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Cover Photo: The photo features a pen of cattle at Ranger Feeders, four miles east of Dighton, Kan. They have been on feed 147 days and are a cross of English/English and English Exotic. The cattle are owned by Lamar Fullmer.

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The cattle industry has changed as much over time as any other industry. For example: shipping by rail to trucks, farmer feeders to larger feeding operations, horse power to mechanized machinery, flaked rations and feeder trucks.

If we take in new information and adjust our lives or method of operation, we have changed. Whether we want to or not, we adjust to the future. “Change is the process by which the future invades our lives.”

Writer Alvin Toffler, a famous futurist, professor of astronomy and former editor of *Fortune Magazine*, was known for discussing the digital revolution, and the changes it was creating. One of his early books, “Future Shock,” was published in 1970, 37 years ago.

At the start of reading Toffler’s book about the future in 1970, his predictions seemed almost strange. But, by the time the book was finished, it was plain the changes he talked about were taking place, and they still are. It wasn’t just the changes, but of equal importance was his explanation of what had taken place at the time, and how it was shaping our future. He said, “change is not merely necessary to life – it is life.”

For instance he said: Man has only invented three things:
1. The use of Fire.
2. The making of tools, and
3. The transistor.

The first two were easily understood at the time. The third was new.

The transistor – was the early stage of the computer chip. Invented in 1947, which produced the first programmable computer in 1948, which led to the internet as we knew it in 1993, and the digital revolution continues.

Toffler at the time, couldn’t predict the extent we would utilize the computer or how it would be utilized in the cattle industry, for research, tracking results, grading or cattle I.D, and other uses.

One of the other things Toffler said, “The time between original concept and practical use has been drastically reduced.” Accessible knowledge and communications have played a big part in change. We now expect rapid change by the use of technology.

As an example: The first self propelled combine was built in 1886, but the first patent was issued in 1814. The first commercial production was in 1937 in Canada, a 123 year laps.

The first typewriter was patented in 1714, but it was the mid 1800’s before it was available. With cell phones and the internet, everything moves faster. Instrument grading is moving fast. It’s not going to take 123 years before we have it. In fact, we do now to a limited extent.

It has taken 58 years for digital technology to reach its present state. Cell phones, faxes, computers and the internet are only in the infant stage of development and use.

Eventually we will be able to track the mass of data and separate all the variables that may influence cattle performance.

With the use of the cattle I.D. system, the history of each animal, birth date, when and how long they grazed, which type of forage, weaning, backgrounding, vaccinations, trucking, weather factors such as humidity, temperature, sunlight exposure, the list goes on and on.

Do cattle all have the same genetic capability? There has to be variables we’re not seeing which make a big difference. In the future we will use more information and technology which will make life more interesting, predictable and profitable for all of us and the cattle industry. Instrument grading, cattle I.D. and DNA profiling are good examples.
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1 Exhibits bactericidal activity against some strains of *Mannheimia haemolytica* and *Histophilus somni*.
2 Testing demonstrated that 99.9% of the bacteria were killed within 24 hours. Data on file at Schering-Plough Animal Health Corporation.

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Full product information found on page 6.
As we enter the winter season, many state and local cattlemen’s and allied industry groups are busy with their annual conventions and trade shows. The season usually culminates with the Cattle Industry Annual Convention and NCBA Trade Show in late January or early February. These conventions and the trade shows associated with them present cattlemen with an excellent opportunity to catch up with old friends and familiarize themselves with new information and technology available to our ever-changing industry.

As I began to prepare this article, I reflected back on my first experience at NCBA. The year was 1996. I was then an undergraduate and had a pot load of steers consigned to video auction on one of the trade show days. Needless to say, all the industry people I met, the commercial exhibits, and vast amount of information to be gathered, somewhat overwhelmed me. I spent the majority of three days wandering around, visiting the exhibits with the most “bells and whistles,” and trying to learn, and see, and do all that I could. Looking back, I am quite sure that I would have been much more efficient and much less tired if I had taken the time to prepare.

According to an online article by Susan Friedmann, it is estimated that 39 percent of all trade show attendees spend less than eight hours actually at the show. At trade shows, time is at a premium. In order to get the most from a trade show, have a clear strategy in mind. This means knowing what you need to accomplish before, say, all the industry people I met, the commercial exhibits, and vast amount of information to be gathered, somewhat overwhelmed me. I spent the majority of three days wandering around, visiting the exhibits with the most “bells and whistles,” and trying to learn, and see, and do all that I could. Looking back, I am quite sure that I would have been much more efficient and much less tired if I had taken the time to prepare.

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during, and after the show.

Before you go, try to secure a hotel adjoining or very near the convention center. While planning, list your personal and professional goals as they pertain to the trade show and begin to budget your time. Make use of pre-convention materials for research, and then prepare a list of exhibitors categorized as “must-visits” and “want to-visits.” Once this list is completed, think of specific questions to ask at each stop. This will help to maximize efficiency by minimizing unproductive conversation. Consider making appointments with some of your “must-visits”, especially if a business relationship already exists. If the trade show seems too large, think about using a “divide and conquer” strategy using friends, family and/or coworkers. Use a show guide or map and plan your route. Bring along a light bag to carry all the free “stuff” that you obtain and plenty of your business cards. Remember to wear comfortable shoes as trade shows are often large and can be tiring, especially for us “country folk” not as accustomed to walking on concrete.

