

January 2010

**Wibaux County
Extension Office**

Dear Farmers & Ranchers,

Please mark the date of **January 28th** on your calendar. This is the date for the 16th Annual Extension Winter Series. Enclosed please find a schedule and information on the topics to be covered. Again this year we still start the programming at 10:00 a.m., have a dinner at noon, and conclude at about 3:15 p.m. We think we have some interesting topics and good speakers lined up and hope everyone who is interested will be able to attend. Individuals with a private or commercial pesticide applicator's license will receive three recertification credits for attending. If you will be able to attend, we do ask that you **RSVP by Monday, January 25th**, so we have some idea how many to plan on for dinner.

In this newsletter you will also find information on Annie's Project, Raising Beef Cattle Naturally, Understanding the Nutrition/Reproduction Linkage, Feed the Cows and Feed Them Right, and Caring for Your New Yearling Bull.

If you have questions or would like additional information on these or other topics, please let us know.

From the Wibaux County Extension Office,
Patti and I do wish you and your family a very
Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

David L. Bertelsen
County Extension Agent



*Montana State University,
U.S. Department of
Agriculture and Montana
Counties Cooperating.
MSU Extension is an equal
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EXTENSION PUBLICATIONS

\$	MT200918HR	What Are Your Rights Over Your Remains?
\$	MT1989HR	Letters of Last Instruction
\$	MT199817HR	Montana Medical Care Savings Accounts (MSA's)
\$	MT200207HR	Shopping for Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA's)
\$	MT200206HR	Helping Friends Cope With Financial Crisis
\$	EB0019	Dryland Pastures in Montana and Wyoming (\$5.00)
\$	DVD008	Taking Care of Your Ground Water: A homeowner's guide to well and septic systems (\$4.00)

ANNIE'S PROJECT EXPANDING IN NORTH DAKOTA

Annie's Project which will start the week of January 19, 2010, is expanding to 12 locations across the State. Annie's Project is a six week program designed to empower women to become better business partners on the farm and ranch. Each week the Annie's Project participants gather for a light supper, followed by video conferences and presentations designed to help them better understand how to be actively involved in an agricultural operation. Each session will help them be able to better balance family life, farm life and community involvement, and of course there will be plenty of time for visiting and social networking thrown in!

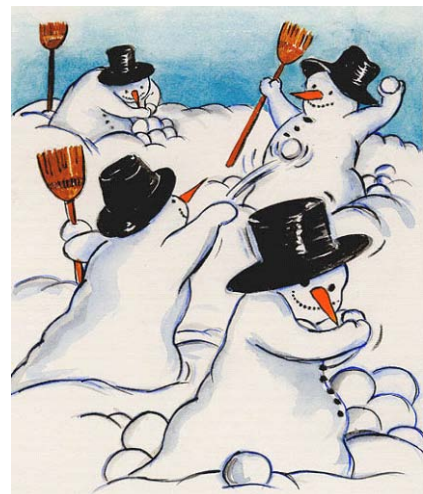
Topics covered by Annie's Project include: Real Colors (temperament profiles), Farm and Family Finances, Farm and Ranch Financial Analysis, Computer Programs designed for Farm Business Management, Crop and Livestock Marketing, and Farm Business Planning.

Everyone can find something at Annie's Project. Use the experience just to see if you want to help your husband with these decisions and meet other farm women, or use it to refresh and see what's available to help make those decisions easier. Farm women both old and young can benefit from Annie's Project!

What a better way to give your operation a Christmas gift than to help empower women to work WITH you to make your operation stronger. At the same time giving the women the gift of a "ladies night" where they can socialize with other women who know the same struggles and frustrations they do.

Annie's Project will begin in Beach on Wednesday, January 20, 2010, at the Beach High School. Cost is \$100 before January 6th, and \$135 after that date. Sessions will begin at 5:00 p.m. and run until approximately 8:30 p.m.

For more information, please call Ashley at the Golden Valley County Extension Office at (701) 872-4332 or visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/anniesproject.



SOUTHEASTERN MONTANA EXTENSION WINTER SERIES

Thursday, January 28th

The 16th Annual Extension Winter Series will be held in Wibaux on Thursday, January 28th, with a series of programming beginning at 10:00 a.m. in the Wibaux County Courtroom. The program will run from 10:00 a.m. to 3:15 p.m. Topics this year will include: Crop Variety Selection; Cultural and Chemical Weed Control; Proper Use of Herbicides for Future Planning Decisions; Cheatgrass Control on Rangeland - Cultural and Chemical; Grasshopper Control - Biological and Chemical; and Farm-to-Table Project.

