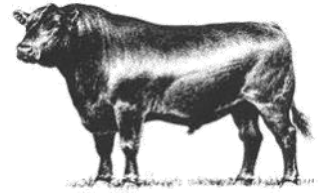




The Beef Bonanza

just shooting the bull



McDowell
county center

Fall 2019 Issue

NC COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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McDowell County Cattlemen's Meeting

Tuesday, November 12th at 6:00 pm
McDowell County Senior Center
100 Spaulding Road, Marion

We will be having an auction to benefit the Mario Deluca Scholarship Fund.

Please bring any items that you would like to donate towards the auction!

Please call the Extension Office at 828-652-8104 by Friday, November 8th to RSVP.

Upcoming Events

- **November 12th-McDowell County Cattlemen's Meeting**
- **November 25th- Health Coverage Enrollment Event**
- **November 30th- Last day for free soil samples-\$4.00 starting December 1st**
- **December 2nd- Foothills Region Producers' Cooperative Meeting**

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Winter Beef Cattle Management

Written by: Adam Lawing

Cooler weather is already here, which means cold weather is right around the corner. If you have already been thinking about your feed resources and developing a plan of what you are going to do this winter or for harsh weather, great! You are already a step ahead. If not, now is the time to be thinking about what you have for feed and how you are going to use it.

All animals rely on feed and nutrition to keep themselves warm during the winter. The worse the weather is, the more nutrients their bodies require to keep them warm. The biggest issue animals have with keeping their natural heat source working is when we see fluctuations with temperature and moisture. Fluctuations from warm to cold is very stressful to animals. Most animals can handle the weather pretty well if it gets cold and stays cold. The trouble is when mother nature throws in wet, windy and warm to cold days in our forecast. This gets our livestock out of whack and stresses them out. In this take, they are a lot like us. When we have these same fluctuations and factors, a lot of the time our immune systems get down and we get colds or in severe cases pneumonia or other respiratory issues. For us, we do not have the ability to maintain a constant environment for our livestock like integrated poultry and pork producers do by having houses. We have to take what mother nature gives us, but we can prepare and try and keep our animals as healthy and stress free as possible if we are proactive in our operations.

As many of us know too well, our livestock like to hang around certain feeding areas for a long period of time. The longer they stay, the nastier that place gets, and it increases the environmental contaminants of that particular site. This can affect newborn calves health and lead to scours and other health related issues. So, moving these feeding areas around to different parts of the pastures will be better for your cows and calves health. It will also help your pastures health and lower the breeding areas for flies in the spring.

Getting back to nutrition, water is just as important in the winter as it is in the summer. The more they eat in the cold temperatures, the more water their bodies need to balance the body's homeostasis (a scientific word for allowing the body to adjust to external factors to maintain the bodies functions to survive). Make sure they have plenty of access to water and keep a check on your watering systems, so they do not freeze.

Regarding nutrition, other than water, cattle need energy, protein, vitamins and minerals. These needs all increase in colder, stressful environments. The one that we need to mainly focus on for our topic is energy. Energy is what the animals body uses to produce more heat. If their feeds nutrient requirements for energy is not meeting their needs, they are going to pull that energy from stored sources making them loose condition. That being said, it is always important to monitor their body condition scores, but it is vital in the winter months. Body condition is a good indication to tell you if you need to feed more, or that your feed isn't meeting their nutrient needs. Body conditioning scores are based on a scale from 1-9 for cattle. 1 being deathly thin or already dead and 9 being morbidly obese. We try and keep our cattle between 5-7. When cattle fall below a 5, more nutrients are needed. If you need any help scoring your cattle or want more information on this subject, I will be happy to assist you.

Knowing your feed inventory is also an important factor regarding winter management. There is still some grass available for grazing this time of year, especially if you have some stockpiled areas you have saved up for the winter. If you haven't feed any hay yet, you will be soon. If you feed store bought feed, and it is from a reputable company, it will have the right amount of nutrients to supplement what your livestock need. Generally, you know how much hay you have fed in the past, so you should have a good idea of how much hay you may need for this winter. Count what you have now and if you do not have enough, I would suggest you purchase what you think you will need to get through the winter, before you run out. It is a lot easier to be prepared than it is to be searching for hay in the middle of winter. Remember, all hay is not created equally.

