Alabama Cooperative Extension System

LivestockLinks

A Statewide Newsletter for Alabamians

Summer 2008

Changing for Progress

Danny S. Miller, DeKalb County Extension Coordinator

In agriculture, the only thing consistent is change. One must constantly be able to recognize opportunities. The ability to steer a farming operation properly through the channels of adversity is a gift. One person serves as an example of progress in the industry. Waymon Buttram has a contagious enthusiasm about making changes for the future. Whether its increasing production, lowering inputs, making changes in operations or preparing for the next generation of farmers to take over, Buttram will be there leading the way with an infectious smile and a stern argument.

Buttram married Gail, his wife of 55 years, when he was in the 10th grade at Sylvania High School. He hints that his mind may have been on Gail instead of his studies and admits to having a poor education at best.

"The only class I was good at was vocational agriculture," he says. "The only thing I knew for sure when I graduated was that I was going to farm."

Buttram says that Gail was responsible for a large part of the success of the farm. "Gail worked off the farm for 12 years and provided a way for us to get established in farming. We would not have made it otherwise."

Taking advice from a farmer that he had hired out to, Buttram diversified his farming operation to include cattle, hogs, chickens and row crops. Much of the row crops was fed to livestock.

Wayman Buttram

Many changes have occurred over the years on the Buttram farm. The Buttrams' raised three sons and now own more than 1,000 acres near Geraldine. Their Sand Mountain farm now consists of a farrowing operation with 1,350 sows producing 700 weaned pigs weekly, 14 broiler poultry houses and 480 commercial cows bred to Angus and Sim-Angus bulls. In addition to owned land, Buttram leases 100 acres from neighbors to support grazing and hay needs.

Buttram oversees the cattle operation. His oldest son, Jonathan, is in charge of the poultry operation, and his second son, Greg, runs the swine operation.

Buttram started phasing out the row crop operation in 1990 when their independent hog operation was contracted to Gold Kist. Buttram was not fond of the decision at first, but Greg persuaded him to sign on.

Buttram says, "This was the best thing we have ever done in the hog business. Shortly after we signed on, the bottom fell out." He officially quit row cropping in 1997.

Buttram has been steadily building his cattle herd over the years by selecting the most desirable heifers as replacements and additions to the herd. He believes in keeping his crossbred herd paired with high quality purebred bulls. Realizing the need to breed for good maternal characteristics as well as carcass merit has resulted in a set of highly productive cows. Buttram admits his cattle are too big and has started selecting heifers sired by smaller, more maternal bulls as

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replacements in his herd. They work the cows twice a year, pregnancy testing to cull out nonproductive cows.

Buttram now backgrounds all his calves and retains ownership to slaughter. “Because of the increased cost of feed, backgrounding to 900 plus per pound has become advantageous,” he says. “The industry is changing. If you are not willing to change you will be out. We used to sell pounds of calves. There is a lot more to it now, we have to produce what they want to pay the most for.”

To keep cattle grazing longer, Buttram incorporates winter annuals and uses various techniques of rotational grazing on more than 700 acres of pasture. He supplements grazing with corn gluten and broiler litter fed free-choice to calves and rationed to his cows. Buttram produces and harvests all his hay by baling around 2,200 5-by-6 rolls of hay off 400 acres of hay ground.

When asked about future plans or changes to be made in his herd, Buttram says, “We are going to scale back our cattle in size and number; we will be adding legumes to our pasture; we are going to tighten our calving season to 60 days in spring and 60 days in fall; and we plan to make better use of our fertilizer.” In spite of rising energy and feed costs, Buttram remains cautiously optimistic about the future.

