MANAGING YOUNG BULLS
Geni Wren, Bovine Veterinarian Magazine | May 15, 2012

It's difficult to manage nutrition of the young bull after turnout with the cows in its first breeding season, but there are some things that can be done to maximize the season. Bulls should be transitioned slowly to a roughage diet and introduced to pasture at least 10 days before being turned in with the cows.

Jeremy Martin, PhD, Great Plains Livestock Consulting Inc., Eagle, Neb., says most bulls will lose some weight during breeding simply due to the miles they cover in the breeding process. If possible, put yearling bulls in pastures with less area to cover, to limit the amount of weight lost. Make sure they have access to salt and mineral at all times during the breeding season.

"In my opinion, the most important thing is pulling young bulls out of cows in a timely fashion," Martin suggests. "Many young bulls remain with cows long after the cows are bred, but most young bulls are not smart enough to quit chasing cows and continue to lose weight. After 45 –60 days with cows, get yearling bulls out of the cowherd."

Once young bulls are pulled out of the cowherd, don't neglect them as they start approaching winter. Yearling bulls in particular need to keep growing after they are pulled from breeding pastures. Protein and energy supplementation is dependent on forage quality. "Ideally, yearling bulls would be fed to gain 1.5–2 pound/day through that first winter, and/or managed to a BCS of 6 prior to their second breeding season," Martin says.

If yearling bulls don't continue to grow and develop as they should, you can try to play catch up in their second breeding season, but Martin says it takes less feed to keep them in shape than to try and catch them up. In addition, fertility as a 2-year old can be compromised if bulls are underfed after their first breeding season, particularly if they are severely underfed. "Severe undernutrition can also stunt a bull's growth, probably reducing their mature size and thus reducing their eventual salvage value," he says.

2012 BUTNER AND WAYNESVILLE BULL TEST AND SALE INFORMATION

Information on the 2012 Butner and Waynesville Bull Test and Sale can be found on the NC Beef Cattle Improvement Program website: http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/an_sci/extension/animal/bcip/Ahbcip.html. The schedule can be found in the Rules and Regulations (R&R) file. The tables file has information on expenses, sale averages, and performance.

If you or your producers have any questions about the bull test, please contact Gary Gregory at 919-515-4027 or e-mail: gary_gregory@ncsu.edu.

This information has been sent to potential consignors. However, if you’re unable to access the information online, please contact Brad Johnson, Rowan County Livestock and Dairy Cooperative Extension Agent at 704-216-8973 to get copies.

If you’re interested in consigning bulls, DO NOT DELAY getting this information. The last date to give the first round of required shots for the Butner Test is June 6.
Regional Hands-On Beef Cattle Workshop

Tuesday, May 29, 2012
1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

To be held in Guilford County,
at the farm of Don York,
4627 Old Julian Road, Julian NC 27283

AGENDA:

- *The NC Cattle Industry Assessment Program* - What has been done and what has the impact been? Bryan Blinson, NC Cattlemen’s Association Executive Director

- *Low-Stress Animal Handling, Animal Welfare & Weaning Management* – Minimizing stress and maximizing performance in your herd. Dr. Mark Alley, DVM, NC State University College of Veterinary Medicine

- *Improving Forage Quality and Utilization* – Adding legumes to the pasture mix, dealing with fescue toxicity, improving pasture management and cow efficiency. Dr. Matt Poore, NC State University Animal Science Specialist

- *View Herbicide Treatment Demonstration* – Scott Goodwin, Dow AgroScience

- *Mineral Supplementation Management* – Dr. Sharon Freeman (Livestock Nutrition)

- *Update on Beef Cattle Marketing Programs in North Carolina* – Neil Bowman, NCDA&CS Livestock Marketing Division

Refreshments will be provided by Scott Goodwin & Dow AgroSciences

The workshop is free, registration will take place upon arrival.

For More Information:
Ben Chase, Extension Livestock Agent, Rockingham & Guilford Counties
336-342-8235, 800-666-3625 or ben_chase@ncsu.edu

FLY CONTROL TO KEEP THE FLIES FROM WINNING

From the April 10, 2012 Drovers CattleNetwork E-newsletter

**Strategies for using fly control.** The following simple steps can help make your fly control program more effective and create less resistance in the flies.