At the trade show, check your coat and bag. As you go along your planned route, don’t just grab any material that you can, rather take only what is relevant. Offer your business card and ask that additional information be mailed to you so you have less to carry. Use the trade show to comparison shop, research a project or product, and to gather information about your competition, but don’t be too obvious. Don’t be hesitant to ask for samples, demos, trial offers and pricing. If possible, take advantage of any show specials and become familiar with the latest industry trends. There are often opportunities to attend educational seminars, symposia, or workshops held in the trade show area. Seize the opportunity to meet in person and “put the face with the name” of those you may already do business with. Before leaving, be sure to complete the exit questionnaires in order to let the organizers know what you think.

After the show, categorize all the materials that you obtained and make notes while the experience is fresh in your mind. Denote particularly effective displays, concepts, or materials that you encountered. Be sure to follow-up, where appropriate with any contacts that you made. If you contact an exhibitor after the show, remind them where you found out about their product or service. Keep in mind that a trade show is not just a gathering of representatives and potential customers; it’s an experience. With some research and proper planning, your time at the trade show can be much more productive and pleasant.

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Producers who have experienced anaplasmosis in their herds may look toward preventative measures. A common approach is to supplement cattle with an oral antibiotic (chlortetracycline, CTC) in either free choice mineral or a range meal supplement, according to sources with the Arkansas Ag Extension. Keep in mind that a common mistake is feeding a mineral supplement that DOES NOT contain a sufficient level of CTC. This means the mineral label should indicate a use for anaplasmosis prevention, and the feeding directions should provide consumption indications for cows of various weights.

Since consumption can vary with free choice minerals, and some cows may not even consume the mineral at all, the second most convenient method of supplying CTC is purchasing a commercial range meal. Range meals are traditionally fed to supply supplemental protein when forage quality diminishes during mid to late summer. Consumption of range meals is greater than free choice minerals, and hand-feeding daily in a trough will provide a more consistent consumption. The salt in the range meal also helps prevent overeating at the bunk by boss cows.

Producers who regularly fertilize pastures may not see the benefit from added protein supplementation on forage intake and digestibility. A custom supplement blend utilizing loose soybean hulls, ground corn or rice bran as an alternative, cheaper carrier feedstuff may be preferred in this situation.

One should note, the less concentrated a medicated feed additive becomes, the greater the cost of the medication on a per unit basis. For example, the cost per unit of CTC in a 4-gram crumble will usually be more expensive than the cost of CTC in a 50-gram formulation. However, more concentrated forms of medicated feed additives become difficult to mix on-farm, especially if mixing small batches. In the end, purchasing a commercially prepared supplement (mineral or meal) may be the best manageable practice.

Since blood-sucking insects can be carriers of the disease, pesticide applications will limit disease exposure. A number of useful application methods for insecticides such as sprays, pour-ons, spot-ons, dust bags, back rubbers, feed supplements and ear tags are available. When using insecticides, you should always follow the manufacturer’s recommendations to maximize treatment results.

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American-style Feedyard Finds Way to Ukraine

by Loretta Sorensen

A Yankton, SD, engineering firm is helping a Ukrainian company bring beef—and lots of it—to their country.

Dan Eisenbraun, engineer and owner of Eisenbraun and Associates, said JSC Mironovsky Hlebo-produkt chose his firm to design and build a 50,000-head feedlot near Kiev after conducting a worldwide search for an engineering company with experience in feedlot construction. JSC leads the Ukraine in poultry production and operates one of the country’s biggest oil mills.

“This company knows their countrymen have a great desire to live the Western lifestyle,” Eisenbraun said. “Beef is a big part of that lifestyle.”

Most of the Ukraine’s beef, which is not high quality, is raised by individual producers. Often the supply comes from dairy cattle that weren’t suitable for the dairy industry, which accounts for the lack of quality.

In addition to the quality of the beef, the quantity being produced is not near enough to allow for making beef part of the country’s daily diet. Chicken and swine, which are more prominent in the country’s diet, are currently more costly than beef.

A lack of modern agricultural equipment and outdated farming practices also play a role in the low quantities of beef available to the public.

“It’s an interesting clash in cultures,” Eisenbraun said. “Most of the people in rural areas have a few cows, five or six in a herd. They farm small plots of ground and have a pig or two, and maybe some chickens. They all seem to have large garden plots. There are fresh vegetables everywhere.”

Because Eisenbraun and his engineers have worked with numerous feedlot projects, they’re familiar with laws surrounding development of this kind of project.

“The Ukraine doesn’t have the same kind of regulations we have in the States,” Eisenbraun said. “But
this company is well aware that Europeans are very environmentally conscious. They want to construct the facility to make it as environmentally friendly as possible.

The feedlot design encompasses 593 acres. It includes approximately 200 lots that will each hold 200 head of cattle. When the project is completed, it will feature 10 miles of feed bunks and more than 31 miles of fence. There are few buildings in the project, but it does include silos and grain bins.

Among the hurdles Eisenbraun’s company has encountered are cultural differences in the construction process. They’ve learned that a foreign approach to construction can vary greatly from American’s traditional processes.

