



AG NEWS

**Division of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University**

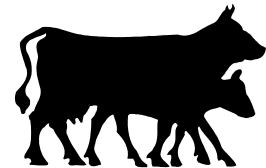
*Beaver County Extension Office * Courthouse * Box 339 * Beaver OK 73932 * (580)625-3464*

March 2006

Cow-Calf Conference III

*Thursday, March 02, 2006
At the Beaver River Stockyards
Beaver, Oklahoma*

- 4:30 pm Cow Condition Scoring. Why is it Important?
Live Animal Demonstration**
Dr Glenn Selk, OSU Animal Reproduction Specialist
- 5:45 pm BVD PI Why should we be concerned?**
- 6:00 pm Registration, Chili Feed**
Please call the Extension Office at (580)625-3464
- 6:30 pm Premise ID. How to do it & Why.**
*Vickie Ernsting, Oklahoma NAIS Coordinator, ODA
Dr Mike Pruitt, Staff Veterinarian, ODA*
- 7:15 pm Risk Management Options & Marketing Opportunities**
Tom Fanning, Manager Buffalo Feeders, Buffalo, OK



Crop Production Clinic

*Thursday, March 09, 2006
Panhandle Research & Extension Center
Goodwell, OK*

- 8:00am Registration**
- 8:30am Utilizing Mesonet in Crop Production—Al Sutherland, OSU**
- 10:30am N Rich Strip—Roger Gribble, OSU**
- 11:30am Lunch—Kim's Ribs (Please RSVP by March 3rd)
Cotton Ginning—Jerry Stuckey, GM NW Cotton Growers Co-op**
- 12:30pm GPS & Precision Ag—Randy Taylor, PhD, OSU**
- 1:30pm Irrigation Efficiency—Mike Kizer, PhD, OSU**
- 2:30pm Cotton Production & Planting Dates—Rick Kochenower, OSU**

There are six (6.0) Certified Crop Adviser CEU's approved, including 2.0 Soil & Water Mgt., 3.0 Crop Mgt., and 1.0 Nutrient Mgt.

If you have questions or to pre-register, call (580)349-5440.

DOTHISTROMA NEEDLE BLIGHT ON PINES

If you are having problems with the needles on pines turning yellow, check for Dothistroma Needle Blight (*Mycosphaerella pini*). This fungal disease causes the tips of needles to turn yellow, and yellow to tan bands to form along the needle. This time of year the black fruiting bodies erupt through the surface of the needle. Needle blight is most serious on Austrian and Ponderosa pines and can also affect Mugo pines. Scots pine is considered resistant.

Unfortunately, there can be other causes of yellowing needles. Brown Spot (*Scirrhia acicola*) looks a great deal like Dothistroma but affects primarily Scots pine. Ponderosa pine is also susceptible to Brown Spot, but Austrian pine is resistant.

Winter desiccation can cause these same needle-yellowing symptoms, including banding, but does not exhibit the black fruiting bodies. Tip blight (*Sphaeropsis sapinea*) can affect Austrian, ponderosa, Scots, and Mugo pines, but Austrians are most susceptible. This disease normally kills tips of branches when the needles are about half-grown in the spring. This disease results in the death of the entire needle, not just the tips. If the tips of branches are dead and the needles on these branches are shorter than normal, suspect this disease.

PREPARE FOR CALVING: GET A BOOK & USE IT

Every so often, an industry actually faces the future. Often when that happens, not everything is as it is today, so we talk about change with some authority. Talking with authority also means risk, since not all future change actually occurs.

This year, with some authority, it would behoove producers to keep a calving book. Many already do, but the statement is not a simple statement. During the many years of interacting with cow-calf producers, one very sore spot was the implication of keeping individual records of calves. More than once, if the expression "go fly a kite" means anything, most kite stores should be out of kites by now. The sooner they run out of kites, the better, so the industry can get down to the business of filling out a calving book.

During the past years, most calving books have been an excellent vehicle for advertising, and often the date or

calendar section was larger than the calf record section. It also is not hard to figure which calving books are designed by committee because they are too big to put in your shirt pocket or they don't have labels for data.

The reality of a calving book is simple. A calving book allows producers to write down the tag number they just put on the calf and record the date of birth as close as possible. For the skeptics, those who think calving books aren't accurate, one simply can assume they never have tagged a calf.