- Use fly control products only during the peak fly season (June - October).
- Use a combination of methods (such as tags and occasional spray), but use the same product during the same years.
- DO NOT "double up" on organophosphates, they can be toxic.
- Rotate types of insecticide yearly.
- Note any product that is not working on your farm and eliminate its use for several years.
- Keep dust bags and rubbers well charged
- Remove fly tags when recommended by manufacturer.
EXAMINING CATTLE AT A DISTANCE
Geni Wren, Bovine Veterinarian Magazine | May 13, 2012
From the May 19, 2012 Bovine Veterinarian E-newsletter

Allen Roussel, DVM, MS, Dipl. ACVIM, Dipl. ECPHBM, Texas A&M University, believes that physical examination of cattle should begin with observation of the animal from a distance. This is particularly important when one suspects neurological or musculoskeletal disease.

The animal should be observed at rest for several minutes and then in motion. Note the general condition of the animal and the breed, as some neurological diseases are heritable. When the animal is at rest, pay particular attention to the animal’s awareness of its surroundings which reflects cerebral function. Note if the animal is depressed, hyper-excited, or otherwise responsive to external stimuli, if it is head pressing, wandering aimlessly, vocalizing abnormally, behaving abnormally or aggressively. Diseases such as polioencephalomalacia, lead poisoning, nervous ketosis, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, rabies, brain or pituitary abscess, nervous coccidiosis, and salt poisoning/water deprivation cause these signs.

Before the animal is disturbed, observe the character and rate of respiration, look for a jugular pulse (indicative of right heart failure), and for signs of abdominal pain like bruxism, restlessness, kicking at the belly, or straining. Also look carefully for muscle fasciculation, twitching of the ears or eyelids, tail position and switching and abnormal attempts at swallowing which may indicate nervous system or metabolic disease such as hypomagnesemia, lead toxicity, tetanus, or rabies.

Lameness is often detectable in cattle at rest by observing how the animal bears or shifts weight on the limbs. An easy way to assess weight bearing is to observe how far the dew claws are from the ground. If the dew claws are higher on one side, the animal is not bearing full weight on that side. Abdominal contour should also be assessed at a distance and from behind the animal. While the animal is in the open and not confined in a chute, careful attention should be paid to the muscle mass, particularly over the rump and hindquarters. In unilateral neurological disease, as well as chronic upper limb lameness, atrophy of the muscles will occur, and asymmetry of the muscles will be obvious.

If the animal is recumbent, observe if and how it rises. It is best to observe an animal in motion as it moves away from and towards the examiner, as well as from each side. To optimally evaluate gait, it should move at its own pace with only slight prompting from an assistant. It should be driven and not led (unless it is very well halter broken) so that the head and neck are free to move. The carriage of the head and neck sometimes give important clues about neurological disease. Observation should be carried out from directly behind the animal and then from each side, with particular attention being paid to the carriage and placement of the legs, to ability of the animal to walk in a straight line, to knuckling, and to other signs of weakness. If hind limb ataxia is suspected, the animal should be pulled from side to side by the tail so that the examiner can assess if the animal is able to place its back feet under itself correctly.

Another important observation to make when the animal is moving is to assess its vision. The menace response can be misleading in cattle, particularly young cattle. Therefore, cattle suspected of blindness should be moved through a maze or an obstacle course where they will have to turn to avoid running into objects. In this way their visual capacity can be properly assessed.

NEW FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE VACCINE APPROVAL EXPECTED SOON
Rick Jordahl | May 02, 2012
From the May 5, 2012 Bovine Veterinarian E-newsletter

With recent foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) outbreaks reported in Taiwan and China, many livestock producers are growing increasingly nervous about the possibility of the disease occurring in the United States. FMD is one of the world's most contagious animal viruses and an outbreak in the United States could cost more than $50 billion, experts estimate. FMD affects animals with hooves, including swine, cattle, sheep, goats and deer. The United States has not had an FMD outbreak since 1929.