“In the Ukraine they use concrete for everything,” engineer Todd VanMaanen said. “We discovered they don’t build fence like we do, and they’ve run into some trouble hiring contractors for the work they need. There aren’t a lot of construction companies there like you find in the States. They’ve had to do some searching to find contractors.”

The Ukraine gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1992. While it was under Soviet rule, the Ukraine was known as the Communist’s bread basket. The soil is very fertile, with several feet of topsoil in many areas. Because of the quantity of grains produced there, JSC will obtain feed products from the local area. They will use a mix of corn, sunflower meal, wheat, milo, and barley.

Nutrients generated by the feedlot will be recycled into JSC Mironovsky Hleboprodukt Farms. The company owns approximately 148,000 acres in the Ukraine. Unlike their farming neighbors, JSC uses the latest types of farming equipment.

“When we were there we saw a lot of their equipment,” engineer Mark Johnson said. “They have 17 Caterpillar Challengers and brand new combines.”

Construction plans for the feedlot have been delayed due to a stalled land purchase. Eisenbraun expects that their firm will complete some redesign once JSC acquires an alternative property next to their feedlot site.

Once the first feedlot is completed, Eisenbraun’s firm will work with JSC to complete three more similar projects. As far as Eisenbraun knows, once the feedlots are completed, they will comprise the largest feedlot operation in Europe. He and his firm are looking forward to the opportunity to be involved in the development of JSC’s venture.

“Part of their challenge will be to make beef affordable and get people to say ‘Beef, it’s what’s for dinner.’ Time will tell, but it’s certainly exciting to have the opportunity to work with a company like this,” Eisenbraun said.

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There’s been a lot of talk about tenderness in the beef industry lately. Tenderness markers have been identified and bulls are marketed with much fanfare surrounding this single trait. So tenderness must be king with the consumer, right?

Not so fast, says Mark Miller, San Antonio Livestock Show distinguished professor of meat science at Texas Tech University. “Beef can fail due to flavor, too,” he says. “Once there’s enough tenderness across the industry, then we have to focus on the flavor.”

Recent Texas Tech University research shows that 1,440 consumers actually placed more value on flavor than on tenderness. The grand summary says flavor held 59 percent of the importance in determining if a cut of beef met the participant’s satisfaction level. Tenderness came in second at 25 percent, followed by juiciness. “They varied a little, but flavor and tenderness were the most important in every demographic,” he says.

“When 90 percent of the beef in the U.S. meets tenderness thresholds, flavor is going to become the most important driver,” he says. Although more research needs to be done on what factors influence beef’s taste, Miller has an idea of where to start. “We know marbling has a big effect on flavor,” he says. “A higher degree of marbling increases the flavor,” he says.

The Texas Tech take-home point, Miller says, is that consumers don’t just want tender beef; they want tasty, tender beef. The industry must maintain its focus on assuring tenderness while facing the fact that it must add more focus on marbling.
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Circle No. 114 on Reply
When like-minded producers work together, they can accomplish more than the sum of their individual efforts.

That’s why Certified Angus Beef LLC (CAB) launched the Feedlot Licensing Program (FLP) in 1999. It gathers information on management and genetics of Angus-type cattle in 63 feedlots in 12 states. More than that, it provides many good examples of cooperation.

“We’re all about a quality endpoint,” says Gary Fike, CAB feedlot specialist. “We’re interested in talking to managers of yards who want to dedicate at least part of their business to getting the most out of high-quality, Angus-influenced cattle. Especially those who like the interaction with cow-calf producers.”

The license defines the terms for FLP participation, including use of the CAB partner logo.

“We work more closely with these feedlots to help them collect data which they can use to manage cattle for Certified Angus Beef, brand premiums,” says Fike. Of course, cattle don’t have to be fed at CAB-licensed feedlots to be eligible for the brand’s premiums at licensed packing plants.

“CAB acceptance is solely determined by 10 scientifically based specifications, which are evaluated by...
USDA,” says CAB feedlot specialist Paul Dykstra. “Marbling—or sufficient quality grade—is the number one hurdle that keeps cattle from meeting our brand’s standards.”

Being a licensed partner is an indication to Angus producers that a feedlot manager does not view their cattle as average commodities. The licensed feedlot can provide some level of individual animal management for optimum results.

The FLP database helps CAB identify what prevents cattle from marbling, among many other things. The company coordinates carcass data collection and reports it back to feedlots and their customers.

“We can’t own cattle and our licensed feedlots can’t feed them all,” says John Stika, CAB president. “But by working with Angus producers and this network of feedlots, we can gather information that will influence 100 percent of the cattle.”

That dataset now contains more than 1 million detailed rows of carcass data, returning a wealth of information about what affects CAB acceptance, says Fike. To make a difference with this data, dedicated feedlots need to enroll pens of cattle and help with the information flow, he says.

Jerry Bohn, manager of the 40,000-head Pratt Feeders yard, says it takes commitment at all levels.

“Our staff and our company want to be known as a feeder of high-quality cattle,” he says. “They work really hard to get good cattle, get them into our system and then get the information back to the owner.”

The last step is at least as important as the first one to Bohn, who wants to feed cattle that keep improving. “CAB helps us get that to the owners so they have information to digest and use to make changes in their operations, which in turn will be better for us and the consumer.”