Testing hay is a great resource that isn't used as much as it needs to be. It is also a great way to plan what hay needs to be fed and when. To do it right, you should be testing every cutting of each field and keeping it stored separate, so you know what hay is what. The variables of the nutrient qualities of hay are many things and you all know that well. The maturity level of when it was cut, how long it took to cure before it was baled, the amount of weeds in the pasture, to how it was stored. But, if you know the quality of the hay you have, you can plan how to feed your hay to meet the animals nutrient requirement the best. For example your lower quality hay can be fed to your animals that are mature but not currently lactating or when you want to feed hay while they are grazing. On the other hand, good quality hay needs to be fed during the winter when you don't have as much grass to graze or to livestock that are lactating. If you know the nutrient value of the hay you have, you can feed your best hay when your animals need the highest nutrient requirements. Samples are only \$10 and I have everything you need in the office to help you with this process.



Herd Health 101

Written by: Adam Lawing

Herd health on any operation, no matter the size, starts with prevention. Prevention includes biosecurity as well as preventative medicine. Both of these, done the correct way, will lead to more profit in the long run.

Closed herds are a great way to reduce the amount of pathogens or bad germs that are brought in on your operations. Keeping your best heifers as replacements rather than purchasing them is a great way to start. Although there are times when you have to buy better genetics to improve your operation. When you go this route, try to avoid stockyards and buy from other producers who you know have a healthy herd. A smart thing to do with any animal that you bring on to your farm is to disinfect them with a product like Virkon or Chlorhexidine. Also, keep them separated (quarantined) for a few weeks before you put them with your own cattle.

Keeping the number of external parasites down is a good way to prevent sickness as well. There are a lot of different methods that will work, and I recommend using a combination of all of them. Fly tags work well but require more labor since they only last for a certain period of time. If you use them just remember to switch up the active ingredient every year. Pay attention to the active ingredient and not the brand, since different brands use the same ingredients.

Pour on's are available for external and internal parasites in cattle and work great when used properly. Internal parasites can have a great effect on growth of calves and efficiency in your cow herd. Just remember that there isn't one miracle dewormer that is a cure all for all parasites. There are different classes of anthelmintics (dewormers) that treat different parasites. It is important to consult a vet to determine which dewormer you should use to treat the parasites you are having issues with. Once you figure that out, the biggest problem producers have that they might not realize, is giving the correct amount. You need to know how much each calf or cow weighs. The dose is calculated by weight for a reason, so be sure you are getting an accurate weight. When you don't put enough dewormer on, the parasites start to build resistance to that class of dewormer. When you apply too much dewormer on, you can be wasting money.

Without preventative medicine like vaccines, calves as well as cows, lack that extra immunity to fight off different bacteria and diseases. This can lead to more animals getting sick. When animals get sick they require antibiotics most all of the time for treatment. Sick livestock costs time and money. When they do recover, calves' growth is behind and they take longer to catch up to the rest of your calves and they still might not reach what their genetic potential should have been. Herd health plans are specific to each operation in different areas so it is important to consult a vet to help create your own herd health plan. Some of the most common diseases that we need to prevent are respiratory, blackleg, scours, pinkeye and foot rot.

A lot of respiratory diseases are treated in feedlots, but still can occur in your operations. Prevention and reduction of treatments goes back to the cow-calf industry with vaccinating the cow herd and calves. Vaccinating the cow herd helps reduce sick calves and calving loss with passive immunity during gestation and lactation. It can also reduce abortions in your cows. In most cases of calf loss, it is due to viral lesions leading to lower immunity, then bacterial infections take over the body.

Blackleg is caused by a bacteria that is in the soil or where oxygen is absent. Blackleg may not be commonly heard of like other diseases, but it is around and can be a serious threat to producers when it appears and can lead to lots of dead cattle. It lives in conditions without oxygen and when it is exposed to air, the bacteria creates spores that can live for years and can be hard to overcome. Cattle get affected when the spores enter the body through the mouth or wounds. Vaccines are available and work best when they are given to young calves. Treatment for blackleg is expensive, so it is a lot cheaper to prevent than it is to treat.

