



Ag Insights

From the Desks of Your Northwest Area Ag Specialists

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Use Preconditioning to Boost Returns on the 2019 Calf Crop

Dana Zook, NW Area Livestock Specialist

West Area Office, Enid

Phone: (580)-237-7677

Dana Zook

Area Livestock Specialist
dana.zook@okstate.edu

Trent Milacek

Area Ag Economics Specialist
trent.milacek@okstate.edu

Josh Bushong

Area Agronomy Specialist
josh.bushong@okstate.edu

OPREC, Goodwell

Phone: (580)-349-5441

R. Britt Hicks

Area Livestock Specialist
britt.hicks@okstate.edu

Facebook Page:

facebook.com/
nwareaosuextension

Website:

http://oces.okstate.edu/
nwareaextension

In Oklahoma, fall is weaning time for producers who own spring calving herds. Markets look favorable for the coming season but there are programs that have historically offered a premium for calves even in times of high prices. There are many preconditioning options available for producers, however, a program with a proven track record is the Oklahoma Beef Quality Network (OQBN).

OQBN and other preconditioning programs have been designed to aid producers in making preconditioning decisions and capturing value of preconditioned calves at market. One way this is done is through the OQBN Vac-45 verification program. Cattle meeting the management and vaccination requirements are verified by Oklahoma Cooperative Extension personnel and can be marketed as OQBN Vac-45 cattle. Once verified, producers have the option but are not obligated to market cattle in a certified OQBN sale.

The OQBN Vac-45 program and other preconditioning programs benefit both buyers and sellers in several ways, including reduced shrink, stronger immunity, and improved weight gain during the weaning and preconditioning period. In 2018, OQBN participants realized a \$12.89/cwt premium over cattle that had no weaning or health history (see table below). Buyers offset purchase prices by having very low death loss and excellent feed conversion right off the bat.

Some producers may be apprehensive about preconditioning, however, the use of a proper vaccination protocol and the development of a basic management plan can provide healthy preconditioned calves that are more valuable at sale time.

When the decision is made to precondition cattle, producers should evaluate their feed options. What feed or grain is on hand? What is the nutritional value of the hay source? By determining feed resources and their feeding value, a basic preconditioning ration can be easily formulated by a nutritionist or OSU extension educator. According to these factors, producers should then set a target weight goal for the calves. Producers must be cautious as to not over-condition cattle that are destined for feeding environments with a low plane of nutrition such as stockpiled dry winter range or hay. In these situations, high energy diets during preconditioning will hinder future performance due to the extreme difference in nutrition.

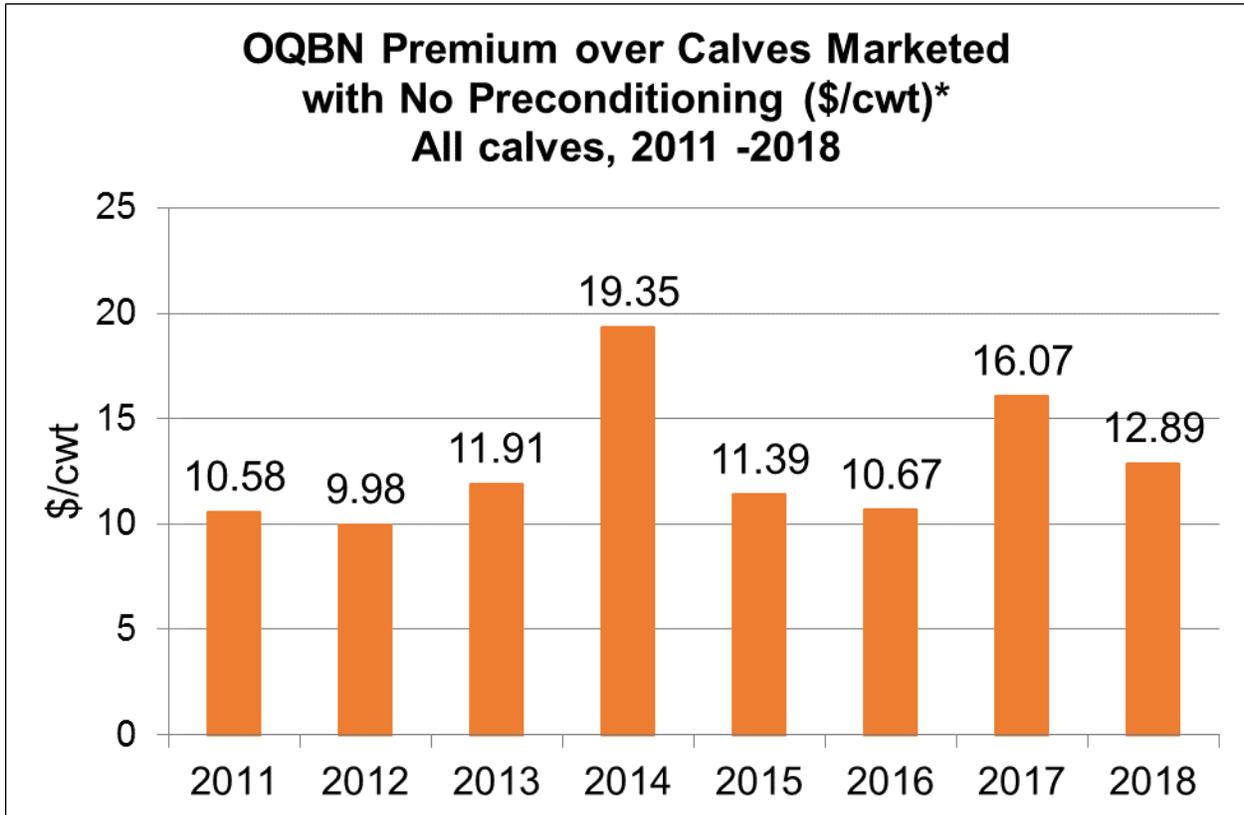
A minimum 45-day preconditioning period is required by OQBN, however some producers may feel that 60 or 75 days works better for their operation. Rations can be adjusted nutritionally to allow for increased days on feed in turn avoiding over-conditioning situations. Finally, make sure

