

Purdue Extension

Greene County Agriculture & Natural Resource Newsletter

Ag Outlook Breakfast

The Ag Outlook Breakfast featuring Purdue Ag Economist, Dr. Christ Hurt will be on Thursday, January 7th at the Greene County Community Event Center (4503 W State Rd 54, Bloomfield) beginning at 8:30 AM.

Dr. Hurt will discuss crop and livestock values, income prospects, land values, cash rents, investment returns as well as energy, fertilizer and input costs. This program is free and breakfast will be provided by the Greene County Homemakers Association. For additional information, please contact the Greene County Purdue Extension Office at (812)659-2122 or email at davis186@purdue.edu.

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Beef Cow/Calf Improvement Seminar

The seminar will take place on Saturday, January 16, 2016 at the Orange County Community Building (1075 N Sandy Hood Rd, Paoli, IN 47454) beginning at 9:30 AM and ending at 2:30 PM. The theme for this year's seminar is "Marketing Strategies & Market Outlook."



When it's time to start marketing calves, what is the best option for your operation? During this seminar, we will discuss the market outlook for 2016 and trends that might help determine when to sell your calves. We'll also discuss the current market needs including consumer demands and how Indiana cattle compare to other states. After lunch, we'll discuss specific strategies like backgrounding, creep feeding, selling in pools, and more that you can take back to your operation and improve your return on investment.

Dr. Jim Mintert from Purdue University will start off the morning with a presentation over Market Outlook and Trends. Kevin Laurent, from University of Kentucky, will follow lunch with discussion over Marketing Strategies. Retained Ownership and the IBEEF (Indiana Beef Evaluation and Economics Feeding Program) will be the presentation topic for University of Tennessee's Dr. Andrew Griffith. For additional information, please contact the Greene County Purdue Extension Office at (812)659-2122 or email at davis186@purdue.edu.

Important Upcoming Dates:

Ag Outlook Breakfast

Thursday, January 7
8:30 AM

Greene County
Community Event
Center

Beef Improvement Seminar

Saturday, January 16
9:30 AM-2:30 PM

Orange County
Community Building

Greene County Ag Day

Thursday, March 17
Evening Dinner

Greene County
Community Event
Center

December Yard & Garden Calendar

HOME (Indoor plants and activities)

- Check houseplant leaves for brown, dry edges, which indicates too little relative humidity in the house. Increase humidity by running a humidifier, grouping plants or using pebble trays.
- Extend the lives of holiday plants such as poinsettias and Christmas cactus by placing them in a cool, brightly lit area that is free from warm or cold drafts.
- Houseplants may not receive adequate light because days are short and gloomy. Move plants closer to windows, but avoid placing foliage against cold glass panes. Artificial lighting may be helpful.
- When shopping for a Christmas tree, check for green, flexible, firmly held needles and a sticky trunk base - both indicators of freshness. Make a fresh cut, and keep the cut end under water at all times.

YARD (Lawns, woody ornamentals and fruits)

- Prevent bark splitting of young and thin-barked trees, such as fruit and maple trees. Wrap trunks with tree wrap, or paint them with white latex (not oil-based) paint, particularly on the south- and southwest-facing sides.
- Protect shrubs such as junipers and arborvitae from extensive snow loads by tying their stems together with twine. Carefully remove heavy snow loads with a broom to prevent limb breakage.
- Protect broadleaves, evergreens or other tender landscape plants from excessive drying (desiccation) by winter sun and wind. Canvas, burlap or polyethylene plastic screens to the south and west protect the plants. Similarly, shield plants from salt spray on the street side.
- Provide winter protection for roses by mounding soil approximately 12 inches high to insulate the graft union after plants are dormant and temperatures are cold. Additional organic mulch such as straw compost or chopped leaves can be placed on top.