The schedule will include the following:

10:00 - 11:00 a.m. Kent McVay, MSU Extension Cropping Systems Specialist: “Crop Variety Selection”: Kent will discuss tools he has developed to help producers make quick, reliable choices based on research results from the MSU research centers and research farms. His tools help producers select new varieties based on performance, location, and resistance ratings, as well as make herbicide and fertilizer selections.

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Jane Mangold, MSU Extension Rangeland Weed Specialist: “Cheatgrass: Biology, Ecology, and Management”: Jane will discuss how cheatgrass arrived in North America and its current distribution, life history, and biology, including some of the traits it possesses that make it so successful. She will discuss the ecological and economic impacts of cheatgrass and strategies for its management.

12:15 p.m. - 1:00 p.m. Dinner at the Palace Café. Sponsored in part by Hubbard Feeds/Crystalix.

1:00 - 2:00 p.m. David Branson, Northern Plains Agricultural Research Lab Entomologist: “Grasshopper Control”: Dave will clarify how grasshoppers influence grassland health and review sustainable rangeland management techniques that may reduce grasshopper outbreaks while satisfying the needs of the grazing industry.

2:15 - 3:15 p.m. Bruce Smith, MSU Dawson County Extension Agent: “Farm-to-Table Project”: The purpose of the Farm-to-Table Project is to create local food systems providing locally-grown and manufactured, quality foods throughout the MonDak region. Objectives of the Farm-to-Table Project include: 1) developing a producer-owned agricultural marketing cooperative; 2) the development of a shared-use, commercial kitchen; 3) a farm-to-table restaurant; and 4) developing and supporting a regional culinary arts program for vocational education. All the food consumed, other than a small portion produced in home gardens, is shipped into this region. As transportation and production costs cause food prices to increase, more and more of the local food dollar leaves the area. The loss of economy has helped exacerbate the population decline and subsequent loss of tax base that has resulted in reduced social and public services.

All interested persons are encouraged to attend. We are asking those planning to participate to **RSVP by Monday, January 25th** so we know how many to plan on for dinner. The phone number for the Wibaux County Extension Office is (406) 796-2486. The Extension Winter Series is being sponsored by the Wibaux County Extension Office.

Individuals with a private or commercial pesticide applicator's license will receive three recertification credits for attending.

Registration fee is \$5.00 (lunch included). Lunch sponsored in part by Hubbard Feeds/Crystalix.

The programs of MSU Extension are available to all people regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. To request disability accommodation or inform us of special dietary or other needs, please contact the Wibaux County Extension Office at (406) 796-2486.

RAISING BEEF CATTLE NATURALLY AN OPTION

The need for more return per calf has beef cattle producers looking at alternative production practices. "Raising cattle naturally is a method that has attracted consumer demand," says Karl Hoppe, North Dakota State University Extension Service area livestock specialist at the Carrington Research Extension Center. "Not to be confused with organic beef production, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has specific standards for raising cattle naturally."

The "naturally raised claim for livestock" standard was published in the Federal Register in January 2009. The USDA's naturally raised claim can be used for meat produced from livestock that meet the following conditions:

- * No growth-promoting products were administered to the animals.
- * No antibiotics (other than ionophores used to prevent parasitism) were administered to the animals.
- * No animal byproducts were fed to the animals.

Thus, to be considered as raised naturally, calves cannot be implanted with ear implants that stimulate growth via hormones or fed a beta agonist such as ractopamine or clenbuterol. Calves also cannot be treated with antibiotics individually or as a group via the feed or water.

If a calf is sick, it should be identified and separated from the naturally raised calves and treated with antibiotics or other appropriate therapy. But once the sick calf is treated with antibiotics, it no longer is considered to be naturally raised and cannot be sold as such.

Vaccinations (immunizations) that prevent disease and sickness are allowed and encouraged for naturally raised calves.

The type of feed program, such as grass, corn, hay or silage rations, does not affect the naturally raised claim. However, feeds that contain animal byproducts are not allowed. Animal byproducts can come from a variety of sources, including a commercial protein supplement, mineral mix or animal fat. Most feed manufacturers have products that are identified as natural for use in raising cattle naturally.