Soon, however, a vaccine will be available that could ease those fears. The new vaccine is expected to be licensed for use in the next few months.

The vaccine has been developed under top security by scientists at Plum Island Animal Disease Center. "This is probably one of the most important innovations in the last 60 years in foot-and-mouth disease," says Luis Rodriguez, research leader of the Plum Island foreign animal disease research unit.

Currently-used FMD vaccines are not practical because of the inability to distinguish vaccinated animals from infected animals. The new vaccine technology will include an antibody test that will enable regulators to tell the difference, the researchers say. The new vaccine will also offer significant safety advantages since it does not use the whole live virus and cannot replicate, according to Larry Barrett, director of Plum Island, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security installation.

A part of the foot-and-mouth virus is placed in a vector and the vaccine works by triggering an immune response. When the vaccine is injected into the animal, it provides the relevant genetic information the animal's immune system needs to fight the disease virus. "The animal actually makes the vaccine inside its body by producing the FMD protein necessary to create an immune response," Rodriguez says. "I think it's going to revolutionize the way we look at FMD vaccines around the world today."
WHY BSE WENT SO MUCH BETTER THAN PINK SLIME
Tom Quaife | May 02, 2012
From the May 5, 2012 Bovine Veterinarian E-newsletter

When a new case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was reported by the media last week, the headlines weren’t too bad.

“They may even be accused of being fair and accurate,” quipped Janie Gabbett, executive editor of Meatingplace, who addressed the Animal Agriculture Alliance Stakeholders Summit on Wednesday. Meatingplace is a publication for the meat-processing industry.

Gabbett contrasted BSE coverage with the more sensational reports accompanying the pink slime controversy a month earlier.

She offered these explanations:

- Journalists who have been around since 2003, when the first case of BSE occurred in the U.S., were already educated on BSE.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture came out with an explanation faster on BSE than pink slime. In fact, Gabbett said, it took USDA 10 days to comment on pink slime or lean finely textured beef (LFTB).
- BSE was seen as something that happened to an industry, whereas LFTB was seen as something that occurred because of the industry.
- With BSE, there was no appearance of “hiding something” from the public, she said.
  “USDA did a lot of things right that first day,” she added. Among other things, USDA released a video of its chief veterinarian, John Clifford, explaining the BSE situation and the fact there was no threat to the food supply.
  One negative, however, was that nine out of 10 headlines referred to it as “mad cow” rather than BSE, she said.

Applying the lessons learned from these two incidents, Gabbett offered this advice for handling future stories of concern to consumers:

- Know your science.
- Be able to tell your story.
- Offer a same-day response.
- Know who to tell it to.
- Know how to tell it online.
- Offer images.
- Offer experts.
- Be transparent.

“Tell your story early, tell your story often, and tell it before someone else does,” Gabbett said.

MANAGING SPRING GRASS GROWTH AND SELECTIVE GRAZING
Ohio State Extension | Updated: March 28, 2012
From the March 30, 2012 Drovers CattleNetwork E-newsletter

For most beef cattle farmers who are managing their pastures in a rotational grazing system two of the biggest spring challenges are the flush of rapid growth that will occur and selective grazing. While there are no easy management answers, if we review some basic plant growth biology and grazing principles, they may suggest some management strategies. Warning: this article may disrupt some conventional thinking.

We know that as spring progresses, grass growth will speed up. Our cool season pasture grasses produce about 60% of their total dry matter production by early July. If your farm has a stocking rate that is matched to summer pasture production there is no way your cattle will be able to consume enough pasture forage to keep up with the flush of grass growth that will occur in late April through May. Coupled with this explosion in grass growth is a physiological response to the shorter nights and longer days that triggers seed head production generally starting at some point in early May. So not only is there more forage than can be consumed, but now the quality is steadily declining as a seed head is produced. It is very hard to fight this biology. Fast grazing rotations where hopefully the cattle just top the grass, combined with clipping the pastures to keep seed heads off are some standard management practices that are tried. In reality, these are not great solutions because cattle are not grazing uniformly and are not just topping the grass. Instead they are picking and choosing. They are grazing some places harder than others, and leaving other places alone. The result is a patchy, uneven growth pasture paddock. The solution is typically to reset that paddock to an even height, while clipping seed heads. Clipping pastures can be very time consuming, not to mention the fuel and machinery costs that are incurred.

