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Marketing Cows

It's that time of year when we see cowherds moving out of pastures, working calves, preg checking spring calving cows and deciding which cows to cull.

Typically, the sale of cull cows accounts for 15% to 30% of the yearly gross revenues of cow-calf operations. In the U.S., historic cull cow prices over the past 30 years have been the lowest in the months of November, December and January; and at their highest in level in March, April and May. Prices in the summer are typically near the average for the year. Past records indicate that on a percent of the annual selling price for cull cows set at 100% over a twelve-month period, prices can vary from 93% in the November-December time frame to 106% in the months of April and May.

If you have been selling cows in the fall as your normal practice, it may be profitable to feed cull cows by considering this seasonal price pattern. Feeding in late fall through February will allow you to take advantage of the seasonal price increase in the spring months. Feeding cows for a period of time can also add value by increasing final weights, but most importantly, improving dressing percentage and quality grade. A 6% to 20% increase in price can be expected when improving grades.

Cull cows will need 20 to 24 inches of bunk space and should be worked up on high energy diets just like feedlot cattle to minimize metabolic disturbances. Cows need to be sound, healthy and in thin to moderate body condition for this kind of program.

Research data from Nebraska and South Dakota would suggest that cows can gain from 2.5 to over 3.3 pounds per head per day, depending on the length of the feeding period and the ration fed. Normally the shorter the feeding period, the higher the average daily gain will be. To increase at least one quality grade, cows should be fed a minimum of 50 to 60 days, but not over 100-110 days. If fed over 100 to 110 days, feed efficiency and rate of gain generally declines, as well as the risk of excess body condition on the cows which can cause these cows to be discounted in price.

Grazing cows on corn stalks and or windrow grazing annual forages along with a supplementation program is also an option. Weight gains of 2.0 to 2.5 pounds per head per day can be realized. If no supplementation is provided, weight gains of 1.5 pounds per head per day could be expected.

Cull cows are not very efficient and all possible management strategies need to be explored (such as ionophores, implants, etc.) with a well-planned feeding regime and a balanced ration that will meet the requirements of the desired average daily gain. With a carefully managed program in place, feeding cull cows can add dollars to the bottom line in a cow calf operation.

If you would like some help developing a cull cow ration, give me a call!

David G. Hallauer
District Extension Agent
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Cash Rental Rates Published

The most recent Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service rental rate surveys were published September 10th. They are now available online through the KSU Agricultural Economics website at www.agmanager.info. Select the Land and Leasing and then Land Rental Rates tab for a list of publications that include these results and other rental information as well.

Notable for counties of the Meadowlark Extension District this year is the absence of a reported non-irrigated cropland cash rent number for Jackson County. This follows a second reporting period with no pasture cash rent number for Nemaha County. Why? In most cases, if enough data cannot be collected from a survey question to give a statistically relevant response, no data is reported.

You'll likely note the availability of other rental rate numbers available on AgManager as well. Next week, I'll break the other data available there as it pertains to rental rates. In the meantime, if you want a copy of the KASS report, e-mail me at dhallaue@ksu.edu or contact any of our Meadowlark Extension District Offices

Pruning Trees and Shrubs in the Fall

It has been said that the best time to prune is whenever your pruners are sharp. It's not bad advice. We can get by with pruning about any time of the year. There is, however, better times for pruning than others. Fall is typically not that time. Let me explain...

Woody plants move sugars and other materials from the leaves to storage places in the woody portions of the plant just prior to leaf fall. It's in our best interest to maximize those stored energy reserves for the health of the tree. Pruning now may reduce those reserves.

We also want to make sure plants are hardy going in to winter. According to Penn State University's Dr. Rich Marini "Based on everything that has been published we can conclude that woody plants do not attain maximum cold hardiness when they are pruned in the fall".

There are always exceptions, though. According to Marini, trees tend to be more affected more by heavy pruning than light pruning. In other words, we can probably get by with some light pruning unless we see a sharp drop in temperature before plants are completely hardened off. Marginally hardy plants are more susceptible to winter damage, especially if pruned in the fall. Bottom line: though light pruning and removal of dead wood are fine this time of year, you may want to delay severe pruning until spring.

What is 'light' pruning? If 10 percent or less of the plant is removed (not including dead wood), pruning would be considered light. CAUTION: even light pruning of spring-blooming shrubs such as lilac and forsythia will reduce flowers for next year. We normally recommend that spring-bloomers be pruned after flowering

Cindy Williams
District Extension Agent
FACS

Healthy Halloween Party Foods with Popcorn

Popcorn is a good choice for healthy eating. It contains fiber, providing roughage the body needs in the daily diet. Popcorn is low in calories—only 31 calories in one cup when popped without added fat. (Source: USDA National Nutrient Database <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search/>) .

October is National Popcorn Poppin' Month. Here are some popcorn ideas for another special time in October—Halloween.

1. Bony fingers. Fill clear plastic gloves (the type designed for wearing in the kitchen when preparing food) with popcorn. Tie the end with orange and black ribbon.
2. Halloween party popcorn. Combine popcorn with your choice of the following ingredients. By mixing Halloween candy with popcorn, you cut back on the total amount of candy offered. Serve with a scoop from a large bowl. Or, fill a self-closing sandwich bag with popcorn for each child.
 - *raisins or other dried fruit
 - *candy corn
 - *nuts
 - *gummy worms
 - *orange/black candies of your choice
3. Ghosts. Wrap a small popcorn ball in plastic wrap. Place wrapped ball in the middle of a large, sturdy white napkin. Tie the napkin together over the popcorn ball with white string, so the ends of the napkin hang out to form the body. Draw on a scary face with a black marker.

Nancy C. Nelson
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Family Legacies

Understanding and exploring one's family background can be a powerful experience. A number of family theories in the field use family history as an integral part of the growing process. Brownian theory in particular focuses on family legacies, patterns, and self-differentiation.

One helpful way to understand your personal family is through a three generation genogram. A genogram is similar to a family tree, yet, it adds new symbols that represent communication, levels of closeness, difficulties, and strengths.

Here are a few definitions that are helpful in thinking about your family. Each family has certain patterns of behavior. As you contemplate about your family, think about positive and negative patterns that have occurred. For example, there are communication patterns, marital patterns, discipline patterns, work patterns, gender role patterns, religious patterns, health patterns, emotional patterns, and more.

Family legacies are positive family patterns that you would like to keep in your family and carry on to the next generation.

Self-Differentiation is the ability to separate yourself from the negative patterns that occur in your family. In a sense, self-differentiation allows you to become your own self. This may mean you still agree with many of your family's ways, but you agree because you want to. You do not feel pressured to be one way over the other. You are making decisions as an adult in regards to self-identity, self-esteem, spirituality, politics, values, etc. Self-differentiation is important to move forward through each generation.

A transitional character is a person that comes along in a family and changes in a way that creates a new pattern for generations to come. For example, if there is a history of abusive fathers in a family, and a son comes along and chooses not to be like his father and grandfather, then he becomes a transitional character as he influences his children and children's children. This can be very powerful because of how many people are connected to the influence of the transitional character.

Take some time to think about your family. This season can be a time to examine the strengths, areas of improvement, and future directions of your past, present, and future family