



The PRIME Times...

a beef cattle newsletter

Volume 8 Issue 2

June 2014

Master Cattle Graduation

The fourth Master Cattle Producers Program concluded in March 2014. This year's program had 27 participants. They attended 12 classes on Beef Nutrition, Breeding & Genetics, Pasture Management, Financial Management, Soil Fertility, Animal Health, Cattle Handling, Reproduction, BQA, End Product and Master Farmer. Each class lasted 3 hours. It was quite a commitment on the part of the participants. A graduation supper was held. Graduates include: Billy Allemand, Janet Baudoin, Logan Boudreaux, Donovan Caro, Brad Crochet, Mike Danos, Richard Davidson, Freddie Delaune, David Fournier, Brandon Gravois, Perry Matherne, Evans Naquin, Jared Naquin, Dino Ockmond, James M. Pierce, James Pierce, Cody Pitre, Don Robichaux, Benjamin Rodrigue, Kristen Scarabin, Deborah Soignet, and Mike Verrett.

Waste Tire Recycling

Over the last 4 years many of you participated in the waste tire recycling program I conducted. In those years, we've collected over 8,000 tires! I thought I had gotten them all, but a few of you have inquired if I would have the program again. Well, on June 10, 2014 I will have another program. The site will be the Ag Building in Raceland. We'll collect waste tires from 7:30 a.m.—Noon. Please call me at 446-1316 and let me know how many tractor, truck and automobile tires you have to get rid of so I'll know what to expect.

2014 Select Heifer Sale

The 29th Annual Select Heifer Sale was held on March 8, 2014 at Zero Brahman Ranch in Thibodaux. This year's sale had 100 F₁'s, 10 3/4 Angus 1/4 Brahman and 3 Brangus heifers consigned by 13 producers. The sale average on 113 head was \$1,899.34. Thirty-seven open heifers averaged \$1,689.86, thirty-four exposed heifers averaged \$1,672.06. The thirty-one bred heifers averaged \$2,048.39 while the eleven pairs averaged \$2,886.36. This year's high selling heifer was a 17 month old bred tiger stripped F₁ that sold for \$3,600. The heifer was consigned by Don Robichaux (Zero Ranch) and sold to Randy Triche from Houma, LA. Bill Bryson from Blountsville, Alabama paid \$3,500 for a 17 month old bred Angus X Brahman F₁ consigned by Don Robichaux (Zero Ranch). Tim Martinez paid \$3,400 for a 26 month old Angus X Brahman F₁ pair consigned by Double G Farms from Cut Off, LA and \$3,400 for a 36 month old Brahman X Angus pair from B & B Farms of Thibodaux. The volume buyer at this year's sale was Ben Bordelon closely followed by Fournier Farms. Cattle from the sale sold to buyers from Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana.

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Upcoming Event:

Waste Tire Recycling

June 10, 2014
Ag Building
Raceland, LA
7:30 a.m.—Noon



Livestock & Pasture Field Day

The annual Livestock & Pasture Field Day was held April 10, 2014 at Phillip Plaisance's Farm in Valentine. The field day was well attended as over 100 cattle producers viewed the ryegrass variety trial as well as seeing demonstrations on how to pull a calf correctly and what to do afterwards and horn fly control using the "Vet Gun". In addition, LSU AgCenter personnel discussed the Master Farmer program and representatives from NRCS & FSA discussed their USDA programs for cattle producers. Sincere appreciation is extended to the Plaisance Family for hosting an exceptional program.

Bahiagrass—Manage It or Kill It?

Bahiagrass is one of those grasses that you either love it or hate it. Depending on your pasture management system it can be good for your cattle or it can hurt your production of pounds of beef. Managing bahiagrass to enhance its benefits is very important.

1/ Bahiagrass produces most of its desirable forage close to the soil surfaces. About 60% of the total forage is produced within 2 inches of the soil surface. 2/ It can tolerate intense, close grazing pressure. Since its highest quality is within 2 inches of the soil surface it needs to be grazed close to keep the grass at its most nutritional level. 3/ It produces moderate yields of forage on soils of low fertility. Bahia grows on all soil types and does best in good quality soil, but it will produce moderate yields on low quality soils which makes it suitable to places where other, more nutritious grasses, won't grow well. 4/ The dense sod that bahiagrass forms helps to reduce weed encroachment. Even under good pasture management systems, weeds will establish in a pasture so weed control herbicides are necessary. With bahiagrass forming such a dense sod, it is hard for weeds to become established. If you have a hands off pasture management system, then bahiagrass may be for you.

To successfully take advantage of bahiagrass, it needs to be grazed or clipped to keep it tender and succulent with good quality. When bahia gets to be about 8-10 inches tall, it becomes unpalatable and ceases to produce new growth. Clipping, based on plant height, is required to produce new growth. If you can keep this grass under 6" in height during the growing season, it should provide good nutrition for your cattle. Also, clip to remove seed heads because the seed heads slow down growth.