Named for its proximity to Pratt, Kan., the feedlot licensed in 2003. “We hoped to attract more of the higher quality Angus cattle to feed,” says Bohn.
The October Cattle on Feed report was released showing 96 percent on feed from a year ago (average trade estimate 95.7). Placements are 109 percent of a year ago (trade estimate 104.9). Marketing’s came in at 97 percent compared to last year (average trade guess 96.0). The report was considered neutral for cattle.

Year to date, beef production is 0.8 percent above last year while cattle kill is 1.4 percent above. More cattle and less beef yet we are being told that packers and retailers are having trouble selling the beef.

Perhaps the uneasiness in the economy and the attack on discretionary income by the energy market is coming into play. Of course, the cheap competing meats, pork and poultry are catching the retail consumer’s eye. Seasonally, box beef price should firm up into the end of the year along with the live cattle price. USDA projects fourth quarter price for Choice Steers at 91 to 95. The first quarter of 2008 is projected between 90 and 96. We tend to think that price will exceed those levels as long as the economy holds together.

Corn price is likely to increase from the harvest lows. The latest supply and demand report from the USDA indicates US ending stocks at nearly two billion bushels, but only 58 days of inventory left at the end of the season. Exports are expected to increase by 125 million bushels and corn for ethanol to increase 1.1 billion over last year.

The US is expected to have a record crop of 13.3 billion bushels but usage at 12.6 billion bushels is record large as well. The USDA lowered ethanol use by 100 million bushels from the September report and the perception from the marketplace appears to be that the ethanol industry is slowing.
However, over the last few trading sessions, crude oil and unleaded gas have reached record levels. The markets perception of the ethanol industry will probably change if energy prices continue to rise.

World ending stocks for corn are projected to increase five million metric tons but days of inventory will be another day less and the lowest in modern history. Here again, production is slated to be record large but usage is record large as well.

The shortage of feed wheat around the world will spill over into the corn and sorghum market as a substitute feed. Even though Europe is not likely to import US GMO corn, they will import US sorghum. Should the US aggressively export sorghum supplies, US corn feed use will need to increase.

The marketplace seems to be more focused on supply as opposed to demand. This time of year supplies are the largest available.

From here on out, supplies will shrink as time goes on so, now is a good time to protect feed costs for the rest of the year since the outlook for drastically lower prices doesn’t look promising. USDA’s Keith Collins released their projections for next year’s planted acres. The USDA thinks corn planted acres will drop 6.6 million acres while bean acres will increase 6.3 million acres along with an increase in wheat planted acres of 3.6 million. A 6.6 million acre drop in corn acres for the 2008/09 crop year will be supportive in price in both old crop and new crop.

We also suggest buying put options on cattle and feeder cattle. Should the economy stay in good shape, prices will likely trade steady to up over the next few months. However, should the economy soften and energy prices continue higher, discretionary income will tighten and the retail consumer will seek out alternatives to high priced beef. We are optimistic, but cautious in these volatile times.

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A Strategic Plan for Labor
by Don Tyler, Tyler & Associates

The successful, forward-thinking business person has an overall Strategic Plan for their business that includes a Vision Statement, a Mission Statement, Specific Goals and a Timetable for accomplishing those goals. Greater competition, rising benefit costs and a shrinking labor pool for employers in agriculture requires that we have an additional Strategic Plan for our long-term labor needs.

A Strategic Plan for Labor requires a discussion of some tough questions, such as:

• “Who will our labor force be in the next five to 10 years and where will we find them?”
• “What will their experience level be and how will we train them?”
• “What will the other employers in the area be offering five to 10 years from now and how will we compete with them for employees?”
• “How will we keep the good employees we have?”
• “How can our business become the “Employer of Choice” in our area?”

The value of having written Vision and Mission Statements cannot be over-emphasized.

• “What changes in technology can we implement that will reduce our labor needs?”
• “How will we train our employees in the use of new technology that requires a higher level of skill and knowledge?”
• “How do we progressively reduce our labor costs while continuing to pay competitive wages and benefits?”

These sample questions provide a basic introduction to the issues that must be investigated to develop your strategy. As they are discussed, it is essential to have an open format, perhaps with a meeting facilitator, to assure that all ideas are welcomed and that action steps are implemented.

Including a “SWOT” analysis in this discussion can be extremely helpful. SWOT stands for your Strengths, your Weaknesses, your Opportunities, and “Threats” to your business.

The plan needs to include a Vision for the labor force of the future, a Mission to help clarify...
their particular role in the business, specific Goals that can be measured to evaluate success, and a Timeline to keep the process moving on schedule.

The value of having written Vision and Mission Statements cannot be over-emphasized. Your Vision states the general direction and philosophy for the entire Company. The Mission statement is more specific, and reveals your values and commitment in certain areas. The Goals provide additional specifics, with action steps, which person is responsible for each action, and how the results will be measured. Providing a Timetable, with dates and expected accomplishments, holds everyone accountable for doing their part.

It has been widely stated that, “Unwritten goals are just dreams without a plan.” The specific types of goals that could be included in your Strategic Plan might be; specific efficiency targets, establishing and following labor budgets for each enterprise, hiring and turnover limits, certification and training goals, personal and professional development goals, measurable goals for employee satisfaction, recruiting goals, etc.

