

BEEF CATTLE COMMENTS

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1. NEW YORK CATTLE FEEDERS/RAISERS CONFERENCE AND WINTER MANAGEMENT MEETING.

Cattle Feeders/Raisers Conference. January 25. Utilizing Idled Grasslands. It is estimated that there are 3 million acres of idled farmland in New York. A significant proportion of this land is owned by non-farmers. Many of these landowners are, however, interested in having the land used for agricultural purposes. Often, they will allow use of this land by farmers for minimal to no cost. Since land cost and the production of feed is one of the highest expenses of the livestock enterprise, access to land at a low cost provides a competitive advantage to livestock owners in New York.

**New York Cattle Feeders/Raisers Conference
January 25, 2008
Holiday Inn – Carrier Circle, Syracuse**

Time	Topic	Speaker
9:00	Registration	
9:30	Acreage available- opportunities	Fay Benson, CCE Cortland County
10:00	Converting idled land	Darrell Emmick, State Grazing Land Management Specialist USDA - NRCS
10:40	Working with landowners	Troy Bishopp (The grass Whisperer), Conservation District Program Specialist, Madison Co. SWCD
11:20	Water and Fencing	Rob DeClue, GLCI Area Grazing Lands Management Specialist, Chenango County SWCD
12:10-1:30	Lunch and Trade show	
1:30	Gaining access to idled lands: tax incentives, contracts, agreements	Jerry Snyder, Alfred Station, NY
2:20	Stocker Cattle/contract grazing	Jason Miller, Green Hills Cattle Company, Chemung, NY
3:10	Contract Grazing Opportunities	Bill McCoy. President, Lancaster Stockyards, Lancaster, PA
3:50	Use of Distillers grains to supplement grazing	Andy Buck, Commodity Specialist

Winter Management Meeting. January 26. Health Issues for the Cow Calf Herd. According to Standardized Performance Analysis (SPA), health costs in the most profitable herds are second to feed costs. How are profitable herds spending their health dollars?

Special this year is the opportunity to customize your herd health program through participation in a workshop with Dr. Mark Hilton, DVM, Purdue University. Limited to 15 farms, Dr. Hilton will take participants through a process to identify the management practices that best meet your unique land, labor and facility resources. Plan now to take advantage of Dr. Hilton's skills. He has worked with thousands of cow calf and feedlot clients throughout the Midwest and Northeast.

**Winter Management Program
January 26, 2008
Holiday Inn – Carrier Circle, Syracuse**

Time	Topic	Speaker
8:00	Registration	
9:00	Welcome	Dewey Hauman, President, NYBPA
9:15	Economics of health and herd profitability	Dr. Mark Hilton, Beef Production Medicine, Purdue University
10:00	Designing a herd health program	Dr. Steve Yousey, Somerset Veterinary Services, Lyndonville, NY
10:45	Immunology and MLV vs Killed vaccines	Dr. Mark Hilton, Beef Production Medicine, Purdue University
11:30	Prevention and treatment of calf scours	Dr. McArt, Cornell Animal Health Diagnostic Center
12:15 – 1:30	Lunch and Trade Show	
1:30	Feeding the cow herd on limited resources	Dr. Mark Hilton, Beef Production Medicine, Purdue University
CONCURRENT SESSION		
2:15-4:15	Workshop: Customizing a herd health program for your herd (pre-registration required)*	Dr. Mark Hilton, Beef Production Medicine, Purdue University
2:15	Update on the National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium	Dr. John Pollak, Professor, Animal

		Breeding, Cornell
2:00	Prevalence, impact and prevention of BVD in the cow herd	Dr. Belinda Thompson, Cornell Animal Health Diagnostic Center
2:45	Preconditioning programs to improve calf health	
3:30	Bio-security on the Beef Farm	Kathy Finnerty, Coordinator, NYS Cattle Health Assurance Program
4:15	Update on Animal Identification System in New York	Dr. Dave Smith, Assistant State Veterinarian, NYS Dept. Ag and Markets

*Dr. Hilton will lead an in-depth workshop to design a herd health program that will increase profitability. Recommendations will be tailored to the unique resources of individual farms. Pre-registration required; \$25/farm; limited to 15.