On top of his farming operation, Buttram takes time to invest in his community. He is serving as DeKalb Farmers Federation president for the 35th year, president of the local Alabama Farmer’s Cooperative board, chair of the advisory board of the Sand Mountain Research and Extension Center and member of the DeKalb County Cattlemen. He has also served 20 years on the Natural Resources Conservation Service board and 8 years over voter registration. Buttram believes in supporting his county’s youth program by making many contributions of time and money to local 4-H and FFA clubs. Waymon Buttram is a true asset to DeKalb County and Alabama agriculture.

Understanding Protection Claims on Vaccine Labels

Soren Rodning, Extension Veterinarian

A successful herd health program involves proper herd immunization (vaccination) to prevent and/or control a variety of infectious diseases. However, selecting the proper vaccines for your herd can be a difficult task considering the large number of vaccines that are available. These are some things to consider when developing a vaccination program for your herd: 1) determining the goals of your vaccination program (e.g., what diseases do you want to prevent and/or control, and in what type/age animal?); 2) discussing these goals with your veterinarian and/or Extension agent; and 3) understanding a vaccine’s expected level of protection.

Every vaccine bottle or product insert has information related to its expected level of protection. The U.S. Department of Agriculture can grant one of five possible levels of protection based on a thorough analysis of supporting efficacy and safety data. The following are the five levels of protection in order from greatest protection to least protection:

1. Prevention of infection
2. Prevention of disease
3. Aid in disease prevention
4. Aid in disease control
5. Other claims

The Center for Veterinary Biologics, which is part of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the USDA, is the agency that evaluates vaccines and recommends the appropriate label protection claims. Vaccine manufacturers may voluntarily choose a lesser label protection claim, but they cannot increase their label claims without the supporting data. Understanding label claims is therefore one way to evaluate the expected efficacy of a vaccine, but remember that these claims only apply when products are administered according to label directions. So what do these levels of protection mean?

Prevention of Infection

Prevents all colonization or replication of the challenge organism.

A claim that it is intended to prevent infection may be made only for products able to prevent all colonization or replication of the challenge organism in vaccinated and challenged animals. If such a conclusion is supported with a very high degree of confidence by convincing data, a label statement such as "for the prevention of infection with [specific microorganism]" may be used. This claim is rarely granted.

Prevention of Disease

Highly effective in preventing clinical disease.

A claim that it is intended to prevent disease may be made only for products shown to be highly effective in preventing clinical disease in vaccinated and challenged animals. If so, a label statement such as "for the prevention of disease due to [specific microorganism]" may be used.

Aid in Disease Prevention

Aids in preventing disease by a clinically significant amount.

A claim that it is intended to aid in disease prevention may be made for products shown to prevent disease in vaccinated and challenged animals by a clinically significant amount which may be less than that required to support a claim of disease prevention (see above). If so, a label statement such as "as an aid in the prevention of disease due to [specific microorganism]" may be used.

Aid in Disease Control

Aids in the reduction of disease severity, duration or onset.

A claim that it is intended to aid in disease control may be made for products which have been shown to alleviate disease severity, reduce disease duration, or delay disease onset. If so, a label statement such as "as an aid in the control of disease due to [specific microorganism]" or a similar one stating the product's particular action may be used.

Other Claims

Products with beneficial effects other than direct disease control.

Products with beneficial effects other than direct disease control, such as the control of infectiousness through the reduction of pathogen shedding, may make such claims if the size of the effect is clinically significant and well supported by appropriate data.

These Protection Statements are outlined by the USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services Memorandum No. 800.202, June 14, 2002.

The next time you evaluate your herd's vaccination program remember to read vaccine labels for proper storage, dosage, route of administration, as well as the expected level of protection.

