated at birth performed similarly to those castrated at 4 months of age, indicating that leaving a bull intact for a "period of time" did not increase gains either. It is important to note that these studies did utilize an implant (such as Ralgro®) in the steers to replace the hormone influence lost by removing the testicles.

The animal welfare implications of late castration are beginning to be a force in the beef industry. As guidelines are being established for pain prevention and control, castration is recognized as one of the most stressful and painful experiences for livestock by measuring blood cortisol concentrations and the levels of specific brain neurotransmitters which are associated with pain in food-producing animals. Visible pain responses to castration include struggling, kicking, tail swishing, and restlessness during the procedure followed by swelling, stiffness, and increased recumbency (lying down) whether surgical or nonsurgical techniques are used. Blood cortisol levels, used as an indication of pain, spike almost immediately from surgical castration and clamping while banding causes a slower yet longer period of cortisol elevation. Banded calves have actually shown signs of pain in response to scrotal palpation a month or more longer than calves that were clamped.

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Friday, September 30th

Current Concepts in Cattle Physiology

Strategies to Optimize Use of AI in Cow/Calf Systems
John Hall, University of Idaho

Physiological Principals of the Estrous Cycle
Mike Smith, University of Missouri

Understanding Postpartum Anestrus and Puberty
Amin Ahmadzadeh University of Idaho

Estrus Synchronization and AI Programs

Synchronization Protocols for Heifers
David Patterson, University of Missouri

Synchronization Protocols for Cows
Cliff Lamb, University of Florida

Protocol Sheets/Estrus Synchronization Planner
Sandy Johnson, Kansas State University

Factors Affecting Fertility

Management Factors Influencing Fertility
George Perry, South Dakota State University

Nutritional Influences on Reproduction
Rick Funston, University of Nebraska

Applied Nutritional Strategies for the Northwest
Dave Bohnert, Oregon State University

Temperament and Handling Effects on Fertility
Reinaldo Cooke, Oregon State University

Semen Quality Factors Associated with Fertility
Joe Dalton, University of Idaho

Saturday, October 1st

Capturing the Genetic Value Obtained Through AI

Improving EPD Accuracy by Combining EPD Information with DNA Test Results
Alison Van Eenennaam, University of California – Davis

Genetic Selection for Fertility and Performance
Benton Glaze, University of Idaho

Capturing the Economic Value of AI

Economic Impact of an Estrus Synchronization and AI program
Mike Kasten, Kasten Ranch, Missouri

Marketing Advantages for Calves with Performance and Source Information
Larry Corah, Certified Angus Beef

Producer Panel Discussion: Implementing an AI Program and the Benefits

Question-and-Answer Session

Considerations Related to the Male

Using Natural Service: Bull Management
Wayne Ayers, University of Idaho

What are Bulls Accomplishing in Multiple Sire Breeding Pastures and Why Producers Need to Consider AI.
Alison Van Eenennaam, University of California – Davis

Application of Technology in Male Reproduction
Ram Kasimanickam, Washington State University

Registration - $175.00 both days; $100 one day; Student rate available. Includes lunches, breaks and proceedings

Register On-Line: http://muconf.missouri.edu/arsbc-northwest/index.html

Register by phone with a credit card: toll-free (866) 682-6663; direct (573) 882-4349

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Contact Dr. John Hall jbhall@uidaho.edu (208) 756-2749

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APPLIED REPRODUCTION STRATEGIES IN BEEF CATTLE CONFERENCE, IN BOISE, SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 1 (REGISTRATION INFO, PAGE 7)

When you see three cowboys riding in a pickup you can always tell which is the smartest..... the one in the middle. He never drives and he never has to get the gate!