

Livestock Update

Beef - Horse - Poultry - Sheep - Swine

March 2013

This LIVESTOCK UPDATE contains timely subject matter on beef cattle, horses, poultry, sheep, swine, and related junior work. Use this material as you see fit for local newspapers, radio programs, newsletters, and for the formulation of recommendations.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Dates to Remember	1
April Herd Management Advisor	2
Ten Ideas to Improve Your Herd's Cattle Health This Year	4
Buying the Right Bull - VT Beef Winter Webinar March 12 th	5
2013 Southwest Bull Test: Sale, Open House, & Bred Heifer Sale	6
Consignments Being Accepted for 2013 Virginia Ram Lamb Performance Test	7



Scott P. Greiner, Extension Project Leader
Department of Animal & Poultry Sciences

Dates to Remember

BEEF

MARCH

- 17 Virginia BCIA Southwest Bull Test Open House. Hillwinds Farm. Dublin.
Contact: Scott Greiner, (540) 231-9159; email: sgreiner@vt.edu
- 23 Virginia BCIA Southwest Bull Test Sale. Umberger Facility. Wytheville.
Contact: Scott Greiner, (540) 231-9159; email: sgreiner@vt.edu

HORSE

MARCH

- 22-24 EquiSmartz State Educational Weekend. VHC. Lexington.
Contacts: Celeste Crisman, (540) 231-9162; email: ccrisman@vt.edu or Jessica Tussing, (540) 231-6345; email: jessit07@vt.edu

JULY

- 29 thru Southern Regional 4H Horse Championships. West Monroe, LA. **Contact:** Celeste Crisman,
8/3 (540) 231-9162; email: ccrisman@vt.edu

SEPTEMBER

- 12-15 State 4-H Championship Horse & Pony Show. Virginia Horse Center. Lexington, VA.
Contacts: Celeste Crisman, (540) 231-9162; email: ccrisman@vt.edu or Jessica Tussing, (540) 231-6345; email: jessit07@vt.edu

April Herd Management Advisor

Scott P. Greiner & Mark A. McCann
Extension Beef Specialists, VA Tech

April brings spring fever, winter feeding fatigue and anxiousness to go to grass. As with many management practices, patience pays dividends. Turning out too quickly on spring pastures will only delay the time when pasture can meet a cow's dry matter needs. Rotational grazing can also improve pasture productivity by insuring a rest period for forage regrowth. As fertilization and plans are made for future forage harvest it is an excellent time to total winter feed consumption and reflect on management changes for 2013 which could reduce days of winter feeding and supplement needs.

Spring Calving Herds (January-March)

General

- Calving season winding down. Continue to observe late calving cows frequently.
- Tag, tattoo, record birth weight, calving ease score, teat/udder score and mothering ability of dam. Keep accurate records at birth to comply with age and source verification requirements.
- Monitor young calves for scours. Keep calving area and paddocks with pairs clean and well drained. Move pairs to new pastures or locations and reduce commingling of newborn calves with older calves to help reduce exposure and transfer of scours.

Nutrition and Forages

- Continue to offer a high magnesium mineral to prevent grass tetany. Monitor intake to insure cows are consuming the recommended amount. No other source of salt or minerals should be available.
- Evaluate growth of yearling heifers with goal of reaching 60-65% of mature weight by breeding. Depending on forage quality, supplementation may be needed to meet weight gain target.
- Offer medium quality hay as cows are turned out on pasture and use hay disappearance as a barometer of dry matter needs of the herd.
- New forage growth is very digestible, high in protein and high in moisture content.

Herd Health

- Consult with your veterinarian concerning pre-breeding vaccination schedule for cow herd, yearling heifers, and bulls. Plan early to allow 30-day vaccination window prior to breeding season.
- Monitor calf health closely, particularly for signs of scours and pneumonia, have treatment supplies on hand.
- Observe newborn calves to ensure colostrum intake first few hours of life. Provide selenium and vitamin A & D injections to newborn calves. Castrate commercial calves at birth.

Reproduction

- Finalize plans and protocols for breeding season. Establish calendar to map timing of synchronization program to be used during breeding season. Have supplies and semen on hand.
- Breed heifers 2-4 weeks ahead of mature cows to allow longer post-partum interval prior to second breeding season.
- Schedule and conduct breeding soundness exams on herd sires, including annual vaccinations.

- Manage newly acquired herd sires properly to prepare them for the breeding season. Yearling bulls often lose 100+ pounds during their first breeding season. Adjust them to the feed and environment of their new home, and commingle bulls of same age/weight for a period of time prior to turnout. Ample exercise, in combination with a proper nutritional program, is essential to make them physically fit for the breeding season

Genetics

- Finalize genetic goals and selection criteria for upcoming breeding season (both AI and natural service sires).
- Collect remaining yearling performance data (weight, height, scrotal, ultrasound) in seedstock herds.