To register contact Megan Galloway, NY Beef Producer's Association, 607-965-8282, nybpa2@aol.com. For information on educational conferences contact Mike Baker, 607-255-5923, mjb28@cornell.edu.

2. NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED VETERINARIAN TO SPEAK AT BEEF WINTER MANAGEMENT MEETING.

Dr. Mark Hilton, DVM, Purdue University, will be a featured speaker at the 2008 Beef Winter Management Program in Syracuse, NY. The focus of this year's conference is cow herd health. Dr. Hilton grew up on swine and beef farm in Central Indiana. He lists four professional goals:

1. Assist in the education of veterinary and veterinary technology students
2. Provide continuing education to beef veterinarians
3. Provide continuing education to beef producers
4. Assist beef owners in having a more healthy and profitable herd

Since arriving at Purdue nine years ago he has been honored with six teaching awards. Many producers may know him through his regular contributions to the "Vet's Opinion" column in BEEF magazine along with Dr. Mike Apley and Dr. Dave Sjeklocha.

Owns his own herd of cows and sells bulls to progressive producers along with having a private beef consulting business – Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants
www.mwbeefcattle.com.

Along with three presentations at the conference Dr. Hilton will provide a special workshop that will lead producers through the process of designing a herd health program customized to the unique resources of your farm. The workshop is limited to the first 15 that register.

To register for the conference and/or the special workshop, contact Megan Galloway, NY

Beef Producer's Association, 607-965-8282, nybpa2@aol.com.

3. HERD HEALTH IS HIGH PRIORITY IN COW-CALF BUSINESS

Priorities First: Identifying Management Priorities in the Commercial Cow-Calf Business, by Tom Field, Ph.D., Fort Collins, Colorado.

Herd Health ranked 3rd overall out of 15 management categories in the *Priorities First* survey, according to producer and specialist respondents. The survey also concluded significant management emphasis should be dedicated to disease prevention within the herd. A proactive health maintenance program should be implemented for cows, bulls and especially, replacement heifers and calves (both pre-and post-weaning).

Effective health programs involve both prevention and treatment of disease problems affecting beef cattle. The old adage "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" applies to herd health management. Preventative measures are typically more cost-effective to implement than attempting to deal with a disease outbreak.

The most successful herd health management programs involve cooperative planning by producers and their veterinarians. Veterinarians need to understand the management programs of individual beef cattle operations, especially the major factors affecting profitability. Producers should be aware of their limitations in evaluating, treating and caring for sick animals and of the proper timing for seeking a veterinarian's assistance. A sound herd health program is based on the following components:

- Sound nutritional regime
- Continuous training of personnel
- Known source of livestock
- Sound sanitation management and biosecurity practices
- Excellent record keeping system accompanied by a sound monitoring and evaluation system
- Functional, well-maintained facilities
- Excellent relationship with a professional herd veterinarian
- A sound preventative vaccination system

(Source: Priorities First: Identifying Management Priorities in the Commercial Cow-Calf Business, by Tom Field, Ph.D., Fort Collins, Colorado, and sponsored by the American Angus Association, is the first comprehensive effort to prioritize management and economic issues for cow-calf producers. (A detailed summary can be found at www.angus.org or contact the American Angus Association, 816.383.5100 to obtain a printed copy of Priorities First.)

4. NORTHEAST GRASSTRAVAGANZA 2008 - March 28th 29th, 2008

The Holiday Inn, Binghamton, N.Y.

Hosted by the Central New York RC&D Project Inc.

