November 7, 2013

COWCHIP

DATES TO REMEMBER:

December
2 Bulk Distillers Dried Grains Available

January
4 Cattlemen's Banquet, 6:30 p.m., Kaplan American Legion
17-19 LCA Convention, Monroe
24-25 Parish Livestock Show, McCrory Building, Abbeville

ECONOMICS OF HAY:

For many ranchers in southwest Louisiana feeding hay to cattle represents the largest single cost of production. And yet, it is the most mismanaged and misunderstood resource. Hay value, and limiting hay losses all need to be understood if we are to make wise hay management decisions.

Most of us pay too much for poor quality hay and pay too little for high quality hay. Purchasing hay based upon the nutrients it provides is smart for cattlemen. Storing hay outdoors, uncovered, directly on the ground coupled with poor feeding practices can cause us to double our hay needs and cost. Using good hay rings, storing hay on tires or limestone pads and providing some sort of protection from the rain is well worth the effort. If we can reduce hay needs by ⅓ from managing losses, a significant savings would be realized.

The value of hay is best determined by the nutrient content of the hay and the cost of those nutrients in a readily available replacement. To determine the nutrient content, Crude Protein (CP) and Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN) of a hay, a forage test must be conducted. Very few ranchers or hay producers do this and yet it is the key to putting a value on hay. It is common in the Alfalfa growing parts of the nation to sell and buy Alfalfa hay based on nutrient content with prices varying as Alfalfa quality varies. Having your hay tested and comparing it to an average hay at average price would tell you if the hay you are buying is worth more or less.

How much more or less should be based on the cost of nutrients from a readily available feed, like cubes. Cubes are selling for about $360/ton and they are about 78% TDN and 20% Crude Protein. Let's assume that hay costs are about $70 per ton (budgets in Georgia and Louisiana say this). It takes about two bales to make a ton, so average bermudagrass cost per bale is $35. The average hay is about 6.5% Crude Protein and 50% TDN based on hays

submitted to this office for analysis. Now let's say your neighbor offers you bermudagrass and says it is fertilized and he wants $40 per bale. Is it a goody buy? We have to test it to find out. Let's say the hay offered tests 8% Crude Protein and 56% TDN. If we assume a 1,000 pound bale weight, that's an additional 1.5% x 1000 = 15 pounds of protein per bale. To get that from the cubes it would take 15 pounds protein/20% protein in the cube. It would take 75 pounds of cubes to get the 15 pounds of extra protein in the bale. At $360/ton a pound of cubes is 18 cents. So, the bale is worth $13.50 more based on the protein it provides. Similarly, the bale provides 6% more TDN or .06 x 1000 = 60 pounds more TDN per bale. It takes 60 pounds/78% = 76 pounds of cubes to get the extra 68 pounds of TDN. That difference is about covered by covering the Crude Protein difference so the value of the hay wouldn't change. So yes, the hay being offered is well worth the extra $5/bale.

Pricing hay based on quality is very rarely done, but for ranchers who buy hay it is important to consider. Testing purchased hay or asking hay producers to provide tests allows us to alter supplementation levels to match hay quality and lets us identify high quality producers.

Hay storage and feeding practices are just as important as knowing hay value. We will cover this in detail in the next Cowchip.

BULK FEED:

Due to continued high feed prices, we will again offer a group bulk feed purchasing program. We had used corn gluten earlier this fall; however, corn gluten is not available at this time. So, we will be taking orders for distillers dried grains. Price would be $325.00 per ton delivered to Abbeville. We are taking orders for a December 2nd delivery date. We will need at least a truckload of 22 tons to make the program work. This product would be an excellent supplement for poor quality hay and is often used in growing rations for calves. It would not be appropriate for use in a self-feeder due to its high fat and low fiber content.

Here is the outline of the program.

- Purchaser provides a super bag or portable container
- Delivery will be for the week of December 2nd. Pickup must take place by the end of that week
- Orders for feed are due by November 15th and must be in multiples of a ton
- A deposit of $50/ton is required. Deposits are not refundable once the order is placed
- The group must order at least 22 tons and in multiples of 22 tons above the minimum. A truckload is about 22 tons. We will return your deposit if your order is part of an unfilled truck.

If you are interested in ordering bulk distillers dried grains fill out the enclosed order form and return it with proper deposit by November 15th.

CATTLE PRODUCTION AND GREENHOUSE GASES:

We often hear how much cattle contribute to greenhouse gases. Here is an article from Beef Daily which sheds some light on the issue.

The American Society of Animal Science invited congressional staff to an educational briefing, presented by Drs. Clinton Krehbiel and Frank Mitloehner, to discuss the contributions of animal production to global food security.

Dr. Krehbiel, a ruminant nutrition professor at Oklahoma State University, discussed the rising concern of meeting the global food demand for a world population that will triple in the span of our lifetime. He stressed the importance of increased efficiency through technology in food production; while balancing economic feasibility, social acceptance, and environmental friendliness.

"The biggest opportunity and greatest challenge is to double the food supply," Krehbeil said, "which is the estimate that will be required to meet the demand of 2050. Approximately 870 million people are undernourished and as the world population grows, food security on a global scale must become a greater priority. The development and adoption of new technology has aided us in becoming more environmentally friendly, which leads to greater sustainability for producers and consumers."

During the presentation, Dr. Mitloehner, air quality specialist and professor at University of California-Davis, addressed several common myths about the carbon footprint of beef production. Most notably – the senseless "Meatless Monday" campaign. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, only six percent of the greenhouse gases generated in the U.S. are from production agriculture, compared to the 26 percent contribution from transportation, and 31 percent from energy production and use. Furthermore, only 3.4 percent of the total greenhouse gases produced in the U.S. are from livestock production, with a mere 1.4 percent as a result of beef production. That said, if all Americans stopped eating meat, specifically beef, on Mondays, the impact would amount to a small decimal of a percent– 0.2 percent precisely.

He also said, in order to minimize global impact on the environment, as an industry, we have to become much more intensive in countries where we currently are not. Our improved fertility, genetics and implementation of more energy-dense diets have led to a decrease in the number of animals needed to produce a given amount of food.

"Sustainable intensification is the new key word," Mitloehner said. "Production intensity and emission intensity are inversely related. The more you produce per animal, the less you pollute the environment."

PLEASE RETURN BY FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH TO ANDREW GRANGER, 1105 W. PORT ST., ABBEVILLE, LA 70510

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ CELL _____

Tons of Bulk Feed _____ x $50/Ton

Amount of Deposit _____

Sincerely,

Andrew Granger
County Agent
Vermilion Parish

It is the policy of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, or disability.