Fall Calving Herds (September-November)

General

- Schedule and conduct pregnancy diagnosis with veterinarian 45-60 days following breeding season.
- Evaluate potential options for marketing of calf crop, including timing of weaning to meet operational goals. Calculate break-evens on various marketing options and consider risk management strategies.
- Reimplant commercial calves.

Nutrition and Forages

- Begin creep feeding or creep grazing calves if desired.
- Cows are entering latter portion of lactation, above average to good quality hay should meet nutritional requirements.
- Although pasture green-up is beginning, hay should be continued to be offered until consumption declines significantly.
- Reserve high quality hay and a pasture area for calves post-weaning.

Herd Health

- Consult with veterinarian on vaccination protocol for calf crop. Design vaccination and weaning program around marketing goals and objectives.

Genetics

- Collect weaning weights on calf crop at optimum time (typical age range 160-250 days), along with cow weights, hip heights and body condition scores (cow mature size data taken within 45 days of calf weaning measure).

Ten Ideas to Improve Your Herd's Cattle Health This Year

W. Dee Whittier, DVM, MS

Extension Veterinarian, Beef Cattle - College of Veterinary Medicine, VA Tech

Like in any other part of our cattle operations, resolving to do some things better for the health programs we have on our beef cattle operations might pay us dividends. So here is my list of top 10:

1. Inspect cattle often to look for ones with health problems. Probably nothing else improves the odds for a good outcome from a health event more than early discovery and treatment.
2. Develop a relationship with your veterinarian. He/she is a lot more likely to make the trip to help you with your midnight calving if you've used them to buy some products and perform some routine vet work. Investing in veterinary inputs into keeping our high-priced cattle healthy is a sound financial practice.
3. Use your veterinarian to help you with sick animals. We have sometimes developed a mindset that we couldn't afford a vet when cull cows were worth \$200. With \$1000 cull cows and weaned calves, an investment in veterinary care for beef cows makes a lot more sense.
4. Prevent exposure to any disease you can. This means carefully considering how you introduce herd additions. It often also means thinking about how you feed and manage calving cows so that scour bugs don't build up in your calving lots or barns.
5. Administer dewormers with a plan. Not every deworming makes economic or control sense. For example, midsummer deworming of spring born calves and two spring dewormers given at the right times to yearling replacements and stocker calves can give returns of \$10 to \$30 per dollar spent on a dewormer.
6. Give calving cows lots of attention. If there appears to be a problem, examine them early. Getting cows and calves successfully through the calving season has never paid bigger dividends.
7. Give newborn calves lots of attention. National figures show newborn losses to be nearly 5%. Dealing with chilling, inadequate colostrum consumption, too little milk, mismothering, scours and pneumonia has never been more important.
8. Vaccinate with a plan. Poorly chosen or improperly timed vaccinations may afford no benefit and even make things worse if vaccines add to the stress of already sick cattle. Well timed vaccines against the right diseases give huge advantages in keeping cattle healthy.
9. Make a plan to market the vaccination program that you have given. Calf buyers will pay premiums for well vaccinated calves if they marketed through a program like VQA or on the Tel-O-Auction where the vaccination information can be passed along and there is a way to get a competitive bid.
10. Follow the rules in using antibiotics to treat cattle. Not only are many antibiotics expensive, but their use is a concern to our consumers. Consumers generally agree that it is good to treat animals with infections with antibiotics. But they want us to be sure we follow withdrawal times and only treat when necessary.

Applying good health management practices in our herds help insure a profit, make cattle production more satisfying and help out the whole beef industry by maintaining our image as responsible keepers of cattle.

Buying the Right Bull - VT Beef Winter Webinar March 12th

Dr. Mark A. McCann
Extension Animal Scientist, VA Tech



Dr. Scott Greiner, Professor and Extension Animal Scientist at Virginia Tech will be the featured speaker for the fourth Beef Webinar sponsored by Virginia Cooperative Extension and scheduled for 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 12th. He will provide cattlemen with tips and advice for “Buying the Right Bull”.

Dr. Greiner has led Virginia’s Bull Evaluation Program since his arrival in 1998. Participants in the on-line meeting will have the opportunity to ask questions through an on-line chat box or over the telephone using a number provided during the program.

Check with your local Extension Agent about accessing the program at your local Extension office. Producers with high speed internet service can access the meeting at home. Webinar information and meeting links will be available on the VT Beef Extension webpage <http://www.vtbeef.apsc.vt.edu/> . From the VT Beef Extension site, you can click on the meeting link and go directly to the meeting. If you missed the earlier webinars, you will find the links to the recording on the VT Beef Site.

If you have questions please contact Mark McCann at 540-231-9153 or mark.mccann@vt.edu .

