

# BEEF MANAGEMENT TIPS

VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION - CLARKE COUNTY

## Beef Cattle Webinar

The first winter Beef Cattle Webinar (a live and interactive meeting held via the internet) is scheduled for 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, December 7, 2010. Bill McKinnon, Executive Secretary of the Virginia Cattleman's Association will be the featured



speaker. Bill will discuss "Issues and Forces Impacting the Virginia Beef Industry,"

with focus on cattle markets and factors driving economics in the cow-calf sector. Participants in the on-line meeting will have the opportunity to ask questions through an on-line chat box or over the

telephone using a number provided during the program. The Page County Extension office will host an on-line connection to the meeting. From 6 to 6:30 p.m. (before the online meeting), we will have a discussion to identify issues related to Beef production in the Page Valley, and to cover the details of this year's Mid Atlantic Carcass Contest for those interested in participating.

For those with access to a high-speed internet at home or elsewhere, Webinar information and meeting links will be available on the VT Beef Extension webpage <http://www.vtbeef.apsc.vt.edu/>. From the VT Beef Extension site,

you can click on the meeting link and go directly to the meeting.

In addition to the December 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, future Webinars will be scheduled for January, February and March. We are in search of suggested topics and speakers for these sessions. If you have questions or suggestions related to the Webinar or the pre meeting discussion on local issues, please contact Jake Grove at the Clarke County Office.

Jake Grove  
Extension Agent, Animal Science  
[jagrove@vt.edu](mailto:jagrove@vt.edu)  
101 Chalmers Court  
Berryville Va, 22611  
(540) 955-5164

## Silver Linings...

**Jake Grove, Extension Agent, Clarke County**

It is the accepted wisdom that any time a group of folks get together and converse, they are more likely to commiserate than to congratulate. Farmers are no different, today we'll talk about rising energy cost, escalating corn prices and the lack of hay and pasture this summer's whopper of a drought have left us with. All these things are true and sometimes painful, but there is little we can do to change them. As I've traveled around this fall, I have seen some things that we should be thankful for. Nearly everyone I see has culled off their unproductive cows, and many of them did it when the prices were good. Anyone who hasn't culled off the poor performers yet has certainly identified them and is setting the date for their departure. Anyone that was able to grow a crop this summer has had good weather and good prices at harvest. The other thing I am seeing a lot of is people doing the work now to secure their winter feed needs. I drive past truckloads of hay each morning coming from all points beyond and much of it appears

to be headed to cattle farms. Last year's winter has certainly scared some week to week operators strait.

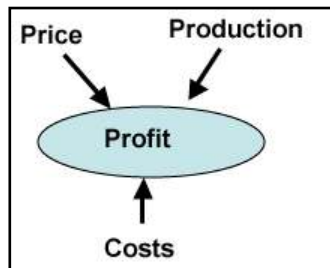
The reality is that the cattle business or any other agricultural enterprise is no longer for those just want to get paid for the work that they do, it is really for the benefit of those who choose to manage their operations to make the hard work pay off. The week to week and month to month vision of management overlooks the opportunities of things like pregnancy checking cows, sampling forages, and planning for the years to come. Good and poor managers will both have issues, mistakes, and difficult problems to solve but on the whole good managers that take on reasonable risk will prevail through difficult times. That is the main reason we have such a strong farming sector here in the Valley, our success rest on your ability to be a strong manager, not on abundantly fertile soil or subsidized farming practices. Keeping this in mind, I am thankful for the state we are in, and I am hopeful for the future that lies ahead of us.

## Remember What Drives Profitability in the Cow-Calf Business

**Dr. Mark A. McCann, Extension Animal Scientist, VA Tech**

The recent corn price escalation has many cow-calf producers lamenting the cost of corn and its impact on the cost of by-products. Additionally, the cost of grain has an impact on fat cattle prices which has downstream implications on the calf prices we realize in Virginia. It is great to understand the connections among commodities and their impact on prices we receive. However, cow-calf producers do not need to lose sight of the management practices under their control which directly impact the profitability of their enterprise.

The figure shows that prices received for cattle, production levels (weaning weight and pregnancy rate) and operating costs work together to determine profitability. Over 60% of the cash costs related to cow-calf budgets are related to feeding the cow herd with pasture grazing or stored feeds. Feed supplement



and mineral costs also add to the yearly feed/ nutrition portion of the budget. Analysis of low-cost producers has repeatedly revealed that maximizing grazing days and minimizing use of stored forage is an important step to lowering costs and improving profitability. Stockpiling tall fescue coupled with strip grazing is our best way of reducing stored forage needs. Accumulating forage has been particularly difficult in view of this year's drought. Recent rains coupled with mild temperatures have helped

with some fall forage growth. Strip grazing of stockpiled forage will maximize utilization and minimize waste.

Another component of nutritional expenses is purchased feed to supplement pasture or hay. In most cases, green growing forage does not require supplementation. Supplementation of

hay or silage is typically reserved for lactating cows or developing heifers. Basing a supplement plan on forage quality via a forage analysis allows more precision and perhaps the knowledge that forage alone could meet a cow's nutrient requirement. While trying to economize on purchasing feed, it is important not to underfeed due to nutrition's impact on reproduction.

Attention should be given to practices in each category that impacts profitability. Price can be affected by marketing plans and methods, production levels are impacted by management, and costs are impacted by purchasing decisions. Having production and financial records allow further examination of your operation's strengths and weaknesses. Several studies indicate that an important variable separating high and low profit operations is management of input costs. Your local Extension Office has several of the tools available to assist in recording financial and production records as well as budget analysis.

## November Beef Management Calendar

**Dr. Scott P. Greiner, Extension Animal Scientist, VA Tech**

### Spring Calving Herds

- Secure winter feed supply!
- Body condition score cows, separate thin cows and provide nutritional management to improve BCS prior to calving
- Market calves to your best advantage
- Background calves for sale in December, if possible
- Feed replacement heifers to gain 1.5 - 1.75 lbs. per day
- Cull open, old and very thin cows; check feet and legs, udders and eyes
- Consider alternative marketing strategies for cull cows to take advantage of seasonality in cull cow price
- Test hay for nutrient quality
- Get list of bull sales coming up early winter and spring

### Fall Calving Herds

- Secure winter feed supply!
- Finish calving
- Check cows 2 to 4 times per day, heifers more often - assist early if needed
- Keep calving area clean and move healthy pairs out to large pastures 3 days after calving
- Ear tag and dehorn all calves at birth; castrate male calves in commercial herds
- Keep good calving records so that calves may be marketed as age/ source verified
- Give selenium and vitamin A & D injections to newborn calves
- Feed cows extra energy after calving; stockpiled fescue will take care of needs. Cows calving at BCS < 5 should receive special nutritional attention.
- Test hay for nutrient quality
- Look for opportunities to secure low-cost feed supplies of bulk feeds or commodity feeds
- Keep high quality, high magnesium, high selenium minerals available
- Begin breeding replacement heifers late this month; try AI on heifers
- Get breeding soundness exams done on all bulls
- Purchase new herd sires at upcoming bull sales

## Dates to Remember

Dr. Scott P. Greiner, Extension Animal Scientist, VA Tech

### Beef:

#### December 11

##### **Culpeper Sr. VA BCIA Bull Sale.**

**Contact:** Scott Greiner, (540) 231-9163, email: [sgreiner@vt.edu](mailto:sgreiner@vt.edu)



#### February 10-11

##### **VA Beef Industry Convention.** Hotel Roanoke.

**Contact:** Bill McKinnon, (540) 992-1009, email: [bmckinnon@vacattlemen.org](mailto:bmckinnon@vacattlemen.org)

#### March 20

##### **VA BCIA SW Bull Test Open House.** Dublin.

**Contact:** Scott Greiner, (540) 231-9163, email: [sgreiner@vt.edu](mailto:sgreiner@vt.edu)

#### March 26

##### **VA BCIA SW Bull Test & Bred Heifer Sale.** Wytheville.

**Contact:** Scott Greiner, (540) 231-9163, email: [sgreiner@vt.edu](mailto:sgreiner@vt.edu)

### Sheep:

#### December 4

**VA Sheep Producer's Association Fall Bred Ewe Sale.** Rockingham County Fairgrounds. Harrisonburg. 1:00 p.m.

**Contact:** Corey Childs, (540) 955-4633



#### January 15

**Symposium.** Augusta County Government Center. Verona.

**Contact:** Scott Greiner, (540) 231-9163, email: [sgreiner@vt.edu](mailto:sgreiner@vt.edu)

### Other:

#### December 9

**Alfalfa Haylage and Baleage Conference.** Weyers Cave, VA

**Location:** Weyers Cave Community Center - 8:15 am - 2:50 pm  
Pre-registration if received by December 1<sup>st</sup> is \$20, or registration at door day of conference is \$25.

**Contact:** Chase Scott by phone at (276) 223-6040 or by e-mail [miscott1@vt.edu](mailto:miscott1@vt.edu).

#### January 20

**VFGC Winter Forage Conferences.** Weyers Cave, VA

**Location:** Weyers Cave Community Center.

**General Session:** 8:30 AM - 4:00 PM.

**Contact:** Gordon Groover (540) 231-5850 or by email at [vttax@vt.edu](mailto:vttax@vt.edu) or visit <http://vaforages.org/> for details.

Jake Grove  
Associate Extension Agent  
Agriculture and Natural Resources,  
Animal Science

101 Chalmers Court, Suite B  
Berryville, VA 22611  
Phone: 540/955-5164  
Fax: 540/955-5166  
Email: [jagrove@vt.edu](mailto:jagrove@vt.edu)

*The information herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service is implied.*

*If you are a person with a disability and require any auxiliary aids, services, or other accommodations to participate, please discuss your needs with Jake Grove, Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Animal Science, at the Virginia Cooperative Extension—Clarke County Office (540/955-5164) during the business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 pm.*

## Virginia Cooperative Extension



[www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu)

Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Alan L. Grant, Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and Interim Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; Wondé Mersic, Interim Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State, Petersburg.