During the summer, cows usually are provided a mineral mix while grazing pasture. If the mineral mix contains steamed bone meal as a calcium and phosphorous source, these calves no longer will be considered naturally raised since they had access to an animal byproduct while grazing with the cows.

Providing an ionophore to improve feed efficiency also is not allowed. Most creep feeds would have an ionophore included to help control bloat and improve feed efficiency, so calves eating a creep feed with an ionophore are disqualified from being classified as naturally raised.

"Most North Dakota-born calves are raised naturally up to weaning," Hoppe says. "With careful attention to guidelines, these calves may be continued to be raised as 'natural.' "

Raising Beef Cattle Naturally An Option CONTINUED...

Raising cattle naturally is a lifetime claim. Therefore, producers need to keep records of treating sick calves at birth or early in life so that at weaning, those calves cannot be sold as naturally raised.

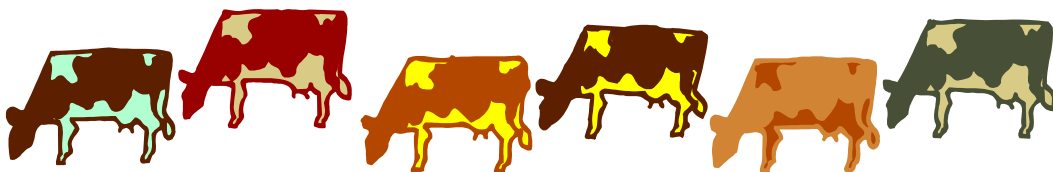
"Natural beef programs have been increasing in popularity, and calves that qualify may bring premium prices," says Tim Petry, NDSU Extension Service livestock economist. "However, cow-calf producers sometimes become disenchanted with value-added programs, including natural beef, because premiums are not consistent from one sale to another."

A first step for producers considering marketing natural calves would be to talk to the market where calves usually are sold, he advises. The market can contact buyers and other producers who also may be marketing natural calves so that a sufficient number is available to encourage natural buyer attendance at a sale. Some markets hold special sales where natural calves are featured.

"Only one natural buyer at a sale may result in little or no premium, but several buyers can create the competition necessary for significant premiums," Petry says.

Premiums for raising calves naturally may not offset the loss in growth by not using ionophores, implants and other growth-promoting products, Hoppe cautions. Producers need to carefully consider the costs and benefits of changing their management systems. However, a producer who already is managing the calves naturally may receive a higher selling price by making sure that the calves continue to be raised naturally.

"While raising calves naturally is not for everyone, those who can do it should seek out market



channels to receive
Hoppe says.

the extra premium,"



UNDERSTANDING THE NUTRITION/REPRODUCTION LINKAGE

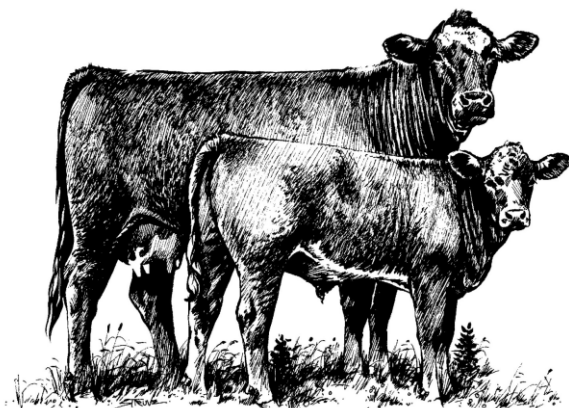
In the cattle industry, percent weaned calf crop is one of the most integral components of creating a profitable atmosphere. Specifically, percent calf crop weaned is one of the most important economic factors in a cow/calf operation. As I reviewed data from many operations, it appears that 70, 75 and 80 percent calf crops are extremely common. Obviously, many of these are under fairly extensive production systems. However, are there ways that those could be improved and are there ways that nutrition could improve percent calf crop?