A Defined Calving Season Increases Uniformity and Profits

Darrell Rankins Jr., Extension Animal Scientist

Waymon Buttram indicated that one of his future goals is to tighten his calving season to 60 days. This is certainly a management issue that many herds across the state should try to improve on. One of the most important reasons for having a defined calving season is improved nutrition for the entire herd. Winter feeding is the single largest cost item in maintaining brood cows and it is impossible to provide adequate nutrition to a group of cows that are in all stages of production. In situations like this, a large percentage of the cows are underfed, a significant percentage are overfed and only a handful are fed the appropriate amount. It is much more efficient to feed cows that have similar nutritional requirements (i.e., have a defined calving season). Another crucial benefit of having a defined calving season is that it allows for better observation and care given to cows at calving time. This in turn increases the number of live calves born which is another major economic factor in a cow/calf operation. Whenever the calving season is spread out over the entire year very little time is devoted to checking on newborn calves. In addition, herd health and management is easier to accomplish. Vaccination, deworming, pregnancy checking and castration are much more likely to be done with a controlled calving season versus a year-round calving season. Likewise, culling and selection of replacements based on production records becomes achievable. One of the main criteria in evaluating brood cows is the performance of their calves. This evaluation can only be accurate if the cows are compared across a relatively short calving season. The final benefit is the ability to market a uniform group of calves that are similar in age and size. Uniform groups of calves will usually result in a higher price than calves sold individually.

A calving season of 90 days or less should be the goal for most cow herds. Once a herd is put onto a calving season, most producers strive to shorten that interval because they quickly see the advantages of having the majority of the calves born in the early part of the calving season. Some will argue that a 45-day calving season is optimal, but, for most Alabama cattle producers, a 60- to 75-day season is probably optimal.

Deciding when to calve can only be determined after considering all of the resources and goals of each particular cattle operation. Fall calving allows the weaned calves to be marketed during seasonally high prices (i.e., August), but requires a large amount of winter feed for the lactating cow. On the other hand, a spring calving season reduces winter feed costs but results in marketing of the weaned calves in a seasonally low price market (i.e., October). Additionally, if the ability to background or stocker the calves exists then this can also influence the decision-making process. The best recommendation is to not calve during the summer months.

For most producers on a year-round calving season the most feasible way to convert to a 90-day calving season is to do it over a 3-year period. During the first year, leave the bull with the cows for 6 months, reduce it to 4 ½ months the second year and then to 90 days the third year. The most important point of accomplishing this is to have a well-fenced bull pasture. One strand of barbed wire and some privet hedge will not keep a bull away from cows that are in heat! For a small producer, it may be feasible to lease a bull from someone; this would certainly be a viable option for many producers.

A defined calving season makes management of a beef herd much easier. It results in providing better overall nutrition to the herd. It increases the likelihood of detecting calving problems in a timely manner. It also results in a more uniform calf crop, which will bring an increased price at the marketplace. The key to having a controlled calving season is to have control of the bulls. This requires a well-fenced bull pasture or pen.

Fast Facts

Feed Consumption by Cattle

- Growing animals consume 2 to 3 percent of body weight in dry feed.

Finishing animals consume 2 to 2.5 percent of body weight in dry feed.

- Herd bulls in excellent condition will consume 1.5 to 2 percent of body weight; young bulls and thin bulls may consume double this amount.
- Brood cows will consume 2 to 2.5 percent of body weight in dry feed.
- One pound of hay is the same as 2 to 3 pounds of silage when figuring daily consumption. They are not necessarily of equal nutritional value.
- When silage is the major forage, cattle will consume 5 to 6 pounds per 100 pounds body weight.
- Grazing animals will consume 80 to 100 pounds of green forage per 1,000 pounds body weight when forage is lush. Consumption declines rapidly as quality of forage declines.
- A brood cow will get a "body fill" on temporary winter pasture (rye, ryegrass, etc.) in 2 hours. This amounts to 7 to 8 pounds dry matter and will usually meet a lactating cow's supplemental protein and energy needs.
- Cattle will drink 2 pounds water for every 1 pound of feed they eat (1 gallon = 8.3 pounds).

Calendar of Events

July	7–11	State 4-H Horse Show, Montgomery
	17–18	State 4-H Animal Science Events, Auburn University
August	15	Triennial Stocker Conference, