Moore County

Livestock News

November/ December 2013

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Surprising Factors can Affect Auction Prices for Beef Cattle

Source: Beef Producer

Marketing studies continue to show cow-calf producers can significantly improve the value of their calves at auction through the use of good management practices.

Britt Hicks, area Extension livestock specialist in the Oklahoma Panhandle, reviewed several recent market studies and says a variety of things such as ***calf body condition, castration, horns, fill, health, group selling, genetic selection, and modification of breeding objectives*** can have a significant effect on sale price at auction.

Sam Houston State University researchers collected data from nine Texas livestock auctions on 1,420 lots with 7,073 head. All selling prices are given in dollars per hundred weight of live weight.

These researchers reported that the selling prices for steers at $132.34, heifers at $118.46 and bulls at $107.63 were significantly different from each other. They said polled calves at $127.78 sold for a higher price than horned calves at $104.91.

Studies show "black" still has an impact but not as much as other factors!

British calves at $128.44 sold for the highest price, while calves that appeared to be predominantly American received the lowest price at $111.08.
Black calves at $122.51 sold for a higher price than red calves at $117.67, or yellow calves at $115.29. Calves advertised as preconditioned at $131.38 and healthy calves at $121.27 sold for the highest price. Calves that were sick sold for the lowest price $86.14. Selling price of calves increased incrementally as lot size increased. Calves sold in groups of 20 or more had the highest selling price at $129.07 and calves sold as singles had the lowest selling price at $109.03.

University of Arkansas researchers collected data from 14 Arkansas auction barns in 2010 on 38,346 lots with 79, 822 head. In one paper, the effect of management factors on selling prices was evaluated, and in a second paper, the impact of genetic factors on selling prices was evaluated. The results were very similar.

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Haylage, Is It For You?

By: Randy Wood, County Extension Director & Livestock Agent
with N.C. Cooperative Extension in Scotland County

The summer of 2013 is rapidly coming to a close. For those farmers who bale hay as part of their operations, this was the second disappointing year in a row. The old saying of "a dry year will hurt you but a wet year will break you" could not have been truer than this past summer. Dealing with wet weather and a hay crop that could not be harvested has left many farmers scratching their heads on how to handle rapidly declining hay crops. One question I was repeatedly asked this summer was the pros and cons of baling bermudagrass as haylage (green grass harvested in round bales and cured like silage).

Haylage is a term for baling high moisture hay (50%-60% moisture) and anaerobically curing it by either wrapping or bagging it so the hay goes through an ensiling process and preserves itself. This is done by storing the hay without the presence of Oxygen (this is the exact same process of how chopped silage is stored and preserved in a bunker or a silo). The advantages of ensiling green grass instead of drying it down to traditional moisture levels of field-cured hay (normally 15%-18%) in a year like we are having is time. The overly mature hay we are facing (often fallen down with weeds such as crabgrass or nutgrass that are difficult to dry) will often take 3-4 days to cure. In a year like this, 3-4 days of sunshine have been few and far between. Silage baling hay however, may only require 8-12 hours of curing time**. * Note- curing times can vary greatly depending on sunshine, wind & humidity*.** So instead of having to miss thunderstorms for 3-4 days you only need to miss them for one day. The other advantage of haylage is that the anaerobic curing process can significantly reduce the nitrates in the grass. Haylage, as long as the moisture content is still in the acceptable levels needed for ensiling to occur (no lower than 45% moisture, but preferably 55% or higher) will reduce the nitrates in the grass by as much as 50%.

Are there any disadvantages?