As one evaluates the reproductive problems in the cow/calf industry, there are three key problems that are present in virtually every state. One is that cows don't cycle soon enough after calving, and thus long postpartum anestrus periods have a negative impact on percent of cows weaning calves. We need to realize that nutrition, both precalving and postcalving, has a tremendous influence on the length of the postpartum anestrus period. Are there things we can do from a supplementation standpoint 20 or 50 days prior to the start of the calving season that might have a dramatic impact on the percent of cows cycling? We need to take a look at what we might do during the postpartum period nutritionally that could impact the length of the anestrus period. Is part of a long anestrus period not only related to energy and protein levels, but possibly to a lack of understanding and appreciation of the impact of trace minerals and phosphorus on reproductive function?

A second major reproductive problem in the cattle industry is cows that don't conceive. Excellent research data has clearly shown that energy levels during the postpartum period have a dramatic influence on conception rates. If we are going to achieve a high percentage of cows weaning calves and a high percentage of the cows breeding in a short period of time, a sound nutrition program will become a key.

A final reproductive factor that is extremely important is percent calf death loss at or near calving. Part of this death loss often may be health related, but part of this death loss can relate to inadequate nutrition. Clearly, research has shown that a sound nutrition program 30 to 50 days before calving has a dramatic impact on calf vigor and calf survival. There are some little things that we can do in formulating rations that will insure that we start out with a calf that is alive and a calf that has the ability to take advantage of its genetic potential to gain weight.

All of these reproductive losses contribute to the ultimate reproductive evaluation that needs to be accomplished on the ranch, and that is what percent of your cows are weaning a calf, and can this be changed?



BEEFTALK: FEED THE COWS AND FEED THEM RIGHT

Winters like this year create discussion about what type of cattle operation is best. Despite the discussion, the fact remains that the cows need to be fed.

Calving-time discussions are relevant, as are discussions on high versus low input and big versus small cows. The bottom line is that producers must select a cattle management system they are comfortable with. What is even more important is that, in every system, producers still must feed the cows.

If more time was spent discussing the nutrient requirements of beef instead of the merits of different systems, all the cows would be better off.

The discussion with a nutritionist involves four basic needs. How much do the cows weigh and milk? How is the environment affecting the feeding requirements of the cattle? What stage of production are the cattle in? Lastly, what type of feed do you have available?

The answers to these four questions have nothing to do with the management system the producer has developed. The important part is that the producer can answer the questions factually so the nutritionist can correctly calculate a feeding plan.

The nutritionist will take into consideration the cows, environment, stage of production, feeds available and the nutritional analysis of those feeds when the ration is formulated. Getting the correct answers are critical.

Let's take the very first question about how big the cows are. Greg Lardy, North Dakota State University beef cattle specialist and nutritionist, shared some calculations that help show the amount of feed that a cow would need in a given environment (5 degree temperature and no mud), a given milk production (17.6 pounds peak milk production during lactation) a given stage of production (a cow in the last two-thirds of pregnancy) and a given feed resource (55 percent total digestible nutrient forage).

Lardy calculated the dry matter intake for every 100 pounds of cows weighing from 1,000 to 2,000 pounds. The 1,000-pound cow requires 26.5 pounds of dry matter per day, while the 2,000-pound cow requires 42.2 pounds of dry matter per day.

The larger cow needs a lot more than a fork or two more of hay. It actually needs 15.7 pounds more of dry matter. It's simply a biological need, which is not good or bad.

Likewise, the smaller cow will waste feed that is provided over what she actually needs, so know your cows and how much they need to eat.

BeefTalk: Feed the Cows and Feed Them Right CONTINUED...

If we accept Lardy's assumptions, the 1,000-pound cow needs 26.5 pounds of dry matter forage. Here are the daily dry matter needs for different weight cows:

- * 1,100-pound cow needs 28.2 pounds of dry matter
- * 1,200-pound cow needs 29.9 pounds of dry matter
- * 1,300-pound cow needs 31.5 pounds of dry matter
- * 1,400-pound cow needs 33.1 pounds of dry matter
- * 1,500-pound cow needs 34.7 pounds of dry matter
- * 1,600-pound cow needs 36.2 pounds of dry matter
- * 1,700-pound cow needs 37.8 pounds of dry matter
- * 1,800-pound cow needs 39.3 pounds of dry matter
- * 1,900-pound cow needs 40.7 pounds of dry matter
- * 2,000-pound cow needs 42.2 pounds of dry matter

This illustrates how the amount of feed a cow needs varies considerably by body weight. Other factors also influence the amount of dry matter forage a cow needs to consume.