The Featured speakers are:

- Kathy Voth- Colorado-based consultant and owner of Livestock for Landscapes, a business that teaches using animals for weed control, local food production, fire prevention and improving biodiversity, Research Associate with Utah State University's BEHAVE Program and Stockman Grass Farmer contributor.
- Kevin Fulton- Nebraska beef farmer, competitive power lifter and coach that custom grazes and grass-finishes over 1000 head on 2300 acres of native prairie grass and cropland. He is one of the few that have lifted the legendary Dinnie Stones in Scotland. Kevin is passionate about the Paleo Diet for good health.
- Janet McNally- Minnesota sheep producer and owner of Tamarack Lamb and Wool Co. She is nationally known for practical small ruminant grazing production and profit strategies. Janet is also a regular columnist for the GRAZE magazine.
- David Smith- Maryland based farmer grazier, marketer and president of the American Pastured Poultry Producers Assoc. The 67 acre multi-generational family farm has been in operation since the 1700's. David has a wealth of knowledge about on-farm marketing and working with the media.
- Dan Barber-Stone Chef/owner, Blue Hill & Blue Hill at Stone Barns Creative Director, Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture in Pocantico Hills, N.Y. Dan has been featured in the New Yorker, Gourmet Magazine, CBS Sunday Morning, New York Times, House and Garden, Martha Stewart Living, Breathe, and named as "the next generation" of great chefs for Bon Appetit's 10th annual restaurant issue.

PLUS Over 35 practical workshops, Local grass-fed meats, Vendors and Surprises!!!

5. CARCASS EVALUATION WORKSHOPS: "HOOF TO RAIL".

March 8, 2008

10am-12 noon

Cornell Beef Teaching and Research Center

Harford, NY

Participants will learn how to visually determine when a steer is properly finished for

harvest. The skills to estimate quality grade, yield grade and dressing percent will be taught. An ultrasound demonstration will conclude the morning presentation. Instructors will be university and industry personnel.

March 15, 2008

10am-2pm

Cornell Meats Lab, Morrison Hall

Cornell University Campus

Ithaca, NY

Cattle that were visually evaluated for proper finish the previous week will be evaluated on the rail. A video of the live cattle will be available for those unable to attend live evaluation on March 6. Hands on activities include taking carcass measurements, learning the retail cuts of meat, and discovery of carcass defects that affect consumer acceptance.

Fee: If registered by February 20, \$35 (\$15 2nd person from same farm/family) covers both workshops, and includes instruction, handouts, coffee, donuts and lunch on 3/11. Children under 12 years, \$5. Fee, after February 20, \$45. To register, send name, address, phone number, number attending and fee to Vicki Badalamenti, Administrative Assistant, Cornell Beef Extension, 130 Morrison Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, email: yb65@cornell.edu, or call 607-255-7712.

6. FEEDERS CORNER

a. Sorting Feedlot Cattle Into Market Outcome Groups at Re-Implant Time Was Profitable

Kansas State Univ. researchers used 311 crossbred steers to determine the profitability of sorting feedlot cattle at re-implant time by using an ultrasound machine operated by personnel of Designer Genes Technologies, Inc. (DG), Harrison, AR. Measurements taken during scanning were liveweight, 12th rib fat thickness, ribeye area, and estimated percentage of intramuscular fat (IMF) within the ribeye. Four test groups were harvested based upon projected marketing times generated by the DG sorting system at 83, 97, 113, or 125 days after scanning. A control group was harvested at a single date determined by

feedlot management, which was 97 days after scanning. Carcass measurements taken were carcass weight, fat thickness, ribeye area, and yield grade. A quality grade number was assigned to each carcass as follows: USDA Choice=5, USDA Select=4, no roll=3. Following is a summary of performance and carcass traits.

Item	Group	
	Control	Sorted
No. of steers	146	147
Initial scan wt., lb	996.5	1012.1
Days on feed	97.0	108.4*
Avg. daily gain, lb/day	3.40	3.33
Hot carcass wt., lb	823.0	852.0
Backfat thickness, in.	.44	.51*
Ribeye area, sq. in.	14.9	14.6
Yield grade	2.5	2.8*
Quality grade number	4.2	4.5*
Percent USDA Choice	37.7	51.8*

*Indicates statistically significant difference (P<0.05).

As shown above, sorted steers were fed for about 11 more days than controls. Numerical yield grade was significantly higher for sorted steers because of heavier carcasses and greater backfat thickness. Quality grade was significantly higher for sorted steers. The following table provides a summary of economic performance of the two groups.

