



The Ranch Hand



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Does the cattle cycle still exist? Tim Petry, NDSU Extension livestock marketing economist, shares his viewpoint on this important topic for cattle producers.

The trend in livestock production today is to require more and greater detailed records. A pilot electronic ID program is now available to beef producers from the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association. Read the article on page 2 to see if you are interested in signing up.

A new forage management guidebook is available through NDSU Extension and the NRCS. More details on its content are on page 3. The NDBCIA has also produced a handy pocket-sized calving book. For information on how to get one, see the article on page 3.

Another area facing change is manure management. New regulations effect all producers. Upcoming workshops, sponsored by the NDSU Extension Service, will show you how to address the new rules while making manure actually work for you. Check out the schedule to see if you can attend a workshop in your area.

Greg Lardy, Ph.D., Editor
Extension Beef Cattle Specialist

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Market Advisor: Cyclical Expansion in U.S. Cattle Herd Continues

Tim Petry, Livestock Marketing Economist NDSU Extension Service, with Rich Mattern, NDSU Agriculture Communication

Rumors that the cattle cycle no longer exists were laid to rest with the most recent cattle inventory report released by the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service on January 27, 2006.

The USDA confirmed that U.S. cattle numbers, as of Jan. 1, increased for the second straight year. The estimated number of cattle and calves in the U.S. totaled 97.1 million head, 1.7 percent more than last year and the highest since 2001.

The abnormal eight-year liquidation phase of the last cycle from 1997 to 2004, compared with a normal four-year liquidation phase, may have caused some to question the validity of the cycle. However, the added length was primarily due to drought in much of the Western U.S. cattle-producing region. Prices were high enough in 2001 to encourage increasing cattle numbers after the normal four years of liquidation, but poor grazing conditions would not support additional cattle.

Beef cow numbers increased 1 percent over last year to the highest level since 2001. Much improved pasture and range conditions in the northern Plains and West, along with favorable cow-calf returns, helped fuel the increase.

Dry weather conditions in Texas and Oklahoma have been in the headlines recently, but beef cow numbers still increased 1 percent in Texas and 3 percent in Oklahoma.

(continued on page 4)

Electronic ID Program Offered to North Dakota Beef Producers

Dickinson Research Extension Center

Beef producers in North Dakota are able to get electronic identification tags as part of a new program announced by the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA). The Electronic Identification Pilot Project is offering 20,000 electronic tags to the first producers requesting tags, according to Kris Ringwall, executive secretary of NDBCIA.

The Electronic Identification Pilot Project is a joint research venture with the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association and the NDSU Dickinson Research Extension Center (DREC). "The goal is to have producers electronically tag their calves, test the accuracy and reliability of various tags and systems, and initiate a tracking process for tagged calves," Ringwall said.

Under the project, producers are required to complete data sheets (which accompany EID tags), keep a calving book, and agree to assist with other research. The project is for the 2006 calf crop.

Ringwall said, "This pilot project is a collaborative effort to identify the ways to achieve animal identification in an efficient, cost effective way. The Dickinson Research Extension Center continues to engage producers and industry professionals to secure positive outcomes." Cooperating with the NDBCIA and the DREC on the program are the North Dakota State Veterinarian and the ND Stockmen's Association. Producers can begin requesting tags for the 2006 calf crop immediately.

A four-step process is necessary to be part of the Electronic Identification Pilot Project. The steps are:

1. Mail completed enrollment form to NDBCIA.
2. Individually identify animal at birth with visual tag and/or electronic identification tag.
3. Complete calving book and mail copy to NDBCIA.
4. Place EID calf on and complete data sheet. Send completed data sheet to NDBCIA office.

Cost of the program is only \$2 per calf. Ringwall said producers that participate in the Electronic Identification Pilot Project can choose to enroll in the CalfAID™ program should they decide they want to have their calves source and age verified. Producers wanting to be part of the CalfAID™ program must follow the requirements of CalfAID™. Cost for enrolling in the CalfAID™ program will be waived for those also in the electronic ID project.

Producers who want more information can contact the NDBCIA office at 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601; e-mail chaps@ndsuxt.nodak.edu; or phone 701-483-2045.

Livestock Manure Nutrient Management Workshops



The NDSU Extension Service is offering a workshop entitled, "Livestock Manure Nutrient Management – The Basics on Why and How." The program is designed to increase the awareness of technical advisers on "why" livestock manure nutrient management is an important issue. The sessions will help people who work with livestock producers understand the basic principles of resource protection.

Workshop topics include: Water Quality and Beneficial Use Impacts Associated with Livestock Manure, Managing Livestock Manure as a Resource, Preliminary Site Reviews Using the "Assessment Tool for New or Existing AFOs," and Management and Structural Options for Improving Manure Utilization and Management.

The workshop concludes with group discussion on the session and future training needs/wishes. Each participant will receive a University of Utah video on manure spreader calibration.

The workshop will be held at the following locations:

- March 7-8 Devils Lake Armory
- March 9-10 Valley City VCSU
- March 14-15 Dickinson DSU
- March 16-17 Minot NCREC

Cost is \$15 per person. Contact Stacey Rzaszutak at Carrington Research Extension Center, P.O. Box 219, Carrington, ND 58421 (701-652-2951) to register.

