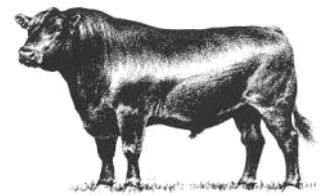




# The Beef Bonanza

*just shooting the bull*



McDowell  
county center

Winter 2019 Issue

NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

## Inside This Issue

- Cattlemen's Meeting
- Upcoming Events
- Bringing in the New Year Right!

## McDowell County Cattlemen's Annual Meeting

The annual meeting will be held on Thursday, January 31, 2019 at the McDowell Senior Center, 100 Spaulding Rd, Marion. There will be a meal provided.

Dues of \$20 will be collected for the 2019 season.

Please call the Extension Office at 828-652-8104 or email Adam\_lawing @ncsu.edu by Friday, January 25th to RSVP.

## Contact Us

NC COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION  
McDowell Center

County Administration  
Building, Room 226  
60 East Court Street  
Marion, NC 28752

Phone: 828-652-8104  
Fax: 828-652-8104

Distributed in furtherance of the acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, North Carolina A&T State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating.

## Upcoming Events

- Southern Farm Show – January 30th- February 1st-NC Fairgrounds in Raleigh
- McDowell County Bee School– February 2nd, 9th and 16th
- NC Cattlemen's Conference – February 23rd and 24th– Hickory Metro Center

NC COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION



# Bringing in the New Year Right

**Written by: Adam Lawing**

Everyone wants to have a successful cattle operation. Raising good looking calves, that you can sell and make a profit, producing quality hay, and keeping that bank account in the black is what we strive for. We all have our own ways of doing things, but no matter how good we are, we can always improve what we do on our farms.

One thing that you need to think about, is what you want to do or accomplish on your operation this year. Look back at last year and evaluate the past year. Is there anything you would have done differently? Maybe there were some things that you wanted to do and planned to do but just never got around to it? Just take some time and process those things, then come up with some sort of plan for the current year to help you be more profitable.

What is your current market for your operation? Are you satisfied with it? Do you pull calves at weaning and send them straight to the sale barn? Do you market them through the Mountain Cattle Alliance or finish them out and sell them as beef? There are numerous ways to market cattle in our area and all have their own advantages and disadvantages. Finding out what works for your own operation is key. If you haven't been pleased with your current marketing avenue or just aren't coming out like you want, then switching things up may be your best option.

Keeping accurate records is always a smart thing to do. The key however, is to actually process your records to benefit your operation. It doesn't matter if you right down every calf born and what shots they were given, or if you have hay and soil samples taken every year. If you don't analyze it to make changes or decisions, then what good were those records?

Soil samples tell you the fertility of the soil and gives recommendations of how much of each nutrient your pastures needs. Using that information, you can calculate it out to find the right blend of fertilizer and exactly how much to put out. This Eliminates the chance of putting too much out and wasting money. Utilizing forage samples can help you plan out what hay to feed. You can also use it to match different hay to nutrient requirements of your cattle to see if you need to supplement with higher nutrient feeds sources. Lower quality hay can be fed to dry cows while your better hay can be used to feed lactating cows or growing heifers.

Keep a tally of your expenses and incomes to monitor profits and cost of production on your operation. If you notice expense costs that seem high, think of ways that you could decrease that cost.

Managing your land, forage and feed supply is the best place to be more efficient and profitable. How you manage these factors will decide how much hay you need to use or purchase and if you have to use other feed sources. Grass is by far the best feed choice for the money. Utilizing soil and hay sampling is a good practice to use every year.

---

---

When feeding hay, you always want your cattle to be eating the highest quality hay you can get. Wet and moldy hay is not good for cattle and it has lost many nutrients that it had at harvest. Storage is the biggest issue with nutrient loss in hay. The University of Tennessee has research showing the percent of nutrient loss of hay through common types of storage methods.