Developing the Strategic Plan for Labor will take time and dedication. Be certain to include some of your more valuable, long-term employees in the discussion, as well as other professionals from whom you regularly seek advice and counsel. The Vision Statement alone will provide you with clear direction as you consider business opportunities and encourage good employees to stay with you.

For more detailed information on how to develop a Strategic Plan (for the entire Company or just for Labor) with sample Vision and Mission Statements, Goals and Timelines, send an e-mail to don@dontyler.com with your request and questions.

For assistance with employee management issues, or for reference materials on these subjects, call Don or review his management book, “The Complete Guide To Managing Agricultural Employees ©” and his new audio series, “Introduction To Communications ©”. They can be reviewed at www.dontyler.com, or contact Don Tyler; Tyler & Associates, at 765-523-3259.
Shelf life concerns

Wet distiller grains with solubles (WDGS) have outstanding feed values, however they come with some management concerns. As we approach the winter months, preserving WDGS or extending the shelf life of these products is not as important as in the hot, winter months. But often, winter is the best time to consider viable options for a summer problem. Researching different options now can make the decision making process easier in the spring and summer, when the “heat is on,” so to speak.

No doubt, WDGS need a more stable shelf life. This is particularly true during hot weather, but can occur any time of the year. Cattle operations need consistent product without fear of “throwing cattle” off feed. WDGS can become less palatable after it leaves the distillery and is stored at the feedlot, farm or dairy. This can begin as quickly as two days in the summer for the wet material.

WDGS can become less palatable after it leaves the distillery in as quickly as two days in the summer for the wet material.

The practical way is to add a preservative to WDGS. A prescribed amount of a preservative is pumped on the solubles and then blended with the distillers grains. The preservative companies do not recommend adding the preservative at the farm or feedlot. They prefer it be added at the ethanol plant as the solubles are blended.

Kemin’s preservative additive

Western Wisconsin Energy from Boyceville, Wisconsin, treat their distillers grains with Kemin’s ZeniPro™. They reported to FeedLot Magazine that in their market area the WDGS is used by both feedlots and dairy farms. They are treating only part of their products on a demand basis. Their “modified distillers grains,” as they call their WDGS, is 40-50 percent dry matter from a two step drying process. They are working for a 12-14 day shelf life at the feedlot or...
farm in the summer. They stress the cooler the weather the longer the shelf life. They reported that the representative of the Kemin Company helped them with the installation of equipment to pump the preservative on to the WDGS.

**Alltech’s preservative additive**

Golden Triangle Energy Company of Craig, Missouri shared information with Feed-Lot Magazine about their program. They treat their “wet cake” as they call their WDGS with a product from Alltech called “CakeGuard™” to increase the shelf life. The product is treated by blending the distillers grain and the solubles as it is conveyed to their concrete slab for load out. It may be shipped immediately or occasionally may be held one to two days. Their customers are local and up to 120 miles to feedlots and dairies. They recommend that the treated WDGS be used in one week to ten days. They only treat their “wet cake” in the summer months. They will continue in the fall until October depending on the weather. During the winter the demand for their WDGS is high and the use rate appears to be more rapid by their customers. They report excellent repeat business from their customers.

**Storage and shelf life of WDGS**

Most feedlots and dairy will not store WDGS, however smaller operations may use “ag bags” or purchase treated WDGS. Prompt use of the WDGS will be the standard procedure if it is not stored in either plastic bags or preserved with an additive. Cattle operators monitor the condition of WDGS and discard products that are out of condition. Depending on the cost of treatment, preservative additives will help insure the safety of this perishable feed ingredient.

It appears most wet distillers that are stored in a plastic storage system keep well for several months. This has been successfully demonstrated with research trials at West Texas State University, South Dakota State University, Dairy Science Department and other stations. It comes in very hot (up to 190 degrees F) and usually is allowed to cool for 24 to 48 hours before it is packed in the storage bags. If the product is delivered promptly from the day of production to the feedlot and does not get contaminated, then a preservative additive may not be needed. But if there is a delay in delivery and storage, then spoilage may develop. If air is left in the bags or the bags are damaged, the wet distillers grain may go out of condition. Very putrid spoilage will begin to form in the spots where oxygen can reach the wet distillers.

**Comments by the author**

Regarding storage in storage bag systems, it is the opinion of this nutritionist that it is safer to have WDGS treated with a preservative if it will be stored for any length of time, and particularly if stored during the summer.

*Comments on this or any article by Dr. Sprague can be directed to him at 625 Grandview, Newton, Kansas, 67114 or call him at 316-283-8692.*

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Roughages…Many Choices for Effective Fiber

Report by James I. Sprague PhD Livestock Nutritionist

Grass hay not forgotten

Grass hay has a definite role for growing and feedlot rations. For example, in eastern Kansas in 2007, spring rains have stimulated harvesting prairie hay and brome hay. This hay is competitively priced compared to other roughages.

Grinding or processing of grass hay is interesting compared to alfalfa hay. The effective roughage factor is not destroyed as much as with alfalfa hay.

Processing without grinding

New methods of processing roughages by cutting or chopping with knives are an ideal method of processing grass hay for complete mixed rations. Some of these machines are also used to process bedding.