Most calves (not the cow) are easy to tag within 24 hours of birth. After that, you need to be extremely fast, and within 48 hours, forget it, wait for roundup. If the calves are walking around the calving pasture with a tag in the ear, believe me, the tags were placed at birth. Granted, after the birth date and individual tag number are recorded or simply written down, depending on what the producer wants to remember about the calf but doesn't want to convert to memory, the rest of the calving book is filled out.

The more typical data recorded is the mother's tag number, generally the cow closest to the calf but not always; the sex of the calf; and perhaps a notation on birth weight, calving ease or just miscellaneous comments. The important item is the calf tag number and birth date. Obviously, without the mother's tag number, no performance data can be gathered, but each individual producer ultimately has to make those decisions.

Don't let the extra data get in the way of writing the basic data down. The checklist for age and source verification is extremely short. First, individually identify each calf at birth with a visual tag and if possible, apply the electronic tag at the same time.

Step two, write the number and date in the calving book. That is it. That can be difficult, given the size of many cattle operations and shortage of labor. The next best alternative is to place the tag on the calves when the calves are worked in the spring. If this alternative is used, the electronic identification tag also could be placed in the calf at that time. These calves would then form the core group from which fall marketing groups could be selected and verified.

Still, take the calving book or some book, write down these individual calf tag numbers, and match the visual tag to the electronic tag. The book needs to follow many of the common record practices and certainly assists a producer in preparing for age and source verification in the fall.

Source: [Kris Ringwall](#), Beef Specialist, NDSU Extension Service

CATTLE UPDATE: WILL SELECTION INDEXES MAKE YOU MONEY?

Selection indexes are being developed and released by scientists and breed associations to aid in genetic decisions that will directly improve profits. With their development and release producers have several questions. What are selection indexes? How do they work? How do I use them? What are their limitations?

What are selection indexes?

A selection index is a multi-trait selection tool that calculates a monetary value for a combination of genetic influences on or within a production system. Within their computations, performance and cost of production factors are considered and combined to evaluate cattle. Previously, EPDs (Expected Progeny Differences) were used for animal comparisons with each EPD focused on a single production trait such as birth weight, weaning weight, or yearling weight. The first wide spread application of multiple trait selection soon followed the release of EPDs when producers began to simultaneously select for low birth weight and high yearling weight proclaiming the procedure as “curve bending”. This has led some breeders to think extreme EPD values are ideal, forgetting that many traits and relationships between traits can greatly influence profits. Most producers have found that many combinations and levels of production traits can maximize profits.

How do selection indexes work?

Through the use of selection indexes, producers will influence several traits simultaneously using one selection value. More specifically, selection indexes are multiple regression equations. The dollar value (equation solution) equals a sum of weighted traits. For the process to work correctly, the regression model must include the correct traits and weight each of them properly. Successful models produce answers that are easy to apply even though their development is complex. Selection indexes began in the 1940's. Iowa State University researchers developed the early theory and mechanics. From that beginning they have evolved to assist genetic selection in several species of livestock. Because of complications involving data collection and cost information, the cattle industry has been slow to bring selection indexes into daily practice.

In the meantime, many producers used single trait and independent culling levels to make genetic decisions. Independent culling levels place a threshold value on one or more traits to separate potential individuals into acceptable and non-acceptable candidates. Single trait selection would allow for the greatest genetic progress for a single trait but often has adverse effects on non-selected production traits. In comparison, indexes allow the candidates to be sorted without a threshold for any particular trait but result in positive overall profit potential.

Which selection index do I use?

Cow/calf operators must first define goals for their own operations. They must discover the profit centers in their production system. The profit centers will then define the best index to use. Most selection indexes have been given names that readily identify their application to cattle producers. Presently it is impossible to compare between the breeds because they do not share their databases or their modeling techniques.

How do I use them?

Selection indexes are used just like EPDs. The value for an individual animal means nothing by itself, but when compared to other, will selection indexes make you money?