Hay Barn- 5%	Stacked on tires or pallets and covered with a tarp- 8%	Plastic Sleeve- 19%
Net Wrap- 23%	On the ground with tarp- 29%	Outside Uncovered- 37%

The majority of nutrient loss is due to ground contact. The best practice for hay stored outside, is to get it up off the ground and covered.

Weed and pasture management is also a good concept to put into place. It will give you more grazing days in the year and reduce the amount of hay or supplements being fed. Overgrazing has the largest impact that will effect a pastures health. Grass and weeds are in a competition all throughout the year. If grass stands get weak, it opens up the opportunity for weed seeds to germinate. The longer weeds take presence in pastures the more concentrated they get and the harder they are to control. Moving cattle around, allowing pastures to rest after they graze, is the best tool to utilize. Herbicides are also a recommended practice, but should be used at the right time to be the most effective. Herbicides are more effective on smaller weeds. Generally the best time to spray is in the early spring and fall, when weeds are small and actively growing. Most are probably too small to notice without walking your pastures. Knowing which types of weeds you have can help you find the right herbicide to use.

The 2 most common types of 2,4-D available are amine and ester. Amine is more commonly found and is more cost effective, but not as effective as the ester version. Ester is more effective, but is more volatile and needs more precaution when broadcasting. A mixture of chemicals work very well, and is my recommendation. Products by the brand name of Crossbow and Weedmaster are two products that also work well and are not restricted use products.

Crossbow is 2,4-D and tryclopyr (Remedy) and Weedmaster is 2,4 D and dicamba (Banvel). Dicamba is a chemical that works best on woody, viney and bushy plants like trees, creeping virginia and honeysuckle. Both of these products can be found in generic brands at lower costs. Allowing pastures to rest to prevent overgrazing, choosing the correct herbicide for the emerging weeds and applying those herbicides at the right time is critical to having healthier pastures on your operation.

Cattle health is important and can lead to losses and unwanted expenses. Prevention of diseases, illnesses as well as keeping a daily check on your livestock can save your livestock and keep money in your pocket down the road. If you keep a check on your cattle daily, you see them and you know how they should be acting. It allows you to notice behavior that is abnormal of your herd. Catching and treating different issues and illnesses early on, makes it easier to treat, saving you money and allowing that animal to recover healthier and quicker. Prevention though vaccination, deworming and biosecurity can keep your herd healthy and thriving.

Vaccination on average will cost between \$3-\$10 a head, depending on what program you use. At first that may seem like a large cost over your operation, but it provides your calves with a stronger immune system. That stronger immune system will help them fight off more viruses and bacteria and allow them to have a better rate of gain ratio, allowing those calves to reach their target weight quicker and efficiently. Deworming does the same thing since parasites are living off that animal using them as a feed source. This causes the animal to gain less and cause more health issues. Having good biosecurity protocols is just the smart thing to do. Quarantining new heifers, cows or bulls for at least 30 days, removing sick or infected cattle from the herd can help keep infectious issues down to a minimum and reduce the risk of spreading those issues. Washing out and disinfecting trailers, equipment or any tools that have been in contact with new or sick livestock will also reduce the risk of spreading infectious diseases.

The last tip to consider is that open cows are costing you money. The main objective of a cow is to produce a calf that will either be sold or kept as a replacement. Cattle that keep aborting, not catching or slipping eggs are not being productive and need to be culled. Culling a percentage of your heard every year is also a good idea to think about. If you notice that you have heifers that are better than some of your cows, get rid of them and use those heifers as replacements. Older cows that are not getting around on their feet and legs also need to go. Your cow herd needs to be productive! They should be having a calf a year, healthy with minimal costs on medical/vet bills, have longevity, good on the move, producing a lot of milk and cows that have a good temperament.

I know this article may be very broad on some topics, but all of these practices are important things to think about as we start this new year. Again, no operation is perfect and things can always be done differently or better. If you have any questions about anything or want to discuss something in more detail, please let me know. I'm always here to help with anything on your operations.