Kansas State University, at their 2007 Beef Stocker Conference, demonstrated the use of a “Roto-Mix Round Bale Slicer” for processing round baled hay for their stocker unit (see picture courtesy of Dr. Dale Blasi.) They report they can mix the sliced hay with other ingredients for a total mixed ration.

Caution is needed in attempting to mix long roughage in some mixers because of binding under the augers or paddles. At KSU, they use a small bale processing attachment on top of the mixer for further processing.

Ground corn stalks or straw

The material handling, including all the steps of harvesting, bailing, transporting, and grinding this very “rough” feedstuff, has stimulated the use of corn stalks and straw in feedlot rations. Yet its use for bedding in confinement feeding areas of the Corn Belt and the northern plains of the US and Canada has increased the price. Straw or stalks at one to five percent of beef finish rations is often used with high levels of wet distillers grains for effective fiber.

Alfalfa

Although tub ground alfalfa hay is the standard roughage in many feedyards, the increased price has led to the use of alternative roughages. Drought in many areas plus competition for quality alfalfa by dairy farms are some of the factors of increased price of alfalfa hay.

The availability of corn gluten feed and distillers grains with solubles with their protein credit have decreased the value of the protein in alfalfa hay.

Processing alfalfa hay by grinding has destroyed part of the protein.
effective roughage factor. This, in turn, encouraged the consideration of other roughages with more of a rumen “scratch factor.”

Even with high prices, alfalfa hay has advantages for feedlot rations. It is readily available on the high plains of the U.S. A feedlot can almost always count on a supply for their feedyard.

**Silages**

With the price of corn for livestock and ethanol production, corn silage and earlage may diminish as roughage source for feedlot cattle.

Alfalfa silage is used for feedlot rations. It not only adds the roughage factors, but the cut by the forage chopper gives a more uniform length of particles compared to ground alfalfa hay. Grass and alfalfa-brome silages are used in the eastern part of the US. One of the advantages of grass silage is getting the crop off and not worry about weather delays of hay harvest.

Small grain silages are outstanding succulent roughage.

**Roughage factors**

Nutritionists and feedlot managers will evaluate the different sources of roughages based on availability, consistency, quality and of course price. The roughage factor will be a “judgment call” based on visual evaluation followed by fiber tests. For example, I use a large white paper and spread out a sample of hay and evaluate the length of the cut and proportion of fine material. A method for evaluating a dried sample of corn silage by separating particle sizes is possible and accomplished in the field by some nutritionists. Then they will use chemical test for fiber; either of crude fiber, acid detergent or neutral detergent fiber to estimate the energy value and an “effective fiber” value. Protein analysis will give a credit or debit to the evaluation process. Then nutritionists and managers can evaluate alternative roughage sources.
South Dakota Indoor Feedlot Says Facility Offers Advantages
by Loretta Sorensen

Merlin Vannorsdel and his son Scott of Viborg, South Dakota, are not newcomers to the cattle business. Merlin’s father established their first outdoor feedlot in 1948 when he began farming the land where Merlin and Scott still live.

A small stream on their property initially ran through their feedlot. As the years went by and the Vannorsdels considered how they could remain in compliance with Department of Natural Resources regulations and maintain their beef production, they began researching their options.

“We didn’t have room for a lagoon,” Merlin says. “We didn’t want to get out of the cattle business, so we opted for an indoor feedlot.”

The Vannorsdel’s feedlot is 770 feet long and 100 feet wide. The building has a steeply sloped roof which leaves the structure open to the south, to ensure that the cattle have plenty of sunshine and air. On the north, between the roof and the floor, a 10-foot opening with a curtain feature allows the Vannorsdel’s to open the area for increased ventilation or close it during adverse weather conditions.

Six 85 by 120 foot pens hold up to 300 cattle each. A 50-foot wide working bay in the middle of the building provides a squeeze chute the Vannorsdels use to administer vaccinations or medicine.

Because they toured nearly 20 similar feedlots before finalizing the design of their own, the Vannorsdels had a good idea of what to expect when they moved their cattle to the new facility. What they appreciate about their new process is a significant reduction in maintenance requirements.

“We spent quite a bit of time keeping the mud out of that outdoor lot,” Merlin says. “Snow was probably our worst problem. You had to move it away from the feedlot or it would melt and keep the lot muddy for a long time.”

Just four to eight inches of mud can reduce feed intake by five to 15
percent, reduce daily gains by 25 to 37 percent, and significantly increase the amount of feed required per pound of gain. Because they are well aware of the negative effect a wet feedlot can have on cattle, the Vannorsdels were diligent about monitoring the conditions of their cattle yard. Providing that kind of care meant that their personal schedules had to be flexible enough to address the needs of the cattle on any given day.

With their indoor facility, the Vannorsdels can maintain conditions of the lot more consistently because weather conditions no longer directly affect the area where the cattle are housed.

“Now we know we clean the feedlot once a week, the same day every week, and we know about how much time it will take,” Merlin says. “That makes everything else a little bit easier. The time we set to work with our cattle isn’t all spent on maintaining yards. It’s still work, it’s just different work.”

To keep the feedlot pens from freezing in the winter, the Vannorsdels must maintain enough animals in each pen.

“Once it freezes,” Merlin says, “it’s hard for the cows to get around in that pen. It’s like trying to walk on rocks.”