Item	Group	
	Control	Sorted
Costs, \$/head		
Feed	150.42	172.38*
Implant	2.85	2.28
Ultrasound	0.000	6.00
Carcass discounts & premiums, \$/cwt		
Yield grade premium	.75	.00
Quality grade premium	1.27	3.93*
Weight discount	-.69	-.09
Carcass value, \$	1112.91	1175.98*
Initial live value, \$	940.57	953.32
Total costs, \$	153.27	180.66*
Profit, \$	19.07	42.00*
Difference in profit, \$	---	22.93

*Indicates statistically significant difference (P<0.05).

The above table shows that total costs were significantly higher for sorted steers, but this was more than offset by their greater carcass value, resulting in \$22.93 more profit. The authors concluded that sorting cattle at re-implant time using ultrasound to sort cattle into uniform market groups cattle is a cost-effective tool that can predict future carcass merit and increase profitability (Garmyn and Moser. 2007. Kansas State Univ. Report of

Progress 978).

b. Up to 30% Dried Distiller's Grains Can Be Fed without Decreasing Animal Performance

In a Kansas State Univ. experiment, a total of 345 crossbred yearling heifers (728 lb) were allotted to six different levels of dried corn distiller's grains with solubles (DDGS) to determine the optimum level to be fed in a steam-flaked corn finishing diet. The levels of DDGS fed were 0, 15, 30, 45, 60, and 75%.

Dry matter intakes were similar for levels of DDGS. Avg. daily gain was greatest when 15% DDGS was fed. However, feed efficiency declined as DDGS levels increased from 0 to 75%. Final body weights and carcass weights were greatest at 15% DDGS. Heifers fed 30% DDGS were similar in avg. daily gain, feed efficiency, final body weight, and carcass weight to those fed no DDGS. Twelfth rib fat thickness decreased with increasing DDGS, but kidney, pelvic, and heart fat increased. As DDGS levels increased, carcasses grading USDA Choice or better decreased, while the number of USDA Yield Grade 4 and 5 carcasses doubled compared to heifers fed no DDGS. Meat tenderness improved linearly as level of DDGS increased, while juiciness and flavor remained unchanged. Color stability did not differ among treatments.

The authors concluded the results suggest that cattle performance was maximized at 15% DDGS, and as much as 30% can be fed without decreasing performance. Furthermore, meat tenderness appears to be improved when DDGS is fed without any adverse effects on juiciness, flavor or retail display life (Depenbusch et al. 2007. Proc. Plains Nutrition Council Conf. Publication No. AREC 07-20, Texas A & M Univ. Res. and Ext. Center, Amarillo).

7. NEW YORK FEEDLOT AND CARCASS VALUE DISCOVERY PROGRAM

The eleventh year of the New York Feedlot and Carcass Value Discovery Program began November 1-2 with the delivery of 231 cattle from 20 farms. At arrival steers and heifers were ear notched for BVD analysis and ear tagged. Weight and hip height measurements were taken. Consignors again had the option of assigning cattle to the conventional or natural feeding and management protocols. Natural cattle are not fed an ionophore or implanted.

All of the calves were to be vaccinated and de-wormed prior to arrival. To determine if an additional worming is beneficial, every other calf was treated with a pour on de-wormer.

The first 28 day period ended December 13. Health on the cattle has been excellent, with treatment less than 20% (compared to 30% last year). In addition to weights, a temperament score was assigned to each animal (for description, see article in this newsletter). Several studies have documented a performance difference between cattle of different temperaments.

The next weigh day is January 10. If you have any questions or would like to view the cattle, contact Mike Baker, 607-255-5923, mjb28@cornell.edu.

New York Feedlot and Carcass Value Discovery Program, 2007/2008 –
28 day report.

Item	Steers		Heifers	
	Conventional	Natural ¹	Conventional	Natural ¹
n	87	68	30	46
Initial wt, lb	718	659	675	598
Period wt, lb.	593	559	562	500
ADG, lb	4.5	3.6	4.0	3.5
Temperament score	2.0	2.1	1.7	2.0

¹Cattle in the natural program are not fed an ionophore nor treated with growth promoting implants.