GARDEN (Flowers, vegetables and small fruits)

- To protect newly planted or tender perennials and bulbs, mulch with straw, chopped leaves or other organic material after plants become dormant.
- Store leftover garden chemicals where they will stay dry, unfrozen and out of the reach of children, pets and unsuspecting adults.
- Once the plants are completely dormant and temperatures are consistently below freezing, apply winter mulch to protect strawberries and other tender perennials. In most cases, 2 to 4 inches of organic material such as straw, pine needles, hay or bark chips will provide adequate protection.
- Check produce and tender bulbs in storage, and discard any that show signs of decay, such as mold or softening. Shriveling indicates insufficient relative humidity.
- Clean up dead plant materials, synthetic mulch and other debris in the vegetable garden, as well as in the flowerbeds, rose beds and orchards.
- Make notes for next year's garden.

Source: B. Rosie Lerner; Purdue Consumer Horticulture Specialist

Care of Holiday Fruit Baskets

A holiday tradition is to give gifts of fruits and nuts (along with other products). Usually these are placed in an attractive basket, wrapped with cellophane covering, and brought (or shipped) to your house. It is important that the fruit contained inside is kept in cool conditions to maintain its quality for as long as possible. Thus, it is wise to disassemble the fruit basket as soon as you receive it and place the fruit in refrigerated storage. If all the products in the basket are tree fruits (such as apples, pears, oranges or grapefruit), you can place the entire basket in a cool place- around 40 degrees F for best results. If the basket contains any bananas or other tropical fruits (with the exception of citrus) remove those fruits and store them separately. About 3-4 weeks is about as long as you can expect to store these fruits without some shriveling and loss of crispness.

Source: Ward Upham, Kansas State University Horticulture Department



Poultry/Bird Movement Update

The movement ban on poultry was lifted on September 17. Bird owners may resume taking birds to events such as fairs, swap meets and auctions; as long as they meet the new record keeping requirements (see below).

NEW: Record keeping requirement for poultry owners began September 17. Poultry owners are required to maintain records of flock additions and removals for 3 years. This requirement is part of Indiana's Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) rule, but was adopted in the wake of the 2015 highly pathogenic avian flu event.

Records must include: names and addresses of buyer and seller, sale date, breed, sex, number of animals and reason for movement.

Report dead or sick backyard poultry by calling the Healthy Birds Hotline: 1-866-536-7593. Indiana's state and federal veterinarians are receiving and triaging these calls. Citizens who see five or more dead, wild feeder-type birds should call the Indiana Department of Natural Resources at: 812-334-1137. More information on avian influenza is available online at: www.in.gov/boah/2390.htm.

Veterinarians who are willing to take backyard/hobby birds as clients should contact BOAH at animalhealth@boah.in.gov. BOAH staff receives requests, but many areas of the state do not have poultry veterinarians. BOAH would like to have a list of practitioners for referrals to backyard bird owners upon request.

Wild bird surveillance testing for avian influenza has increased across the state. Since May, more than 600 wild birds in Indiana have been tested. To view results, visit the Indiana Department of Natural Resources website at: www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/8498.htm. More testing will happen during the fall duck hunting season.

Source: Indiana Board of Animal Health

Current Market Impacts on Future Cow Herds



Anyone who follows beef cattle markets closely is well aware of the price volatility that currently is in place. No better example of this is the cash fed cattle market. Current fed cattle prices are just now falling below prices seen two years ago in 2013. During the past two years, the fed cattle market has experienced two of the most extreme moves in the history of the cattle market.

What are the reasons for such extreme moves in the market? In both years, there was a "Perfect Storm" of sorts that created both positive and negative pricing situations. In 2014, fed cattle prices were positively impacted by the smallest beef cow herd in decades, tighter supplies of pork and poultry, strong domestic demand, and exports increasing in volume and value. This year, market variables such as a backlog of fed cattle in certain regions of the country, large carcass weights, a slowdown of the global economy which has reduced export sales, and increased supplies of pork and poultry have all combined to create significantly lower prices.