Monitoring the health of their cows in the indoor feedlot requires close inspection on a daily basis because cattle can’t withdraw from the herd if they are experiencing problems.

“It’s just harder to spot a cow that’s having a problem,” Merlin says. “Once we do see a cow that needs to be treated or separated from the herd, it’s a little easier when they’re confined like this.”

The Vannorsdels maintained an outdoor lot for part of their cattle and have noticed that summer heat isn’t as much of a problem for the cattle in the indoor lot because they are always shaded. The building is constructed to draw a breeze through the area too. They believe that will result in a more consistent gain for the cattle held inside.

“You have a lot more control over the conditions that cattle are in,” Merlin says. “That may be more true in the summer than in the winter. Still, the cattle aren’t as exposed to the weather in the winter either.”

A 50-foot working bay located in the center of the Vannorsdel’s feedlot allows them to separate and treat their cattle as necessary.

It’s Open Season on Protozoa!
Steve Cote, Conservationist with USDA NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) District at Arco, Idaho, gives seminars on how to improve cattle handling methods. “I learned about livestock handling from Bud Williams. The way cattle are handled is a lot of the problem in cattle stress. You can prevent weaning stress that causes sickness and poor gains,” he says.

“With a different way of handling, you stress cattle less and have more control over them. You can move large herds all mothered up, with no wadding up. Cattle don’t take off to get away from everyone like they do when pushed too hard. If you move cattle in a way they feel they are still in control, they cooperate. They don’t feel forced, and can be with their calf, so they are not upset. If you move cows mothered up, they move very well.”

With his methods, he can load cattle into a trailer out in the middle of a field without any help—not even a dog or horse. “If you do it right, they’ll go in the trailer and stay there, even if you don’t shut the tailgate.”

At seminars he shows ways to sort cattle, how to take cattle away from a bunch, put a cow into a pen and leave the gate open—and have her stand quietly. He demonstrates how to place cattle in rotational systems—without any fences, and the cattle (about 25 of them) will stay on 5 to 7 acres. They go to water and drink, then go back to where he put them, every day.

You must quit forcing cattle, and use methods they understand. “It’s very important to give them relief from pressure. Most people shove and pressure cattle and keep pressing even if the cow goes the right direction, so she rebels. Also, you’ve got to give them a second to figure it out. Cattle must understand what you want, and the handler has to operate in a way that cattle know there IS relief from pressure,” he says.

“If you walk directly toward the side of an animal, it should walk straight ahead. If you walk with the direction of flow, cattle will stop as

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you go by their shoulder. If you walk against them, parallel to the direction they’re going, towards their back end—straight by them—they speed up. If they’re walking, they should pick up the pace, and if they are stopped, they should start walking,” he explains.

If you handle them correctly they react to the handling rather than the facility. Some people do everything at once, processing cattle, because they aren’t able to get the cattle back into the corral and chute again that easily. But with cattle that are well handled, you can bring them in, give them a shot, turn them out, bring them back to dehorn or brand, and bring them back in again.

If you handle them right, it produces a manageable animal.

“IT’s a great way to handle cattle. It doesn’t cost anything to do, and sickness rate plummets. When I used to receive calves at a feedlot, it was typical to have them mill around the pen; the boss would tell me to leave them alone for a few days until they quit milling and get settled. They go around in a group kicking up dust, and stressed, not eating much, and lose weight,” he says.

“Bud taught me how to receive calves. As soon as they come in, they should be worked gently, to take the stress off from shipping. I have them put their minds on me by asking them to do some simple things. Within 45 minutes I have them all on feed and water; the corral is quiet, rather than three or four days of bawling,” says Cote.

“If you handle them right, cattle are quiet and comfortable. They don’t get sick as readily. I thought at first that cattle were tough, but they are not that tough—especially calves. They get sick easily. If you mishandle them, sickness skyrockets. Many people are saying that even doing this half right has reduced their sickness,” says Cote.♦
Lice are profit robbers, reducing weight gains and making animals more susceptible to disease—especially during colder months when lice populations increase. There are several methods for controlling lice, including injectable and pour on products. One relatively new product is called Clean Up.

Dr. Jack Lloyd, recently retired from University of Wyoming, says the chemical in this topical pour on has been around for quite awhile, but was not made available for control of ectoparasites such as lice until recently. “We did research many years ago on this for lice control, and were very impressed with it, and reported on it. But nothing happened with it for years. Then three years ago Boehringer Ingelheim made it available for lice and horn fly control,” says Lloyd.

“There are two active ingredients. One is diflubenzeron (dimilin), an insect growth regulator that has been available for horn fly control as a bolus, for several years.” For horn fly control, the ingredient in the bolus goes into the manure and kills developing fly maggots by inhibiting their growth.

“The other ingredient in the lice product is permethrin, which doesn’t do much on sucking lice but controls chewing lice. The best thing about Clean Up is the dimilin which is effective against both types of lice. We are excited about this product. The insect growth regulator is not toxic to humans. It affects the cuticle of the immature insect so it can’t go from one stage to the next so it dies in the molting process,” explains Lloyd.

The cattle product is a pour on that’s easy to use; it doesn’t have to be mixed. It’s ready to use right out of the container, to be poured along the backline of the animal. “It then moves through the hair coat and tends to cover the whole animal, but is not systemic. It is not absorbed at all; it stays on the surface. The dimilin seems to be quite residual. Researchers in Australia felt it lasts a long time,” he says.

