

COW/CALF CORNER

The Newsletter

From the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

April 30, 2012

In this Issue:

Clues to Beef Herd Rebuilding

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

Early Summer De-worming of Nursing Calves

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Clues to Beef Herd Rebuilding

Derrell S. Peel, Oklahoma State University Extension Livestock Marketing Specialist

In the aftermath of last year's drought, it is taking some time to determine where the industry is with respect to stopping herd liquidation and beginning the process of herd rebuilding. The first consideration is that the drought continues in force in the Southwest; in parts of the intermountain Rockies; and in the Southeast. Some additional drought forced liquidation is occurring in these regions, though the magnitude of the impacts on the broader market is much smaller than last year. The aggregate numbers suggest that an 18 to 20 percent year over year decrease in beef cow slaughter, combined the slight increase in beef replacement heifers reported on January 1, will be needed to stop beef cow liquidation in 2012. Even sharper decreases in beef cow slaughter will be required before any beef cow herd expansion is possible.

Beef cow slaughter is currently down 6 percent from last year, not enough to stop additional liquidation. However, the drop in beef cow slaughter has been much more pronounced lately. In the last 4 weeks or reported slaughter data, beef cow slaughter has averaged nearly 18 percent less than the same period last year. In the most recent data, weekly beef cow slaughter was 26 percent less than one year ago. If the current reductions in beef cow slaughter persist for many weeks of the year, stabilization of the beef cow herd inventory, or even fractional growth in beef cow numbers, is possible in 2012.

Of course, the slaughter cow market is very strong and will continue to bid for cows. In Oklahoma, slaughter cows price is currently around \$90/cwt. for average dressing breaking and boning cows, with high dressing cows bringing nearly \$100/cwt. The year to date decrease in beef cow slaughter is being moderated by a 1.7 percent increase in dairy cow slaughter, resulting in an overall decrease in total cow slaughter of 2.3 percent so far this year. A continued sharp decrease in beef cow slaughter will pull the total cow slaughter lower and continue to support strong cull cow prices.

It is more difficult to say anything about heifer retention. The cattle on feed data appear to be a mixed set of indications. The April 1 on-feed total was up 2 percent but included 4 percent more heifers while steers on feed were up less than one percent. In total, heifers make up a slightly higher percent of cattle on feed compared to last year. The picture is widely varied across states. In Texas and Kansas, where total cattle on feed is unchanged to lower than last year, the on-feed inventory consists of increased heifers on feed and less steers. This may be related to the drought effects on regional cattle shipments during liquidation and the timing of steer versus heifer sales during liquidation. In some other states, such as Idaho and South Dakota, on-feed inventories consist of fewer heifers and more steers, which could be an indication of heifer retention. In Nebraska the large increase in feedlot inventories consists of both more steers and heifers.

In the end, I don't think much can be said about heifer retention from the current cattle on feed numbers. Placements of steers versus heifers in the next few months may provide stronger clues until replacement heifer numbers are reported later. The mid-year Cattle inventory report in July may be anticipated more this year than sometimes for clues to heifer retention in 2012. Weekly cow slaughter will be monitored as closely this year for the magnitude of year over year decreases as it was last year for the magnitude of increases related to drought impacts.

Early Summer De-worming of Nursing Calves

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

For many years, the average value of a pound of added gain on feeder calves was considered to be 55 to 60 cents. In today's market place that figure is no longer accurate. Last week at the Oklahoma City National Stockyards, the value (for steer calves) of each pound added between 450 pounds and 575 pounds was worth approximately \$1.18. This is lower than the average sell price because of the price slide between lighter and heavier calves. Nonetheless, this much higher value of added gain means that management practices that may have been marginal in profitability in the past now have tremendous advantages. One such practice is the de-worming of spring born calves.

Five de-worming trials were conducted at the Eastern Research Station located near Haskell, Oklahoma during the 1990's. Crossbred cows and their Charolais sired calves were sorted by sex of calf, calf age and cow age, then randomly allotted to one of four treatments: 1) non-de-wormed control, 2) de-worm calf only; 3) de-worm cow only; and 4) de-worm cow and calf. Two or three treatments were applied each year including one control group. Each treatment was applied two or three years. Cows and calves were individually identified and weighed in early June. Treated animals received label-recommended dosages of ivermectin pour-on. Pairs grazed in rotation seven bermudagrass pastures overseeded with clover at a stocking rate of 2 acres per cow-calf pair during the 144 to 181-day trials. Initial studies indicated that a low worm infection rate was present in the first two years. At that time fecal egg counts ranged from 0 to 28 eggs per 3 gram sample of feces. De-worming cows in late spring had no significant effect on cow summer weight gains up until calf weaning time. Treating cows but not their calves resulted in a small advantage in average daily calf weight gains (0.1 pound/day); while treated spring-born calves had significantly greater daily weight gains (0.14 pound/day) while nursing non-treated cows. In other words, just de-worming the calves resulted in a 21 pound weaning weight advantage over non-treated controls. Treated calves nursing

treated cows had significantly greater average daily weight gains (0.17 pound/day) than the untreated calves nursing untreated cows. Over the approximate 150 day period this weight gain advantage would total about 25 pounds additional weaning weight to calves in this treatment group.

As previously stated, in this series of studies, de-worming spring-born nursing calves in early summer resulted in summer weight gains of 21 additional pounds. Twenty-one pounds valued at \$1.18 each produces \$24.78 more per calf and should pay for the de-wormer and the labor to apply it. De-worming both cow and calf resulted in an increased summer weight gain of 25 pounds versus non-treated controls (or 4 pounds more than when the calf alone was treated.) In these studies, reproductive performance was quite high for both treated and non-treated cows, and no difference was noted. **Different results may occur in different climates and under different stocking rates.**

Oklahoma State University, in compliance with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 11246 as amended, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and other federal laws and regulations, does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, disability, or status as a veteran in any of its policies, practices or procedures. This includes but is not limited to admissions, employment, financial aid, and educational services. References within this publication to any specific commercial product, process, or service by trade name, trademark, service mark, manufacturer, or otherwise does not constitute or imply endorsement by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.