Source: Twig Marston, cow/calf management specialist, KSU

NEW INFORMATION ON FIRST HOLLOW STEM

By Jeff Edwards

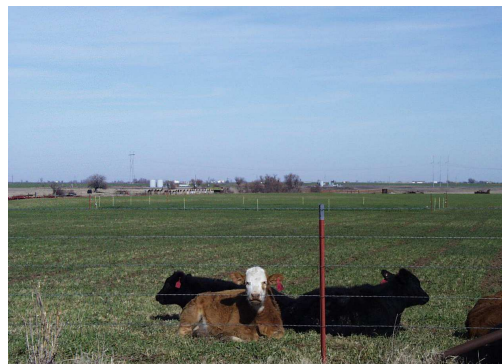
Let me start this article by making it clear that as a general rule, first hollow stem is still the optimal time to remove cattle from wheat pasture. New information gathered by an OSU research group led by Brian Fieser and Gerald Horn, however, indicates that there might be a little more flexibility than previously thought when removing cattle from wheat pasture.

Previous research indicated a grain yield loss of 1.25 bu/ac/day for grazing past first hollow stem. This assumes that the yield loss response is linear. In other words, it assumes that the grain yield loss for the first day of grazing past first hollow stem is just as damaging as the tenth. New research, however, indicates that this is not necessarily the case. This research has shown that the first few days of grazing past first hollow stem are not as damaging as previously thought and that grazing 10 days past first hollow stem is much more damaging than previously thought.

One could compare this trend to interest accumulating on a loan. If grain yield losses for grazing past first hollow stem were linear in nature, it would be similar to non-compounding interest on a loan. That is, interest would be figured based on the original principal and the interest payment would not change for the life of the loan. Our new data, however, seem to indicate that the wheat grain yield response to grazing past first hollow stem is more similar to compounding interest (like a credit card). In this scenario, the first few days of interest on the loan are manageable and may not be that big of a problem, but if left unchecked, the total amount can quickly snowball into an unmanageable sum.

It is also important to take into consideration that profitability of grazing past first hollow stem also depends on yield potential of the wheat. For example, a 10% yield loss associated with grazing a few days past first hollow stem has entirely different economic ramifications for a farmer with 30 bushel yield potential as compared to a farmer with 60 bushel yield potential.

The take-home message here is First Hollow Stem is still important, and while you don't need to have a truck waiting at the gate in anticipation, it is important to remove cattle from wheat pasture as close to first hollow stem as possible. We will continue to fine-tune the system with further research at OSU and report findings on a regular basis.



Once first hollow stem is reached, remove cattle from wheat pasture as soon as practically feasible.

COW-CALF PRODUCTION RECORD SOFTWARE

Producers frequently ask about the availability of software programs to manage cow-calf production records. Before purchasing a software program, it is important to analyze the value of such a system with regards to making better management decisions. Producers should evaluate their existing records to determine the types of information sought from a software program. Are inventory records important? Are summary reports of primary interest? By considering specific record needs, the producer is better equipped to choose an appropriate software package. The hardest steps to building a valuable recordkeeping system are (1) making time for recordkeeping, (2) determining the herd information that is economically feasible to collect, and (3) summarizing the herd data for use in the decision-making process.

If the cow-calf operator is not currently keeping any records on herd performance, a good starting point may be some basic calf crop records, cow information (if individual identification is used), calving and weaning percentages, inventory numbers, number of females exposed per bull, etc. Seedstock and commercial cow-calf producers have different needs. Also, herd size can influence the amount of detail that a producer is willing or able to collect on the cattle.

Meaningful cow-calf records may be handwritten or computerized. Monthly calendars, journals, and IRM Red-books are a few examples of handwritten record systems. The choice of programs, features, and cost of software are the "fine-tuning" portion of recordkeeping.

IF SOMEONE THINKS THE LOTTERY IS A GAMBLE...THEY SHOULD TRY FARMING

We take risks everyday. How we manage these risks in our business can make the difference between being profitable and unprofitable. Production agriculture comes with many risks including weather conditions, price fluctuations, and input costs. Through management schemes, diversification, knowledge, and education, you can protect yourself from adverse situations. Developing enterprise budgets, finding breakeven prices, and generating cash flow projections is a good start to minimizing risks.

The National Ag Risk Education Library is a great source of information aimed at managing risk in production agriculture. It is located at <http://222.agrisk.umn.edu> and anyone can easily search for articles from drought management to implementation of new technologies. Producers searching for ways to manage risk will utilize this resource. You can also contact your local Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Educator for assistance.

This newsletter is published monthly by the Beaver County OSU Extension Office, PO Box 339, Courthouse, Beaver, OK 73932 (580) 625-3464, and is one way of communicating educational information. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement is implied.

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