Now is not the time to misjudge cow nutrition. When you get to visit with the nutritionist, make sure you adjust the cow feeding for your environment, cow size, expected milk production and cows at calving time.

Have a good feed analysis in hand and be able to describe your feeding system so appropriate feed wastage also can be factored in. Now is not the time to debate cattle management systems. Instead, feed your cows enough and feed them right.



CARING FOR YOUR NEW YEARLING BULL

Greg Lardy, NDSU Extension Beef Cattle Specialist

Many of you have already purchased or will be purchasing yearling bulls to prepare for the upcoming breeding season. Here are some pointers on nutrition and management to keep in mind as you bring your new bull(s) home.

Nutrition. Yearling bulls have nutrient requirements for both maintenance and growth since they must still grow and mature. Energy, protein, trace minerals, and vitamins are some of the more important nutrients to consider. Consider all bulls, but in particular yearling bulls, similar to athletes in regard to condition. They should not be too fat or too thin when turned out for the breeding season. Either situation will result in bulls that fail to breed cows.



Yearling bulls which have been fed higher concentrate development rations should be gradually adapted to a diet based predominantly on forages. Make diet changes gradually (over the course of two to three weeks) to allow the rumen microflora and the animal to adapt to the new dietary ingredients. Don't turn yearling bulls directly out to pasture without some dietary adaptation, especially when they have been fed higher concentrate rations during development.

Feed yearling bulls separately from mature bulls if possible. Mature bulls have lower nutrient requirements than yearling bulls. If fed together, mature bulls tend to be overfed and yearling bulls tend to be underfed. In addition, mature bulls tend to be more aggressive and will get more than their share of feed. Prior to the breeding season, yearling bulls should be fed to gain approximately 1.5 to 2 pounds per day. A yearling bull should be a BCS 5.5 to 6.5 at the beginning of the breeding season. This will require a diet that contains approximately 12 percent CP and 65 percent TDN.

With free choice access to medium quality hay, about 6 to 10 pounds of grain will be required. In some cases, a protein supplement may be required to adequately meet the bull's protein requirements. A good quality trace mineral and vitamin premix should also be offered as either a free choice salt or block mixture or as a component of a totally mixed ration.

Be sure to provide plenty of bunk space for the bulls to consume feed. As a general rule of thumb, 24 to 30 inches per bull is typically required. Remember that horned bulls will require additional space.

Exercise. Young bulls do not need forced exercise if given a large enough lot or pasture area where they can get adequate exercise on their own. About 2 acres per bull is generally adequate. Exercise prior to the breeding season can reduce the number of fighting- and riding-related injuries that occur during the course of the breeding season.

Caring for Your New Yearling Bull CONTINUED...

Management. Sperm development and maturation (spermatogenesis) is a process that takes 60 days. In other words, an injury to a bull which hampers spermatogenesis that occurs on March 20 may not cause a problem with semen quality until May 20. Because of the length of time it takes for spermatogenesis to occur, attention to the finer details of bull development need to take place well in advance (60 to 90 days) of the start of the breeding season.

If bulls will be pastured together to breed a group of cows, it is better to let them establish a pecking order prior to the beginning of the breeding season, rather than during the breeding season. Injuries can and will occur when unfamiliar bulls are pastured together for the first time at the beginning of the breeding season.

Muddy lots should be avoided. Mud increases nutrient requirements, as well as the chances of injury and the likelihood of hoof and feet related problems.

During the Breeding Season. Observe all bulls often during the breeding season. This is the best way to be sure they are free of injury and are finding and breeding cows in heat. The greater the number of cows per bull, the more important it is to observe them frequently. Increased observation is also especially important in single sire pastures and in large, rough pastures where the bulls are covering large acreages. Be sure to have a contingency plan in case a bull becomes injured, lame, or otherwise incapacitated during the breeding season. On large ranches, you'll likely have a backup or spare bull which can be used. However, in smaller operations, this is generally too costly. Most seedstock producers have a few bulls which can be used in the case of injury to your main herd bull. Don't forget about good biosecurity practices in those cases when a replacement bull is needed.

After the Breeding Season. Evaluate condition, soundness, and health of all bulls used during the breeding season. Thin bulls will require additional energy in the diet in order to regain body weight which was lost during the breeding season. Remember that yearling bulls need to be fed to continue to grow after the breeding season as well.