Contact Ron Wiederholt at 701-652-2951 for more information. You must register 10 days before the session you plan on attending.

New Resource Books Now Available

Rancher's Guide to Grassland Management

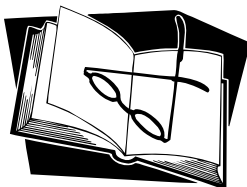
Kevin K. Sedivec, Extension Rangeland Management Specialist, NDSU Animal and Range Sciences Department

The third edition of the Rancher's Guide to Grassland Management is now available through the NDSU Extension Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Designed as a three-ring binder to make recording of daily and monthly activities easy for the producer, it also encourages calendar planning and serves as a resource for range and grassland management.

Educational information is presented in a tip guide format with 23 different sections relating to grassland management and forage production. There are separate sections for weekly and monthly record keeping with a grazing record mini-booklet and calculator.

One section provides a full definition of common terms used in range and grassland management, while another provides information on who to contact for technical assistance. Two sections, Native Plants and Introduced Plants, include color pictures to assist with plant identification and other important facts about each plant. Other sections include tips on determining range condition, stocking rate and carrying capacity, pasture development, grazing management, hayland management, and expired CRP land management. There are sections on riparian grazing management, drought strategies, pasture monitoring, and range nutrition. One section discusses North Dakota's noxious weeds and gives management tips. The two sections on pasture development address fencing and water options. A poisonous plant section lists the most common toxic plants in the Northern Great Plains region and symptoms of toxicity.

Cost of the book is \$20. Contact your local NRCS office or the North Dakota State University Extension Service Distribution Center at 701-231-7882 to order. For more information, contact Kevin Sedivec at 701-231-7647.



CHAPS™ Calving Book

Dickinson Research Extension Center

The North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association (NDBCIA) and NDSU have produced a calving record book for use by beef producers. The book is free to all beef producers.

The decision to design a new book and get it printed was made at the November 8, 2005, meeting of the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association Board of Directors. Board advisor and NDSU area livestock specialist John Dhuyvetter volunteered to coordinate the review of the old calving book and suggest new content. NDSU area livestock specialist Karl Hoppe and NDSU beef specialist Greg Lardy provided additional input.

The book is 3.25" x 5" and will fit comfortably in a shirt pocket. It is spiral bound with plastic coated wire, weighs less than 3 ounces, and contains 108 pages.

"The Board wanted a calving book that would be functional and would make it easy for producers to transfer the data from their book to the CHAPS™ forms," NDBCIA executive secretary Kris Ringwall said. "The work by John, Karl, Greg, and Don (Tibor at the NDBCIA office) provided those ingredients. We have a very functional and sturdy calving book."

The book contains calendars for 2006 and 2007, a gestation table, calving codes, breed codes, and a resource list for beef production assistance. There is information about the CHAPS™ program and the CalfAID™ program. "The inside back cover contains a checklist for producers who want to age and source verify their calf crop," Ringwall said.

Producers have 17 pages for entries, which will accommodate 204 calves, for birth and weaning. There is space for 264 breeding entries and 264 pregnancy checking entries. Additional pages include forms for health treatments, bull turnout, and calving summaries. Data entry columns are consistent with the CHAPS entry forms.

Producers who are part of CHAPS™, CalfAID™, or the newly announced Electronic Identification Pilot Project will automatically receive a calving book. Other producers who want a copy of the book can contact the NDBCIA office, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601; phone 701-483-2045, or email: chaps@ndsuxt.nodak.edu.

(continued from page 1)

Evidently, the drought areas in those states, where some liquidation may have occurred, were offset by increasing numbers in areas of those states where rainfall was closer to normal. Even beef heifers kept for replacements were up 70,000 head in Texas and 35,000 head in Oklahoma.

The northern Plains states of Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming, which were severely impacted by drought for several years, all recorded increases in beef cow numbers of 1 percent.

Wet conditions in the Pacific Northwest were evident by the 22 percent increase in beef cows in the state of Washington.

The number of heifers held back for beef cow replacement was estimated at 5.9 million head, which is 3.8 percent above last year and the highest number retained since 1997.

Double-digit percentage increases in beef heifer replacements were posted in Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Vermont, Washington and Wyoming. A 5 percent to 9 percent increase occurred in Arizona, Illinois, Kentucky, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Texas.

Cattle cycle accumulation phases usually last six years. Beef cow numbers have increased about 392,000 head since the low in 2004, but are still more than 2 million head lower than the last cyclical peak in 1996. Depending on weather conditions, continued rebuilding of the beef cowherd is likely for several more years.

Cattle herd expansion will have both short- and long-term price implications. In the short-term, historically low feeder cattle supplies will be supportive to feeder cattle prices this spring, especially lighter weight cattle suitable for summer grazing. Prices for replacement-quality heifers and bred cows also will be strong, as herd rebuilding continues at robust levels.

Fall 2006 calf prices will be impacted by a larger calf crop and likely below prices received in 2005, but still above historical levels. The size of the 2006 corn crop and resulting prices will be an important factor to watch for fall 2006 calf prices.

In the long-term, cattle numbers likely will increase through the end of the decade. As calf crops increase, so will beef production and cyclically lower prices can be expected to occur.

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