What does the price volatility in the cattle market mean for the cow-calf producer? Obviously, the significant drop in fed cattle prices has also impacted feeder calf prices downward as well. Cull cow prices have declined due to increased imports of lean beef and a gradual increase in domestic production. Prices for bred cows and heifers have declined slightly from the previous year but are relatively stable compared to other sectors of beef production.

Understandably, many cattle producers are a bit nervous over recent changes in market prices. We have just experienced an 18 – 24 month run of historically high prices so these recent price declines seem even more dramatic than usual. While the swings in prices over the past two years are unprecedented, the short- to mid-range outlook for cow-calf producers remains very positive. According to CattleFax, cattle numbers will increase in

2016-2018 but the nation's cow herd is expected to remain below pre-2011 levels. Cow-calf producer margins have peaked, but will remain profitable. In fact, CattleFax projections expect cow-calf profitability from 2016-2018 to be higher than any year prior to 2014 over the past 35 years.

So how does this information impact your plans for your cow herd in the immediate future? Regardless of the prices in the cattle market at any point in time, any management practices implemented by the producer should have the bottom line in mind. There are numerous production traits that the producer can choose to emphasize in their operation. However, the areas that will have the greatest impact on future profitability of any operation are fertility (conception rates) and calving ease (calf survivability). If the producer achieves a high rate of efficiency in these two areas, then the producer can put selection pressure on additional traits of importance such as growth, maternal, and carcass traits.

One particular of concern that I have in today's beef industry is the potential impact of current market dynamics on the mature size of the typical brood cow. There is no question that harvest weights of fed cattle have climbed steadily for several years. In fact, reports indicated that average dressed steer weights reached 923 pounds during the week of September 19, 36 pounds heavier than a year earlier. At a dressing percentage of 62%, this translates to a live weight of approximately 1,490 pounds. These heavier carcass weights can be directly attributed to the need to generate more pounds with fewer head and less expensive feedstuffs.

Cow-calf producers have historically shown they are fairly responsive to market signals. Here are a few examples. Continental breeds grew in popularity in the 1970's to improve growth and carcass yields. British breeds later saw resurgence in popularity to moderate cow size and improve calving ease. The success of branded beef programs such as Certified Angus Beef saw a growth in popularity in black-hided cattle produced by Angus and other breeds. I'm sure you can think of other examples.

I would caution cow-calf producers from increasing the mature size of their brood cows in an effort to produce feeder calves that can produce the current typical harvest weights of fed cattle. While some of the increase in harvest weights is a result of cheaper feed costs, breed association data and other research indicates that nearly all major breeds have increased weaning and yearling weight Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) steadily for several years. As a result, mature weights of breeding females have also risen. A sound cow-calf production strategy would be to keep mature cow size moderate relative to your available forage base. A 1,000 pound cow may struggle to produce a calf that can achieve 1,400 pound harvest weights.

A 1,600 pound cow will require higher annual maintenance costs and may not reach an adequate plane of nutrition that allows for annual conception and delivery of a calf. Both of these extremes in cow size have their issues. It is more efficient to keep cow size in check and get more of the calf crop's growth and performance from the sire. I would rather maintain one larger herd sire than many larger cows.

The ideal size of mature brood cow has been a hotly debated subject at auction markets, feed stores, and coffee shops for as long as I can remember. There is no universal correct answer as cow size should be based on the cow's ability to conceive and calve in a 12 month period in their given environment. Think about the annual rainfall and forage differences for producers in the eastern Corn Belt to the Gulf Coast to the Great Plains to the

Far West. The brood cow that can thrive in these varied environments will come in several different shapes and sizes. Choose the cow size that best fits your operation.

Source: John F. Grimes, Ohio State Extension Beef Coordinator, from Ohio Beef Cattle Letter

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www.extension.purdue.edu/greene



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