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that the preconditioning program is set in a way that requires minimal labor and equipment input. Preconditioning is an investment in risk management, however, the intention is not to accrue costs that offset premiums at sale time.

Whether headed to the feed yard or staying on the operation for winter grazing, preconditioning management paired with a full course of preconditioning vaccines will provide the producer with risk management needed to boost returns on the 2019 fall calf crop. Contact your local OSU extension educator about the OQBN program or questions about creating a preconditioning program for calves this fall.



Answering Some Questions About Hemp

Trent T. Milacek, Northwest Area Ag Econ Specialist

Hemp production in the U.S. has gone through a series of changes throughout history. Legislation has both supported and stifled its potential as a viable cash crop over the years. Recently, the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018, commonly called the 2018 Farm Bill, modified the way hemp is regulated under the Controlled Substances Act.

The Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Bill) authorized pilot hemp production through collaborations of state departments of agriculture, universities, and approved contractors. Pilot programs were required to monitor THC levels to identify crops that exceed the allowed limit of 0.3%, and production was only legal when state legislation and a university partnership was in place. At the time of this writing, hemp may only be legally grown in Oklahoma as a part of an ODAFF licensed pilot under the OAIHPP. Oklahoma producers wishing to participate in a hemp trial should contact an institution of higher learning in the Oklahoma State System of Higher Education that has a plant science curriculum. ODAFF has provided resources on their website for those interested in participating in the OAIHPP. The pilot program will remain in effect through the 2019 hemp crop year.

Expanding beyond the research programs of the 2014 Farm Bill, the 2018 Farm Bill authorized USDA to establish regulatory plans to directly govern the production of hemp or to review and approve state and tribal plans for hemp production. It is important to remember that the 2018 Farm Bill did not create a “blanket” authorization for the production of hemp throughout the U.S. but rather gave states the option to authorize hemp production in a manner consistent with the federal legislation. USDA approved state hemp plans should include procedures for obtaining a license or other authorization to produce hemp, tracking land in hemp production, annual, randomized inspection of permitted hemp farms, testing THC levels, disposing of crops and products of crops that exceed allowable THC levels, and reporting to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture on these activities. USDA anticipates releasing details on the content of regulatory plans in the fall of 2019, as well as the dates when USDA will begin accepting submissions of state and tribal plans. Additionally, the 2018 Farm Bill addressed a common problem posed by the patchwork of state programs and regulations in place now, namely the interstate transportation of hemp and hemp products.

A key change in the 2018 Farm Bill involves defining the term *hemp*. This definition is important as it means the difference between a potentially legal agricultural crop (hemp) and an illegal controlled substance (marijuana). However, the definition poses practical challenges because the distinction between the two is based on chemical levels, and may not be apparent visually. Consequently, the 2018 Farm Bill excluded hemp from the list of controlled substances under the CSA.