Plenty. The first is the investment in equipment. While some farmers will roll the dice and run high moisture grass through their regular balers (hoping they do not tear them up in the process), most farms will invest in a silage baler that is made to handle the additional stress and pressure needed to properly bale a silage hay. These balers are significantly more expensive than a regular hay baler. Once the bale is on the ground, you then have to ensile it. The easiest and quickest way to ensile haylage once it's in a bale is with a hay wrapper. These are not inexpensive pieces of equipment by any means. Other methods are individual hay bale bags or completely covering a stack by burying the edges of the cover. Prices vary on these methods but they all take time and labor. This brings us to perhaps the biggest drawback on haylage, which is labor. Due to the moisture content of the forage, haylage bales are heavy. Often times a smaller tractor cannot even pick them up. In addition, if you are going to transport them any distance, you have to reduce your load size to safely transport them on the highway. The other drawback is the time constraints that you face when handling haylage. Haylage is best when preserved at 50%-55% moisture. Just because you start raking and baling does not mean the hay stops drying. Moisture reduction will not stop until you get it wrapped or completely covered. A good rule of thumb is to take how much dry hay you can reasonably handle in a day and divide it by as much of a third when doing silage hay. Raking, baling, transporting the bales to the storage site and finally bagging them all have to be done quickly so the silage bales do not get too dry.

One final note on haylage.

The perception that haylage turns bad grass into good grass is simply not true. Protein, energy, minerals and other critical elements that all make up whether a bale of hay is considered "good" or not are all going to be the same in a bale of grass if it's harvested at 60% moisture or 15% moisture. The only real measurable difference is the nitrate% that was discussed above. Where people get this perception is the palatability of the bale and how much a cow wants to eat it when you bring it in the pasture. It is true that cattle love to eat silage hay. When you are discussing forage like cereal rye hay that is notorious for poor palatability then this is a big advantage. With bermuda hay however, most of the time cattle will eat it unless it is very old or is just one step away from being rotten. So simply because a cow is more excited about eating one bale over another does make it any "better" for her, and should not be the deciding factor in your forage management decisions.

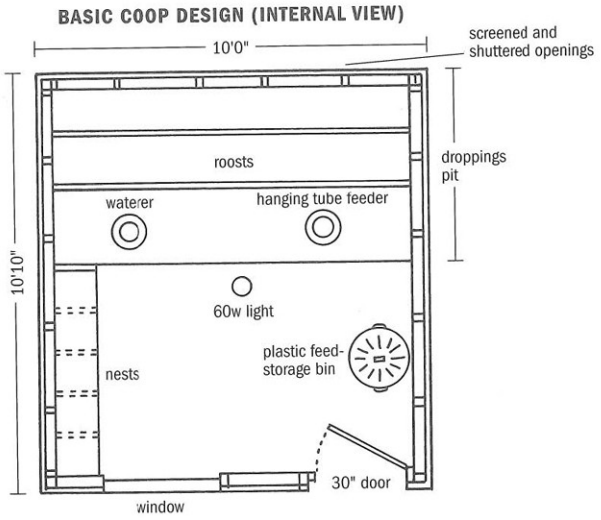
In a year like this, where drying weather is all but non-existent, haylage can offer some advantages for beef and hay farmers who are forced to harvest fields any way possible. Just realize that ensiling Bermuda grass adds more expense and work to a forage that will pretty much be the same value to you as a feed source whether it's dried or ensiled.

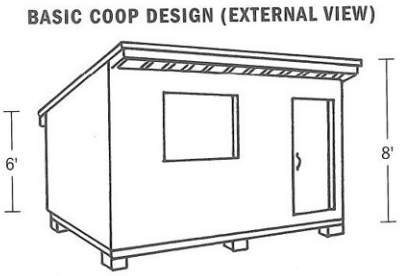
Backyard Poultry Basic Housing Design

Excerpt from University of Minnesota Extension, Backyard Chicken Basics
Betsy Wieland, Education Director

A quality coop is essential to backyard poultry production. Layers need nest boxes– one per 4-5 birds. Chickens are descended from jungle birds, which means they like to be up high, so a place for them to roost is important. Coops must provide protection from the weather and predators. There should be a well-insulated area with a light bulb or heat lamp for the winter months as well as ventilation for fresh air. Be sure to have a minimum 3-5 square feet per bird, including outdoor space.