Since bahiagrass is a coarse grass, much coarser than bermudagrass or dallisgrass, you will need to mouth your cattle once a year when you are working them. Their teeth tend to wear down quicker when grazing only bahia vs. bahia/bermudagrass mix, or pure stand of bermudagrass or dallisgrass.

If you would like to eliminate bahia from your pasture, try the following:

Isolated or minimal infestations: Can use Cimarron, Cimarron Max, Chaparral or Pastora. Could also spot-treat with a 2% solution of Glyphosate (Roundup)

Total renovation: In the fall apply 2 quarts/acre of glyphosate. After green-up in the spring, apply 2 quarts/acre of glyphosate and then prepare a seedbed and plant common or hybrid bermudagrass

Keeping your bermudagrass pasture or hayfield in a vigorous condition (well fertilized and not overstocked) will help to keep bahiagrass from invading these bermudagrass stands.



Valuing Replacement Heifers

Feeder heifer prices have moved approximately \$20/cwt higher since the beginning of the year and weaned heifers are now worth approximately \$1,000 per head, if not more. Last month's USDA NASS *Cattle on Feed* report showed that the number of heifers on feed was down 6% from a year ago. The decline in heifers on feed coincides with an increase in the number of heifers retained for breeding purposes since 2011 and smaller calf crops. With this year's calf crop likely to be 200,000 to 400,000 head smaller than last year's 33.9 million, the value of these females will not be significantly less over the next couple of years.

The decision to sell the heifer or retain for breeding purposes will not be an easy decision given the revenue per head that won't be collected should a producer retain the female. Costs associated with developing the heifer into a replacement female are also variable given the numerous different strategies that can be used to produce low-cost but high quality replacement heifers. Knowing the costs of production from birth to weaning is essential to determining the development costs. While the value of the sold heifer calf can often be an acceptable proxy for animals retained either for breeding or retained ownership purposes, using the value of what the animal could have sold for will greatly overstate the "true" cost of retention in the current market environment.

Direct calf production costs are projected to be approximately \$530/cow this year according to the LSU AgCenter enterprise budgets. This is significantly cheaper than using the current market value of the same heifer calf (approximately \$1,000/head) to start calculation of heifer development costs. Calculating the costs of developing the heifer from weaning until the first calf arrives in two years is more difficult due to the time elapsed and input prices and levels of input usage is not known with certainty. Estimated direct costs of production from weaning until first calf suggest an additional \$815/female for a total of approximately \$1,345/female (\$1,630/female when accounting for indirect expenses less cull heifer sales). Using the current market value as a proxy for costs prior to weaning would overstate the heifer development cost by approximately \$500/female.

Current bred heifer prices from USDA AMS reported sales are in line with these cost estimates, but private sale prices have been higher. Replacement female prices as a whole have been on the rise and improved drought conditions in the central portion of the U.S. will help push these prices higher. Knowing your costs of production may open the opportunity to save your operation money or increase the revenue coming into the operation as the U.S. beef herd begins to stabilize and then enter a period of expansion.



Cargill to cut workforce at Dodge City plant

DODGE CITY, Kan. – Cargill Meat Solutions plans to downsize the workforce at the company's Dodge City plant because of tight supplies of cattle. The final number of layoffs has not been confirmed, but local news reports say roughly 300 employees could be affected.



"Our analysis of the cattle supply for the next few years projects continued tight supplies as the herd begins to rebuild from the recent drought conditions," said Mark Klein, Cargill spokesman. "Aligning production with the available supply for harvest will enable the plant to run more efficiently.

"We have been talking to employees this week and do not have a firm number on how many could be laid off or reassigned," he added. "What we do know is that these decisions are never easy, and we looked at every possible option to avoid having to do this."

Cargill will recall laid off workers in the bargaining unit as openings occur through attrition, Klein said. The number of employees remaining at the plant will still be well above 2,000.

Persistent drought conditions followed by severe winter weather have resulted in the smallest US cattle herd in more than 60 years. The US Department of Agriculture's Jan. 31 Cattle report indicated cattle and calves totaled 87.7 million as of Jan. 1, 2014, down 2 percent from 89.3 million from a year ago and the lowest Jan. 1 inventory of all cattle and calves since the 82.1 million head recorded in 1951.

Cargill will continue investing in the Dodge City beef plant. In August 2013, the company announced plans to add an automated order distribution system at the facility.

"Dodge City continues to be an integral part of the beef business for Cargill," Klein said. "We are continuing our investment in the Dodge City plant. Work continues on the \$50 million box distribution facility currently under construction. When complete, this addition will improve the operational efficiency and customer service levels at this location."



**Ryegrass Variety Demonstration
Planted October 24, 2013
20' X 60" plots**

Name	Crude Protein %	TDN %
Flying A	26.99	77.32
Grits	26.16	78.19
Gulf	26.91	77.19
Jackson	27.66	78.21
Lonestar	25.15	76.90
Marshall	27.36	78.41
Nelson	26.37	78.82
Passerel Plus	27.27	78.94
Prine	24.46	75.07
Winter Hawk	27.13	77.07



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June 2014