8. TEMPERAMENT SCORING

Important behaviors to beef cattle production include reactions to processing through a squeeze chute, maternal instincts at calving, newborn calf vigor, bull serving capacity, and foraging behavior. Since these are distinctly different behaviors, different strategies are necessary to quantify differences among animals. Among the most important of behavioral traits, temperament reflects the ease with which animals respond to handling, treatment, and routine management. Animals with disposition problems are a safety risk to handlers, themselves, and other animals in the herd. Disposition affects handling equipment requirements, operation liability exposure, beef quality assurance, and performance. The scoring system provided below is designed to subjectively evaluate differences in disposition when animals are processed through the squeeze chute. Because an animal's behavior can be influenced by past experiences, scoring should be conducted at weaning or yearling ages. This will reduce the extent to which current behavior has been influenced by prior handling experiences.

Score 1 - Docile. Mild disposition. Gentle and easily handled. Stands and moves slowly during processing. Undisturbed, settled, somewhat dull. Does not pull on headgate when in chute. Exits chute calmly.

Score 2 - Restless. Quieter than average, but may be stubborn during processing. May try to back out of chute or pull back on headgate. Some flicking of tail. Exits chute promptly.

Score 3 - Nervous. Typical temperament is manageable, but nervous and impatient. A moderate amount of struggling, movement and tail flicking. Repeated pushing and pulling on headgate. Exits chute briskly.

Score 4 - Flighty (Wild). Jumpy and out of control, quivers and struggles violently. May

bellow and froth at the mouth. Continuous tail flicking. Defecates and urinates during processing. Frantically runs fence line and may jump when penned individually. Exhibits long flight distance and exits chute wildly.

Score 5 - Aggressive. May be similar to Score 4, but with added aggressive behavior, fearfulness, extreme agitation, and continuous movement which may include jumping and bellowing while in chute. Exits chute frantically and may exhibit attack behavior when handled alone.

Score 6 - Very Aggressive. Extremely aggressive temperament. Thrashes about or attacks wildly when confined in small, tight places. Pronounced attack behavior.

(Source: *BIF Guidelines*)

9. EMPIRE HEIFER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The heifers arrived at the Empire Heifer Development Facility in Lyons December 7-8. Delivered were 77 heifers from 15 farms.

At delivery, all the heifers received TSV-2, BoviShield FP 4+L5, dewormed and ear notched for BVD analysis. Weight and hip height measurements were taken. As of this writing the heifers are off to a good start. The first weigh day is Dec 29th. If you have any questions, contact Mike Baker, 607-255-5923, mjb28@cornell.edu.

Arrival information for Empire Heifer Development Program, 2007-2008

No.	77
Arrival weight. Lb	632
Arrival age, mo.	8.8
Frame score	4.7

10. SIGNIFICANT VARIATION IN COW-CALF RETURNS

Cattle-Fax data compiled during the period from 1986 to 2006 revealed there is considerable variation in cow-calf producer returns. The top one-third of producers generated an average return of \$89.19 per head on a cash cost basis. The lower one-third of producers showed a loss of \$29.56 per head. The middle one-third of producers were essentially in a breakeven business, generating a small per head profit. It was noted that an important difference between profitable and unprofitable producers was lower cow costs on the part of profitable producers (SOURCE: Cattle-Fax Update).

11. 2006 COSTS AND RETURNS FOR U.S. COW-CALF PRODUCERS

Cattle-Fax® recently published its annual Cow-Calf and Stocker Survey, which was conducted in January, 2007. Following is a brief summary.

- Average cow-calf profit was down slightly in 2006 from the peak in 2005. However, it was the eighth year in a row in which the majority of the respondents

- were profitable. Profit on calves sold at weaning was \$100 or more for 51% of producers, \$25 to \$100 for 35% of producers, and \$25 or less for 14% of producers.
- Annual average cash cost to run a cow increased by \$15/head, from \$351 in 2005 to \$366 in 2006.
 - Feed costs accounted for approximately 62% of total cash costs at \$226/cow.
 - Operating costs which include labor, vet/medicine, interest expense (excluding land), and other supplies were \$1/head lower than in 2005 at \$136/head.
 - An operation with an average cow cost of \$366/head and a weaning percentage of 85% equates to a breakeven calf price of \$78/cwt.
 - Average steer weaning weight was 563 lb, which was 17 lb lower than in 2005, largely due to dry conditions and short forage supplies throughout a large portion of the U.S.