Scours (diarrhea) occurs when there is inflammation in the intestinal tract (enteritis) and is one of the cattle industry's biggest economical losses in calves. More calves obtain scours within the first 2 months than any age of cattle. Enteritis can be caused by a number of diseases, so many symptoms can be seen. Stress from weather can start the process that leads to scours. Once scours sets in, it's important to treat calves as soon as possible. Calves get dehydrated and start to lose weight, which in turn can cause death in just a few days if not treated. Sanitation and making sure calves get plenty of colostrum are the best preventative methods against scours. There are also vaccines that can be given to cows at least 30 days before calving that can help control most types of scours.

Pinkeye is a common disease that can have a large economic impact and is usually caused by bacteria. It is spread by insects that have been in direct contact with the pathogen. Fly control is the best way to help prevent pinkeye, but there are vaccines that are made from strains of the bacteria that can be used as a prevention. Consult your vet to get a vaccine from a strain or strains that are common in your area.

Foot rot is the last issue we are going to cover and it can be caused by many bacteria, fungi or other organisms that are mainly found in wet areas. Foot rot occurs when the pathogen enters the body through an open wound in the foot due to sharp objects like nails, wire or rocks. There are no vaccines available for foot rot, so prevention is the best treatment. Sanitation and good drainage of pastures, watering or feeding areas, are key to keeping foot rot cases to a minimum.

If you noticed repetition throughout this topic you are right. In most all diseases, prevention is the best treatment and often cheaper than using antibiotics or other medications to treat sick or infected animals. According to the University of Illinois, "The annual cost of a vaccine health program ranges from \$3 to \$10 per cow-calf unit." So in the long run, it is not that expensive and creates healthier cattle. Even though the cow-calf industry may not see many disease issues, it is still important to vaccinate and produce healthy calves. Selling healthier cattle can earn you a higher profit at sale day and is best for our cattle industry not only locally but at a national level.

Health Coverage Enrollment Event

Written by: Molly Sandfoss

There will be health coverage enrollment assistance available for FREE on Monday, November 25, 3 to 6 p.m. in the Extension Conference Room, 2nd Floor, County Administration Building, 60 East Court Street, Marion.

Individuals from McDowell Access to Care & Health (MATCH) will be on-hand to offer unbiased education, outreach, and enrollment assistance for the 2020 Marketplace Health Plan. Enrollment for Health Coverage runs from November 1 to December 15. If you have other issues surrounding health care, MATCH can help navigate you in the right direction. Over 80% of NC residents qualify for tax credits and cost sharing to reduce the cost of premiums.

An individual from the Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP) will also be on hand to assist individuals and families with eligibility questions and problems related to Medicare, Medicare Advantage Plans, Medicare claims, Medicare supplemental insurance, and Medicare Prescription Drug Plans. The enrollment period for Medicare runs from October 15 until December 7.

Walk-ins are welcome, but an appointment guarantees you a slot. Call 828-659-5289 or 855-733-3711. This service is available to all farm families, retired farm families, and their employees.



Foothills Region Producers' Cooperative Meeting

Written by: Molly Sandfoss

Farming inputs can be expensive. What are some ways you can reduce costs? On Monday, December 2, 6 p.m., at the McDowell County Senior Center, 100 Spaulding Road, Marion, N.C. Cooperative Extension will host a meeting to discuss the formation of a buyers' cooperative. Farmers have expressed interest in forming a cooperative in order to be able to purchase in bulk at a reduced cost.

The cooperative structure has been around for generations. A producer or farmer cooperative is made up of individual producers who come together for a variety of reasons. One of these purposes may be feed, seed, fertilizer, and equipment purchases.

We invite beekeepers, cattlemen, produce growers, poultry, pork, dairy, backyard chicken hobbyists, nurserymen, etc. We invite hobbyists, small-scale, mid-scale, and large-scale farmers. Becky Bowen, NC State, will be on-hand. She is an attorney licensed in North Carolina and South Dakota. Becky has extensive experience providing community development assistance to small towns and grassroots organization efforts. A representative from Carolina Common Enterprise, a non-profit cooperative development center, will also be on-hand. Please join us to discuss issues and details of the cooperative.



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*For accommodations for persons with disabilities, contact the McDowell County Center
at 828-652-8104, no later than 10 business days before the event.*