Their main predators are raccoons, rats, owls, hawks, and cats. An enclosed space for them to stay at night is essential to their protection. Ensure that the coop is free of small holes for predators to sneak in. There is an endless variety of coop designs with just as much range in cost. Find a design that provides easy access and otherwise suits your situations. There are many books and websites with coop designs. The image at right shows a simple chicken coop schematic. The space should be free of unnecessary objects like woodpiles or equipment as they attract predators.





This basic coop plan features roosts over a droppings pit for good sanitation, a window for light, and screened and shuttered openings on the north side to control ventilation. To expand the interior floor space, build the nests on the outside of the coop.

Hay Directories are below for people selling hay or looking for hay to buy. It is free to list your hay for sale.

1. North Carolina Department of Agriculture's Hay Alert is at http://www.agr.state.nc.us/hayalert/. Producers can call the Hay Alert at 1-866-506-6222. You can sign up to list your hay on-line.
2. The Southeastern NC Hay Directory is available at http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/files/library/67/HayDirectory.pdf. Call your Extension Agent to learn how to include your farm on the list.

Forage Management Tips

From Production and Utilization of Pastures and Forages in North Carolina

NOVEMBER

- To improve feeding efficiency, test forages before winter feeding begins.
- As winter feeding begins, separate the herd into lactating and dry cows so the best-quality pastures and hay can be fed to the cows with nursing calves.
- Do not graze fall-planted perennial pastures until growth reaches 6 to 8 inches.
- Winter annual pastures that were planted early (September) may be responsive to an additional application of nitrogen (30 to 50 pound/acre).
- Weed control in fall plantings of alfalfa and other legumes should be completed between now and December or January depending on herbicide selection.

DECEMBER

- Limit the grazing of winter pastures by feeding hay on pasture or restricting acres available to animals.
- Feed hay stored outside before using hay stored inside..
- May a monthly forage demand for specific classes of livestock. Total annual needs can be estimated if you remember that each cow requires 25 to 30 pounds of hay equivalent per day.
- Weed control should be ompleted on seedling legumes, especially for certain herbicides.
- If you plan to seed switchgrass in April or May, buy your seed this month and store at room temperature or slightly higher to break seed dormancy.

Growth and Feeding of a Weanling Horse

Adapted from Feeding and Management of Weanling Horses for Healthy Skeletal Development, Virginia Cooperative Extension Service

When a foal is weaned it results in changes to the nutritional environment of the rapidly growing young horse. During this critical period, skeletal development in the young horse is still occurring. For the weanling to reach its full potential as an adult, you must manage its total nutritional environment.

How should I prepare my foal for weaning?

There are many options when choosing the best time to wean your foal, each farm is different. Most typically wean between 4 and 6 months of age, if you wean before this will require you to provide some form of liquid mile replacer or specially designed foal pellet as the foals digestive tract cannot yet utilize forages and grains.

Weaning can be a very stressful time for a foal. Preparing a foal for weaning will help reduce stress! Creep feeding is one tool you can use to prepare the foal for the transition from suckling to weaning. A foal accustomed to eating grain while with the mare is more likely to continue eating and experience reduced stress. As a rule of thumb, a foal about to be weaned should be consuming approximately ½ to 1 pound of feed per month of age each day. A foal for sale or show is likely to consume more feed than a foal that will not be working until it is more mature.

What to feed once the foal is weaned?

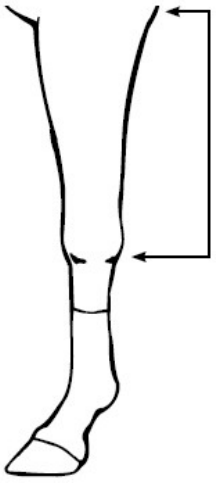
After weaning, the young horse no longer has access to milk and relies on forages and concentrates to supply the nutrients and energy required for growth. The horse owner has a great deal of control as to what is fed in the barn. A quality grass or grass/legume-mixed hay with a low acid detergent fiber (ADF, 30 percent to 35 percent) and a crude protein content of between 10 percent to 16 percent is suitable for the weanling. Straight alfalfa forage does not contain balanced energy, protein, or minerals (particularly calcium and phosphorus), so feed it with care. Introduce concentrate slowly and use it to correct any nutrient deficiencies, particularly energy and lysine (protein), that may be lacking in the forage. Ideally, more than 50 percent of the ration should be made up of forage, but in some cases you may feed more concentrate than forage.

