

Much confusion exists today regarding the definition of “natural” beef simply because a certified definition does not presently exist. Consequently, every beef company who markets an “all natural” product has actively promoted their own definition of “all natural” beef based on the combination of various animal husbandry attributes that appeals to their desired consumer audience. Some of the various attributes attached to a specific brand label may include the prohibited use of growth implants, antimicrobial feed additives and antibiotics, specific breed types, forage finishing and humane handling.

While there are definite opportunities for realizing greater gross returns from calves raised and marketed through these alternative management strategies, there are downside risks that must be factored into the overall equation as well. First, all producers interested in these alternative production systems must thoroughly understand and document compliance to the strict guidelines which exist for participating in each program. With that said, it is incumbent upon the interested producer to thoroughly research the specific production parameters each program requires. One must pay very close attention to the records required while the animals are in your custody as well as the necessary paper trail required when ownership transfer is completed to ensure there is no “fall out” of cattle eligibility.

If purchasing stockers eligible for a natural program, one must ensure proper immunization and commingling protocols have been prudently followed prior to receiving as significant opportunity costs of that calf will be realized if morbidity occurs and subsequent antibiotic treatment is necessary. Moreover, producers must also have a marketing strategy for those animals that are disqualified from the program for any reason.

Finally, it is very important for producers to recognize that costs of gain will be significantly increased through reduced daily gains, lowered feed efficiency and, potentially, higher death loss if growth implants and antibiotics such as Rumensin and Tylan are not incorporated throughout the stocker and finishing phase.

Strict attention to bunk management and the increase in roughages level while in the feedlot will be necessary to offset the higher likelihood of digestive upsets and resulting liver abscess rates which may consequently impact performance and carcass merit. It is critical for producers to fully anticipate and properly manage these potentially negative aspects of managing cattle to fit natural and certified organic branded beef programs or else trade dollars realized from premiums for the numerous productivity losses that will accrue during the pre-harvest phase.

Presently, total sales and volume at the retail supermarket channel for natural and certified organic branded programs are quite small (1.5 to 2%) relative to conventionally produced beef. I frequently interact with a few colleagues who personally believe the potential upper market share for natural and certified organic branded beef programs (% of total beef marketed) will “sputter out” around 5 to 10 percent (% of total beef marketed). However, incidents such as the massive pet food recall (at the time of this writing) as a result of a dog food ingredient (wheat gluten) contaminated with rat poison that was imported from China will only hasten the demand for food that is traceable. If a person can’t fully trust what he or she feeds their dog or cat, can we not expect that they will demand to know what they eat?

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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AG NEWS

Division of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources
Oklahoma State University

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April 2007

COW-CALF CONFERENCE IV

Thursday, April 5, 2007
At The Beaver River Stockyards
Beaver, OK

- 5:00 pm Where do Distillers By-Products Fit for the Cow-Calf Producer?**
Dr. Britt Hicks, OSU Area Livestock Specialist
- 6:00 pm Registration, Chili Feed**
Please call the Extension Office at (580)625-3464 .
- 6:30 pm How do Weaning Strategies Impact Calf Value?**
Dr. Ted McCollum, Texas A & M Beef Cattle Specialist
- 7:15 pm Influence of Feed Grain Prices on the Price of Calves**
Dr. Derrell Peel, OSU Livestock Marketing Specialist

AGRI-QUEST 2007

“Celebrating Oklahoma Agriculture For 100 Years”
April 5, 2007 — 10:00am—3:00pm — Laverne Ag Building

First 120 attending will receive a free Koehn sorting stick (One per family)

- Over 40 Trade Exhibits
- Door Prizes
- Free Lunch
- Health & Safety Information
- Presentation Topics: Drought Management
Future of Ethanol in Agriculture
No-Till Farming
Cedar Removal & Recycling

Special Session For Women
“Women In Ag Tea”
2:00-3:00pm
Please RSVP for this special event

For more information contact Jolena Graves at (580)921-2029 or Carolyn Oakley at (580)921-3612.

REGIONAL AGRITOURISM WORKSHOPS

Topics Will Include:

- Landowner Liability in Oklahoma
- Risk Management Plans
- Identifying Funding Sources
- Marketing Your Business
- Packaging and Pricing
- Marketing to the International Guest
- Attracting School Groups
- Educational Experiences on the Farm
- Travel and Tourism Trends

Early bird registration (at least one week prior to workshop) is \$15. General registration is \$25, which includes meals and workshop materials.

Locations & Dates:

- Vinita—April 6, 2007
- Freedom—April 13, 2007
- Antlers—April 20, 2007
- Weatherford—April 26, 2007
- Moore—May 4, 2007
- Henryetta—May 10, 2007
- Medicine Park—May 15, 2007
- Ardmore—May 18, 2007

For updated conference information, including a full agenda for the each workshop and registration form, visit www.oklahomaaagritourism.com or call 405-522-5652. Registration forms also available at Beaver County Extension Office.

HELP OKLAHOMA SET THE AGENDA FOR THE STATE'S WATER RESOURCES

The Oklahoma panhandle is full of vital agricultural interests that require an adequate supply of water. However, agriculture is just one important use of water. Businesses and homes depend on a clean, adequate supply as well. One overriding question is how does Oklahoma balance the needs of all water users in a way that ensures a clean, plentiful supply of water while planning for the state's water needs in the future.

The answer is not a simple one. The Oklahoma Water Resources Board and the Water Research Institute want you to help answer that question by attending a local input meeting regarding the Oklahoma Comprehensive Water Plan update.

The first meeting will be held April 12 in Beaver, Oklahoma, at the Beaver County Fairgrounds Pavilion at 1107 Douglas. The meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. and is open to all area citizens. Participation by all parties interested in the future of Oklahoma's water is encouraged.

The Water Research Institute at Oklahoma State University will be conducting 42 local input meetings throughout the state. The purpose of the meetings is to record issues, concerns, questions and suggestions citizens have regarding Oklahoma's water resources.

"We all use Oklahoma water whether in our homes or to make a living," said Jeri Fleming, WRI Stakeholder Communications Specialist. "I think most of us take water for granted, that it will always be at our fingertips, but that may not be the case if we don't start thinking about the future now."

The Oklahoma Water Resources Board is required by law to develop a Comprehensive Water Plan and update it every ten years; this is the third revision of the plan. The WRI is working with the OWRB to facilitate stakeholder input into the Water Plan.

Information sheets about water law as well as some regional and statewide issues will be available prior to the April 12 meeting. A record of discussion and all reports will be posted on the WRI website. Citizens will have the opportunity to make comments at the meeting or may fill out an input form and turn it in at the meeting. The input form will also be available on the website or can be faxed or mailed.

"We want the process to be fair, inclusive and transparent. There is no set agenda for the water plan now, the agenda will be set by the people of Oklahoma," Fleming said.

"The WRI is excited about the process we are about to embark on and we look forward to hearing from Oklahoma citizens," said Mike Langston, WRI Assistant Director. "The stakeholder input portion of the Water Plan update is a unique endeavor designed to allow citizens a voice in planning for the future of Oklahoma's water resources."

For more information and a schedule of meeting locations visit their website at <http://okwaterplan.info> or e-mail the WRI at waterplan@okstate.edu.

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA MEAT GOAT CONFERENCE May 5, 2007 - 9:00 a.m. - Norman, OK Cleveland County Fairgrounds

Conference Topics

- Economic Impact of Meat Goats in Oklahoma
- Modifying Fencing and Shelter Systems From Existing Cattle Operations
- Nutritional and Forage Management Considerations
- Parasite Control & Predator Management Considerations
- Goat Cooking Demo and Lunch
- Basic Goat Care-General Herd Care Hoof Trimming, Doe Health Management
- Business Management
- Meat Goat Selection

Pre-Registration fee of \$20.00 is due by April 26th to Cleveland Co Ext Office. For more information contact Justin Rogers at 405-321-4774. Registration forms are available at the Beaver County Extension Office.

HOW LOW SHOULD YOU GO?

We often are asked whether it is good to mow lower in the spring. The answer is "Yes" and "No." It doesn't hurt to mow lower than normal the first mowing or two. As a matter of fact, it can actually speed up green-up by removing old, dead grass and allowing the soil to warm up faster. However, the mowing height should be raised to normal after the first or second cutting so that crabgrass is not encouraged.

Crabgrass seed must have light to germinate, and a high mowing height will shade the soil. Also, the root depth and mowing height are related on upright growing grasses such as tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass. The higher the height of cut, the deeper the root system. A deeper root system means a more drought-resistant turf.

So, how low should you go on the first cutting? On tall fescue and Kentucky bluegrass and bermudagrass you should mow at about 1 to 1 1/2 inches. Be careful you don't go so low that you scalp the turf. Normal mowing height for Kentucky bluegrass or bermudagrass is 2 to 3 inches and for tall fescue is 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches.