12. GRAZING RESOURCE

If you're looking for pasture research results, check out the Northeast Grazing Guide at www.umaine.edu/grazingguide. This site was developed as part of the Northeast Pasture Research and Extension Consortium, which brings together farmers and research and outreach personnel from Maine to West Virginia. These folks work together across the region to establish research priorities and advocate for pasture based agricultural systems. At the site, you can link to all the Universities in the Northeast, read articles by various grazing experts, as well as link to numerous other agencies and organizations with an interest in pasture. Check it out! (Source: GLCI Gazette, December 2007, contact, Karen Sullivan, karen.sullivan@ny.usda.gov).

13. PROFIT OPTIMIZATION AND EVALUATION PROGRAMS

a. Cornell Feedlot and Carcass Value Discovery Program

Purpose: Teach cow/calf producers the value of their calves based on performance in the feedlot and on through the packing plant. Calves are accepted in November and fed till their most optimal profit potential during March-July. For more information contact Mike Baker, Cornell Beef Specialist mjb28@cornell.edu, 607-255-5923.

b. Empire Heifer Development Program

Purpose: A management and marketing program for cow/calf producers to evaluate replacement heifer prospects and offer a marketing opportunity for quality heifers. Calves are accepted in December. Heifers can be bred artificially at the heifer rearing facility, or returned home for breeding. Eligible heifers can be sold in April. For more information, contact Martha Wright, Empire Heifer Development Program Manager, maw32@cornell.edu, 585-770-4664.

c. New York Pooled Weaning and Marketing Program

Purpose: Provide a uniformly managed group of feeder calves, commingled from

several producers, in a truck load lot, which can be marketed at optimum value. Calves are accepted in October and marketed in late November or December. For more information contact Mike Baker, Cornell Beef Specialist mjb28@cornell.edu, 607-255-5923.

d. NY Beef Producers Central Bull Test and Sale

Purpose: To 1) compare individual performance of potential herd sires, 2) provide an opportunity for seedstock producers to market individual bulls, 3) provide a source of bulls for commercial and seedstock herds and 4) provide an educational opportunity for sellers and buyers alike. Bulls are accepted in November. Eligible bulls are sold in April. For more information contact Bull Test Managers Jason TenEyck at 315-539-8031 or Jim Brown at 315-549-8318.

14. ULTRASOUND SERVICES AVAILABLE

Heather Birdsall, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Cortland County recently received her ultrasound certification. For breeders that require this information for their breed association records, this service is now available within New York State. Images that can be collected are ribeye area, backfat and rump fat depth and percent intramuscular fat. This information is invaluable in developing seedstock that produce high quality beef for today's market. Cattle can be scanned for \$15/head plus travel. For more details contact Heather at 607-753-5222, hbb6@cornell.edu.

15. TO/DO JANUARY/FEBRUARY

- a. Cows should be in body condition score of 5.0-6.0 for March calving (Smooth appearance, last 3-4 ribs are just visible, and there is some brisket fat).
- b. Heifers should be in body condition score 5.5-6.5 (slightly fatter than cows, can begin to see pockets of fat on either side of tail head).
- c. If forage quality is low, send sample in for nutrient analysis. Contact your Cooperative Extension agent, your feed dealer, or Dairy One Forage Testing Laboratory at 800-496-3344.
- d. If hay for the cow herd is in short supply, replacing up to three pounds of hay with two pounds of whole shelled corn will stretch hay supplies. Include corn at no higher than 50% of the ration. Small grains like barley, wheat and rye can also be used, but unlike corn, must be processed.
- e. If corn or corn silage is a significant portion of the diet, calcium could be in short supply. Contact feed dealer or Cooperative Extension agent for assistance in balancing minerals in the ration.
- f. A good windbreak, e.g., woodlot, building, hillside- can reduce energy requirements 10% in cowherd.
- g. Watch for outbreaks of lice. Treat whole herd, not just affected individuals.
- h. If calf scours has been a problem, consider vaccinating cowherd. Scours vaccination must be given 6 weeks prior to calving. Consult your veterinarian for assistance.