What is the weanling's nutritional environment?

These components vary from environmental temperature, day length, physical stress, and nutrition. Individual farms can have "micro-environments" that you should factor into the development of your comprehensive farm nutrition program. Research has connected the rise and fall in growth with similar seasonal patterns seen in day length, environmental temperature, and pasture quality. This highlights the importance of monitoring these variables and taking action to increase or decrease supplemental feeding before changes in weight or condition occur. With these components kept in mind to maintain a smooth growth curve.

How do I monitor growth? Is the growth optimal?

Growth can be defined simply as an increase in size over time. It is important to monitor growth because most owners have, as a long-term objective, some sort of athletic purpose for their animal. Skeletal and muscular development are important components of athletic potential. Generally, horse owners monitor growth by measuring changes in body weight, wither height, or body condition. Body weight, which incorporates the growth of all tissues in the body (fat, muscle, and bone), can be tracked by using a weight tape, while wither height gives a closer indication of skeletal development. Skeletal development is the most important aspect of development during this time; therefore, other more precise measures may be useful. Research at the Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center indicates that forearm length and front cannon circumference are pertinent measures of skeletal development (Figure 1). Forearm measurement is useful because it represents a bone that grows a considerable amount (approximately 15 cm in Thoroughbreds) and gives a good indication of skeletal development. Cannon circumference is a measurement that has been used by horsemen for many years to evaluate "bone" maturity or development. Growth should be consistent across all these measurements. Sudden large increases or any decreases should be an indicator of potential problems.



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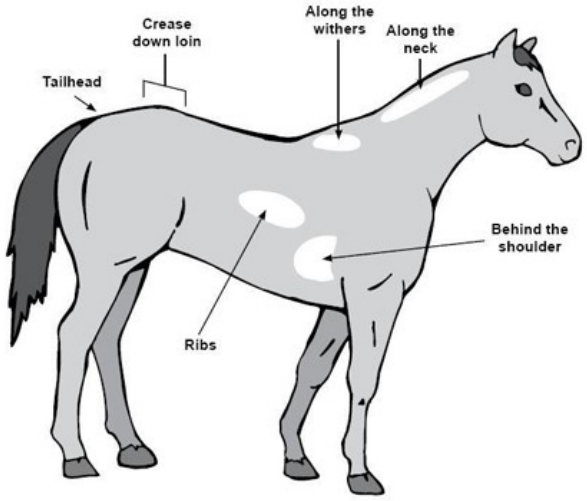
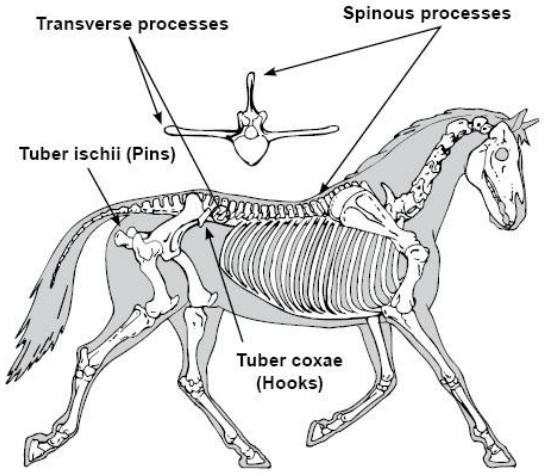
Growth and Feeding of a Weanling Horse continued...

What is my weanling's body condition?