“It probably lasts several months.” Sometimes, however, it is necessary to retreat, if treated animals get exposed to animals with lice before winter is over and become reinfested, or were underdosed when they were treated, or maybe one got missed. If you mix treated and untreated cattle, or if they have fenceline contact, the treated animals become exposed again.

“If an animal shows evidence of lice or is itching before winter ends, you can administer another dose of pour on (depending on the product and label). Usually by the time you notice the cattle itching again, however, the lice populations are going down again.”

Warmer weather tends to inhibit them. One treatment with Clean Up usually gets cattle through the winter pretty well. It’s a relatively inexpensive product, compared with some of the systemic products being used.
Another new topical product is available for lice control, an Eli Lilly product called Elector (active ingredient Spinosad). This is a pour-on also, but not systemic. The active ingredient is a material produced by micro-organisms and has a different mode of action than other products.

According to Richard Hack at Eli Lilly, Spinosad is an organic molecule derived from a fermentation process and is in a different class than pyrethroids or organophosphates. This product has been available in the U.S. for four years and can be used as a pour-on or spray. The battle against lice is ongoing, every fall and winter, but research keeps coming up with effective products to help the stockman in that fight.

Carcass Ultrasound 101

By Patrick Wall, Dir. of Communications, National CUP Lab

With all of the incentives to raise Choice and Prime cattle, it’s easy to see why so much selection pressure has been placed on marbling. However, how ultrasound “measures” marbling often needs an explanation. Percent Intramuscular Fat, or %IMF, is the common ultrasound term for marbling, but it needs further explanation.

In short, %IMF is simply an indicator trait for marbling, much like Birth Weight EPD is an indicator of calving ease. With high marbling EPDs and carcass quality genetics demanding top dollar in the sale ring, it is extremely important producers understand what they are buying.

The major difference between %IMF and marbling is that %IMF is a numeric objective measure, whereas marbling is subjective to the eye of the grader. The correlation is usually around +.70 to +.80 between the two measures. In order to accurately predict USDA marbling score using ultrasound, the same grader would need to be used for every research trial. As a result, a chemical extraction procedure was adopted, using the percentage of intramuscular fat in the ribeye muscle. The collection of %IMF comes from taking a thin slice of the ribeye in the cooler. The steak is then frozen, ground up, and ether extract analysis determines the fat percentage from a sub-sample of the ribeye. Thus, a live animal with an ultrasound estimate of 4.0%IMF should also produce a carcass with a ribeye steak that has 4.0 percent fat within it.

This method captures saturated and unsaturated fat cells, both of which contribute to the eating experience of the consumer. USDA Graders can only measure fat or marbling they can see when assessing quality grade. Typical chain speed in a harvest facility often does not give ample time for some fats to “bloom” or whiten before the carcass is stamped for quality. As a result, some animals are sent to a “re-grade” rail in the cooler to allow more time for fat cells to appear to the human eye.

Some High Select carcasses will actually reach Low Choice if given this opportunity.
Calf scours can cause major economic losses for cow/calf producers, as great as 50 percent death losses in severe situations, according to Iowa State University research. Some calves die of scours. While some do recover with treatment; scours treatment costs valuable time and money. In addition, research shows calves treated for scours weigh as much as 35 pounds less at weaning than healthy calves.

The good news is the occurrence of calf scours can be minimized and often prevented through management practices that reduce exposure and enhance immunity to the common scours pathogens. Minimizing or preventing scours is a multistep, management-reliant endeavor that involves three tiers: the animal, the infectious agents responsible for the illness and the environment.

Simply put, sanitation, animal management and vaccination are the key starting points for scour prevention, reminds John Rodgers, DVM and veterinarian with Pfizer Animal Health, Fairmont, Minn.

“Develop a plan to clean up calving areas from last season to reduce the concentrations of scours pathogens,” Rodgers says. “In all actuality, the environment should be the first variable that producers consider, as wet, unsanitary conditions and mud can be primary culprits behind calf scours.”

It’s also important to work with your local veterinarian to choose a demonstrated, broad-spectrum vaccine and plan vaccination for the cows and heifers prior to calving, but not too early.

“We know production of colostral antibodies begins about five weeks prior to calving and peaks at two weeks pre-calving. To ensure the cow’s passive immunity is at optimum levels, vaccination and revaccination should be done according to labeled directions, and ideally close to calving, so important antibodies are as high as possible in the cow’s colostrum,” Rodgers explains.

“The vaccination window for a product such as ScourGuard® 4KC coincides well with the peak in the cows’ colostral antibody levels,” Rodgers continues. “Initial vaccination with ScourGuard in previous years, an annual booster should be given 3 to 6 weeks prior to calving.”

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New Products

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Bobcat Company recently launched the S100 skid-steer loader as the newest model to Bobcat’s line of compact equipment. The new S100 replaces the Bobcat 553 skid-steer loader. The S100 features a 1,000-pound rated operating capacity and a narrow width of 50 inches. The S100 skid-steer loader features a new deluxe cab and a completely new instrument panel that places additional functionalities and state-of-the-art diagnostic capabilities at operators’ fingertips.

Pfizer
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