2013 Southwest Bull Test: Sale, Open House, & Bred Heifer Sale

Dr. Scott P. Greiner
Extension Animal Scientist, VA Tech

An open house will be hosted at the Virginia Beef Cattle Improvement Association's Southwest Virginia Bull Test on Sunday afternoon, March 17th from 1:00 to 4:00 PM. Cattle producers and others interested are invited to attend. The Southwest Bull Test Station is located at Hillwinds Farm, owned and operated by Tim Sutphin of Dublin, Virginia. The station is located just outside Dublin. From Dublin, travel south on Route 11 just over two miles, and turn right on Thornspring Road/Rt. 643 (Cougar Express convenience store on corner). Proceed on Thornspring Road a little over a mile and the facility is on the left.

Approximately 155 bulls will sell at the Virginia BCIA Southwest Bull Test Sale on Saturday, March 23, 12:00 noon at the Danny Umberger sale facility, just outside Wytheville. These bulls include 70 fall-born senior bulls and 85 spring-born junior bulls. Breeds include 97 Angus, 7 Charolais, 13 Gelbvieh & Gelbvieh Balancers, 7 Polled Hereford, 31 Simmental & SimAngus. Only bulls which meet stringent BCIA criteria will sell. This includes complete breeding soundness exams (including semen evaluation) on fall-born bulls, volume buyer discounts, and an enhanced soundness and fertility guarantee on all bulls selling.

The BCIA-Influenced Bred Heifer Sale will be held in conjunction with the bull sale. A select group of approximately 40 fall-calving bred heifers from leading producers will be offered immediately following the bulls. All heifers will be certified through the Virginia Premium Assured Heifer Program, which verifies health, genetics, and management procedures. Service sires for the heifers will feature highly proven, AI sires selected for calving ease and performance.

For complete details and progress reports visit the Virginia BCIA website <http://www.bcia.apsc.vt.edu> or phone 540-231-2257. Video clips of the bulls and an online catalog will also be posted.

Consignments Being Accepted for 2013 Virginia Ram Lamb Performance Test

Dr. Scott P. Greiner

Extension Animal Scientist, VA Tech

Consignments are currently being accepted for the 2013 Virginia Ram Lamb Performance Test to be conducted at the Virginia Sheep Evaluation Station located at the Shenandoah Valley Agriculture Research and Extension Center near Steeles Tavern. Rams will be delivered to the test station April 30, and after a two week adjustment period, will be performance tested for 63 days. In addition to measurement of growth performance, rams will be evaluated for carcass traits with ultrasound during the test, and DNA genotyping will be conducted for spider syndrome and scrapie resistance. Eligible rams will sell August 24. Rams born September 1, 2012 to February 28, 2013 are eligible. For rules and regulations, as well as entry forms contact Scott Greiner at 540-231-9163 or visit <http://www.apsc.vt.edu/extension/sheep/index.html> .

Virginia Performance Ram Lamb Test- Historical Test and Sale Expense Summary

TEST & SALE EXPENSES	2012	2011	2010
Test Costs			
Feed	\$112.19	\$111.95	\$86.00
Yardage	\$8.00	\$8.00	\$8.00
Codon 171/Spider Genotyping	\$11.00	\$11.00	\$11.00
Vet/Medical	\$4.08	\$1.21	\$4.10
Misc.	<u>\$6.98</u>	<u>\$6.78</u>	<u>\$2.03</u>
Total Test Costs	\$142.25	\$138.94	\$111.13
Sale Costs			
Shearing	\$5.50	\$5.50	\$5.50
Sale advertising, auctioneer, mailings, etc.	\$9.65	\$9.98	\$8.08
Registration Transfer	\$6.00	\$5.00	\$6.00
VA Check-off	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>	<u>\$0.50</u>
Total Sale Expenses	\$21.65	\$20.98	\$20.08
Average Sale Price	\$554.33	\$540.78	\$432.93
Average Total Test & Sale Expenses	\$163.90	\$159.92	\$131.21
Average Net to Consignor	\$390.43	\$380.86	\$301.72

SALE RESULTS Breed Group	2012		2011		2010	
	No. Rams	Avg.	No. Rams	Avg.	No. Rams	Avg.
Winter Suffolk	22	\$640	22	\$530	20	\$459
Fall Suffolk			1	\$520		
Fall Dorsets	8	\$516	5	\$597	6	\$478
Winter Dorsets	10	\$413	5	\$443	6	\$382
Winter Hampshire			2	\$380		
Fall Katahdin						
Winter Katahdins	4	\$631	2	\$718	3	\$303
Winter White Dorper	2	\$638	1	\$650	2	\$250
Winter NC Cheviot	1	\$400	3	\$517	2	\$603
Winter NC x Suff Cross	5	\$460	4	\$639	2	\$400
Total Rams	52	\$554	45	\$541	41	\$433
Commercial Ewe Lambs	29	\$330	26	\$340	26	\$272