APPLE TREE SPRAYS

Two common diseases on apple trees are cedar apple rust and apple scab. Though some apple varieties are resistant to these diseases — including Liberty, Jonafree, Redfree, Freedom, Williams Pride and Enterprise — most varieties are susceptible. For a description of disease-resistant varieties, go to <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/1000/1401.html>.) Fungicide sprays during April and May are critical to preventing disease on susceptible varieties. A fungicide that is available to homeowners

and very effective for control of apple scab and cedar apple rust is myclobutanil (Immunox). There are several formulations of Immunox, and only one is labeled for fruit. Check the label. Bayleton (Green Light Fung-Away) is excellent on rust but poor on scab. Captan, a common component of fruit tree sprays, is excellent on scab but does not control cedar apple rust. Sprays should be done on a 7- to 10-day schedule to keep the protective chemical cover on the rapidly developing leaves and fruit. An insecticide will need to be added to this mixture after petal drop to prevent damage from codling moths that cause wormy apples. Methoxychlor, carbaryl (Sevin), or malathion can be used as an insecticide. In order to protect bees, DO NOT use any insecticide during bloom. Also, do not use Sevin within 35 days of bloom because it will encourage fruit drop.

Although gardeners may continue to use myclobutanil throughout the season, certain other fungicides are more effective on summer diseases such as sooty blotch and fly speck. Consider switching to Captan or to a fruit spray mixture about June 1.

A spreader-sticker can be added to the fungicide-insecticide chemical mixture to improve the distribution and retention of the pest control chemicals over the leaves and fruit. A hard, driving rain of about 1 inch or more will likely wash chemicals from the leaves and fruit. In such cases, another application should be made.

JUDGE ORDERS "STOP SALE" FOR ROUNDUP READY® ALFALFA

As you may be aware, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California issued a preliminary injunction placing restrictions on the purchase and planting of Roundup Ready® alfalfa seed across the United States.

The March 12, 2007, court order allows for the continued harvest, use and sale of Roundup Ready® alfalfa forage, but places limits on the purchase and planting of Roundup Ready® alfalfa seed until further hearings are held.

Under the order, Roundup Ready® alfalfa purchased on or before March 12, 2007, may be planted by growers through March 30, 2007. The order also states that growers intending to plant alfalfa after March 30, 2007, must plant non-genetically engineered alfalfa. Purchases of Roundup Ready® alfalfa seed are prohibited after March 12, pending the scheduled court hearing on April 27. Following the hearing, the court is expected to decide the status of Roundup Ready® alfalfa during the time it takes USDA to satisfy its procedural obligation to complete an environmental impact statement.

If you purchased Roundup Ready® alfalfa and will not plant it by March 30, you should contact the seed dealer or company from which you purchased the seed. They should be able to advise you of their return policies and their ability to supply you with conventional alfalfa seed.

This case, brought by the Center for Food Safety and others against the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as Geertson Seed Farms Inc., et al. v. Mike Johanns, et al., centers on the USDA's process in approving Roundup Ready alfalfa for non-regulated status.

As these proceedings continue, it is important to note that this case is not focused on the safety of Roundup Ready® alfalfa. The scope of this case is the regulatory procedure used to approve Roundup Ready® alfalfa for planting. The District Court and other regulatory agencies, both at home and abroad, agree that Roundup Ready® alfalfa poses no harm to people or livestock. There was no evidence in this case showing environmental effects of Roundup Ready® alfalfa.

For more information about the "Stop-Sale" order on Roundup Ready® alfalfa, go to the WWW where you can find opinions as to why Roundup Ready® alfalfa as well as all GMO's are bad. You can also find how much Roundup Ready® alfalfa and other GMO's are helping the American farmer and the rest of the world. An easy way to find a lot of information is to go to <http://google.com> and type in "roundup ready alfalfa." Watch out what you see on the web. Some things are there with absolutely no proof and other things are highly accurate.

CATTLE MARKETING SYMPOSIUM – ALL-NATURAL BEEF

By Dale Blasi, KSU

What does "All-Natural" Beef mean to the producer and what opportunities exist?

Despite the fact most fresh beef in the retail case is already "natural", there is a growing consumer base who perceive beef is safer and more nutritious when cattle are raised in either a natural or certified organic manner compared to conventional production management systems. This phenomenon is evidenced by the dramatic double digit growth of these branded programs in recent months when compared to conventional production practices.