The 2018 Farm Bill legally defines hemp as:

“the plant *Cannabis sativa* L. and any part of that plant, including the seeds thereof and all derivatives, extracts, cannabinoids, isomers, acids, salts, and salts of isomers, whether growing or not, with a delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol concentration of not more than 0.3 percent on a dry weight basis.”

House Bill 2628 (HB2628) was signed into law by Governor Stitt in April, 2019. HB 2628 authorizes ODAFF to submit a plan to USDA for commercial hemp production in Oklahoma, and removes the requirement for hemp seed to be purchased from the list of approved varieties and vendors that is currently included in the OAIHPP. Producers would still be required to obtain a license from ODAFF prior to growing hemp in the 2020 hemp crop year, as outlined in the 2018 Farm Bill.

While the 2018 Farm Bill and HB 2913 resolve a number of issues surrounding the production of hemp, a number of other issues remain. Although the 2018 Farm Bill reconciled the production of hemp with the CSA, numerous other federal statutes and regulations still contain language that create uncertainty with respect to a number of activities associated with hemp production, ranging from transportation to banking.

The information contained in this article has been adapted from a working paper authored by Dr. Shannon Ferrell, Dr. Amy Hagerman and Scott Clawson. A completed fact sheet will be released soon with more information.

If you have further questions, feel free to contact your local Oklahoma Cooperative Extension office to speak with an Agricultural Educator.

Wheat for Pasture

Josh Bushong, NW Area Agronomy Specialist

August is now here and sowing wheat for pasture is just around the corner. Producers wanting to take advantage of early-planted wheat for fall forage have many challenges to consider in order to produce enough forage to graze. Sowing wheat early significantly increases the possibility that disease and insect pests can limit fall forage production.

When growing wheat for forage, one of the easiest ways to get more tonnage is to plant early. Field research consistently shown that more forage is produced the earlier we plant. Some trials show that sowing wheat the first week of September yielded about twice as much fall forage as a mid-late September planting date. When sowing wheat this early we can sacrifice some grain potential and some issues can occur.

When planting this early the potential for pests can increase. These pests include many viruses, root rots, foliar diseases, hessian flies, wheat curl mites, wireworms, army cutworms, and weeds. Some aid can be made through the use of seed treatments that include an insecticide and/or a fungicide. These seed treatments can reduce root/foot rots, bunt, smut, leaf rust, powdery mildew, hessian fly as well as reduce aphids that can transmit barely yellow dwarf virus. When selecting a seed treatment be cautious of grazing restrictions, which can range from 0-45 days depending on product used.

Over the past few years, getting a stand off a going has been challenging due to armyworms and some mite-transmitted diseases (wheat streak mosaic, high plains disease, or Triticum mosaic). The best management practice would be to prevent a "Green Bridge" prior to sowing the wheat. A minimum of two weeks of nothing green (including corn, sorghums, volunteer wheat and other grassy weeds) is needed to allow the wheat curl mite to starve out prior to wheat seeding. The wheat curl mite still might vector these viruses when invading from neighboring fields, but the viruses will cause less of an impact due to a later infection.

When selecting a wheat variety be sure to note certain characteristics like acidic soil tolerance, high soil temperature germination sensitivity, coleoptile length, forage production potential, pest resistance, recovery after grazing, and first hollow stem date. Utilizing certified seed wheat can also ensure adequate seed quality. Good seed vigor with a known germination percentage will aid in developing early seedling vigor, which will typically lead to producing more fall forage.

The next easiest way to increase fall forage would be to increase your seeding rates. Several trials have shown that fall forage will increase with a seeding rate of 2 bushels (120 lb) per acre. Fall forage can be increased with even higher seeding rates, but the economics start to become a little less favorable due to seed costs. Increasing seeding rates as the planting season progresses can also assist in producing more forage, but increasing seeding rates hardly ever makes up for lost forage potential from seeding earlier.

In addition to seed costs, fertility will likely be another high input cost. Managing fertility economically can be challenging. Starting with a simple composite soil sample can go a long way in managing this input. Knowing your soil pH and levels of the other nutrients will dictate where you should focus your dollars. Acidic soils can limit forage production as much as anything else. The only solution to fix acidic soils is to apply lime, but variety selection and banding phosphorus fertilizer in-furrow can help offset the loss in forage production. Banding fertilizer with our grain drills is more efficient and economical because it is placed right with the seed.

To find out more about how to produce decent wheat pasture economically visit your local OSU Extension office.

Summer Protein Supplementation Boosts Gains in Stocker Cattle

Dana Zook, NW Area Livestock Specialist

Prolific rains during the spring and summer have produced a wealth of forages perfect for stocker calves. As summer heat builds and forage plants progress to a reproductive state, the nutritional value of many grasses will begin to decrease. Producers who wish to capitalize on late summer pasture may consider the Oklahoma Gold or Oklahoma Super Gold programs to boost gains that may otherwise begin to falter.