Continued on the next page.
Instead of fighting the biology of spring grass growth, work with it. If your stocking rate is matched for summer production all of the pasture paddocks are not needed during the spring and early summer period. Paddocks should be dropped out of the spring rotation, and doing so will make it easier to manage the spring flush of growth. Which paddocks should be dropped out? Obviously any paddocks that had trampling and pugging damage during the winter and early spring are good candidates. This will give them time to recover, and/or for some paddock renovation and reseeding to be done. Next, drop those paddocks where it is easiest to get a tractor over. The goal is to use the pasture paddocks with the most slope where mechanical clipping would be difficult.

The end result might be as much as 50% of your grazing acres dropped out of the spring rotation. There is an old saying; in for a penny, in for a pound. If you are willing to change your management and drop paddocks, then the next thing that should be done is to divide those remaining pastures in half. Use temporary fence, such as polywire, to make these divisions. This will change stocking density, but not stocking rate. Stocking density is defined as the number of animal units being grazed per unit of land over a short time period. The stocking rate is defined as the number of animal units that are carried on a given unit of land over a long time period, generally a year. So, when paddocks are dropped out of the rotation, there is now the opportunity to graze more animal units, more pounds of animal per acre. This will accomplish a couple of things.

First, with more animal pounds on a smaller paddock acreage, a faster rotation is necessary. Cattle will need to be moved more often. Depending upon paddock size and cattle number, the goal is to move every 2 to 3 days. This will help keep plants in the paddocks in a vegetative growth stage. It will also prevent any desirable plants that may start regrowth after being grazed from being grazed again too soon. Second, when stocking at more pounds per acre, cattle tend to be much less selective. They get down to the business of eating what is in front of them. Paddocks are grazed more uniformly, reducing the need to clip. Pasture forage utilization is increased.

Keep practicing good grazing principles, do not graze below a 3 inch height, and do not enter a paddock with less than 8 inches of growth. Remember, if you have to err on when to pull cattle out of a paddock, it is better to leave more residual growth as compared to grazing lower. When grass growth begins to slow down and you can no longer pull cattle out of a paddock with 3-4 inches of residual and move to a paddock with 8 inches of growth, it is time to begin adding some of those dropped paddocks back into the rotation to maintain these grazing principles.

The question will come up about what to do with those paddocks that are dropped out of the spring rotation. Options include taking a hay crop from them, clip them before they are worked back into the rotation, or just let them grow. The advantage of taking a hay crop is that it might be used later as a management tool, and fed in the late summer to protect paddocks from being overgrazed, particularly if a drought situation develops. The disadvantage is that there is some significant nutrient removal associated with a hay crop.

Clipping is another expense, but does allow nutrients to be recycled back into the paddock and clipping will maintain the vegetative quality of the paddock. If the paddock is clipped try to time it so that the regrowth will be at that 8-10 inch stage when the cattle enter to graze.

Letting the paddocks grow and mature could be an option if a heavy stocking density can be maintained and more pasture divisions added. Under heavy stocking densities cattle will select the best growth and trample the stemmy material in to the soil. When combined with the uniform manure cover that accompanies a heavy stocking density, the result is a mulch layer over the soil that conserves soil moisture, provides a favorable environment for nutrient recycling, and allows good regrowth potential. If the stocking density is heavy enough there will not be any need to clip the paddock after the grazing pass. The stocking density that would allow this system to work is probably in excess of 200,000 lbs/acre. Think fifty 1200 lbs cows in a one-quarter acre paddock and you get the idea. This requires quick paddock moves; basically strip grazing across a pasture paddock. It is not something that the typical cow/calf grazier is going to try, but it is an option. In addition, this heavy stocking density of mature forage works best once we get some drier weather and soils are not saturated.

Most cattle graziers struggle with the spring flush of growth, seedhead development, rapidly maturing grass and uneven, selective grazing. Expecting different results this year without a management change is wishful thinking. Management options are available. The bigger question is: are you willing to change your management?