Body condition scoring (Figure 2) can be an important tool to indicate whether the nutritional needs of the growing weanling are being met. Body condition is a subjective evaluation of subcutaneous fat deposition, and uses a 9-point standardized scale with a 1 being poor condition and a 9 being extremely fat. There are numerous factors that influence the condition of a weanling, but generally an animal of this age should have a condition score of between a 4 and 6. A condition score of 4 is described as having a negative crease along the back with a faint outline of ribs discernable. The tailhead prominence depends on conformation, but fat can be felt around it. The hip bones are not discernable, and the withers, neck, and shoulders are not obviously thin. A 6 is described as having a slight crease down the back. Fat over the ribs feels spongy and around tailhead feels soft. Fat is beginning to be deposited along the sides of the withers, behind the shoulders and along the sides of the neck. Evaluate and record body condition every two weeks so that you can detect any change in condition early.





There are many ways to manage and positively affect skeletal development in a weanling horse. Managing exercise and nutrition correctly will improve the long-term usefulness of your young horse.

Preparing Meat Goats for Breeding Season

Jean-Marie Luginbuhl, Extension Meat Goat Specialist

Breeding is a very important aspect of any meat goat operation. But, preparing the breeding does and buck(s) for the breeding season could have a large influence on the outcome and the profitability of the operation.

Here are some key steps to consider when preparing the animals for the breeding season:

- Accessing the Body Condition of the animals
- Trimming Feet– pay close attention to the buck as he will cover the most ground.
- Grouping of the Animals– let them establish the "pecking" order in advance of the arrival of the buck.
- Deworming– if animals need to be wormed it is best done before the breeding season, wormy animals do not breed back well.

- The "buck effect"- estrus can be induced with the strategic exposure of does to intact males.
- Vaccination– can be dependant on your operation but it is recommended that goats be vaccinated against overeating disease and tetanus.

Bucks may be easily overlooked but one cannot assume that they are reproductively sound; a buck that was sound one year may not be the next.

How long should the breeding season last?

During the breeding season, does and bucks should be joined for 40 to 45 days, which is the length of time necessary for breeding does per buck is recommended for best breeding results.

4-H Livestock Show a SUCCESS!!

Held September 14, 2013 at Travis Farm in West End, NC.

On Saturday September 14, 2013, 51 4-Her's from seven counties came to Travis Farm in West End for the annual Heifer and Goat Show. The Growing Farmers 4-H Club in conjunction with the Moore County Cooperative Extension Service holds this show each year that is a part of the Sandhills Showmanship Circuit. The Showmanship Circuit allows the youth to compete for points towards year end buckles and awards as well as offering awards for most improved showman in each division. This show offers classes for pure bred cattle and commercial cattle as well as for doe goats and wether goats. The show allows the 4-Her's to present their "projects" to the judge and get scored based on their knowledge about their project , about the specific types of animal as well as their showman presence in the ring. Five of the youth that competed were from Moore County; Austin Cameron and Madison Adams competed in the heifer division, Rebecca Carson, Emily Carson and Kodi Johnson competed in the goat division. A big **"Thank You"** to all the volunteers and parents for the help to make the show such a success!

☆ Upcoming Dates! ☆

- **November 8th**- Sandhills Showmanship Circuit Banquet at 7:00 pm- *Raeford Presbyterian Church*
- **November 18th**- Moore County Cooperative Extension Farm City Banquet at 6:30pm– *Moore County Ag Center*
- **December 5th**– NC Southern Piedmont Area Beef Conference– *Stanly County Livestock Market*
- **January 17, 2014**– Animal Waste Management System Operators Continuing Education Training– *Montgomery County Coop. Extension*
- **February 2014**- Beginning of the Sandhills Farm School– *Please contact the Extension office for further information.*
- **February 27, 2014**– Piedmont Regional Beef Conference– *Guilford County Coop. Extension*

Moore County Cattleman Association Meetings:

All meetings begin at 7pm and are held at the Moore County Ag Center.

- **November 7th** - Weeds in Pastures Presenter: Sarah Milteer with Dow Agro
- **December 5th** - Annual Meeting with Dinner. You must **RSVP** by *November 20, 2013* to (910) 947-3188.
  ~ Scheduled to announce new Directors for the Board!
- **January 2, 2014**- Program Topic TBD
- **February 6, 2014**- Program Topic TBD
- **March 6, 2014**- Program Topic TBD
- **April 3, 2014**– Program Topic TBD