The Oklahoma Gold and Super Gold programs were developed for stocker cattle grazing low quality forage during late summer and fall. As hot, dry conditions develop, the nutrient quality of native range will decline. Pastures that may have boasted 10 – 15% protein in April and May are likely now 5 - 8% protein. Depending on weight, growing cattle (500-750 lbs.) require a minimum of 10% dietary protein. Diets deficient in protein lead to decreased forage intake and reduced digestibility which are both detrimental to performance. The Oklahoma Gold and Supergold supplementation programs are designed to make up for the amount of protein that is lacking from this forage.

What is the Oklahoma Gold program?

Oklahoma Gold is a supplementation program designed to provide stocker cattle 1 lb. per head of a 38% protein supplement on a daily basis. Some feed sources appropriate for this program include: soybean meal, dried distillers grains, corn gluten feed, and cottonseed meal. Complementing a low protein forage with a high protein supplement is the goal here and so high starch feeds such as rolled corn should be avoided.

What is the Oklahoma Super Gold program?

Oklahoma Supergold is a supplementation program designed to provide 2.5 lbs. of a 25% protein supplement to stocker cattle. Diets formulated for this program should contain high quality protein ingredients utilized in the Oklahoma Gold program in addition to some high energy and low starch ingredients such as soybean hulls or wheat middlings.

It is important to keep in mind that adequate forage is a requirement to reap the benefits from these programs. The Oklahoma Gold and Supergold programs are not designed to replace forage. In instances where forage is short, alternative diets should be considered.

Cattle Performance

Based on OSU research trials, healthy growing calves should gain approximately 0.4 lbs. per head daily on the Gold program and 0.7 lbs. per head daily on the Supergold program. The inclusion of an ionophore such as Bovatec or Rumensin fed at a rate of 100-200 mg/lb. in the supplement will further boost gains by 0.2 lbs. per head daily. The Oklahoma Gold and Super Gold programs also work very well for preconditioning replacement heifers. Heifers must reach an acceptable weight before reaching puberty and both programs fed in coordination with an ionophore will assist in achieving this.

Prior to utilizing these supplementation strategies, producers should put the “pencil-to-the-paper” to determine the value of these supplementation strategies. The return on additional weight gain must be analyzed for each particular weight class and may change according to market prices. Take time to shop around for supplements options to get the most economical price.

Contact your local county OSU Extension Educator for questions regarding supplementation strategies and their value in your beef herd this summer.

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND FORESTRY

2800 N. Lincoln Boulevard, Oklahoma City, OK 73105-4912

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Morgan Vance, Public Information Officer

Morgan.vance@ag.ok.gov

405.522.5479

Vesicular Stomatitis Virus Confirmed in Oklahoma Equine

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. — On July 29, 2019, the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry confirmed the finding of vesicular stomatitis virus, also known as VSV, at a premise in Tillman county. This horse showed erosions in its mouth.

VSV is a viral disease of horses, donkeys, mules, cattle and swine. Initial symptoms include excessive salivation and reluctance to eat or drink. Clinical signs include vesicles, erosions and sloughing of the skin on the muzzle, tongue, ears, teats and coronary bands of their hooves. Lameness or weight loss may follow. Body temperature may rise immediately before or at the same time lesions first appear.

In 2019, VSV has been reported in Texas, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming. This is the first outbreak since 2015-2016 and the first case in Oklahoma since the 1990s.

What Livestock Owners Need to Know:

VSV affects primarily horses and cattle.

VSV normally has an incubation period of 2-8 days before the infected animal develops blisters that swell and burst, leaving painful sores.

The virus can be transmitted through direct contact with infected animals or by blood-feeding insects.

If VSV is confirmed, infected animals are quarantined for 14 days after clinical signs of lesions are observed. This short-term quarantine helps prevent the movement of animals and the spread of the disease to other premises, fairs or markets.

Humans can also become infected with VSV, but it is a very rare event.

Recommended Actions:

There is currently no USDA-approved vaccination for VSV. Even with the best defensive measures, VSV could infect a herd.

However, these tips could help protect livestock:

Control biting flies

Keep equine stalled or under a roof at night to reduce exposure to flies

Keep stalls clean

Feed and water stock in individual buckets

Don't visit any premise that is under quarantine

Veterinarians and livestock owners who suspect VSV in their animals should immediately contact the OK State Veterinarians office at (405) 522-6141.



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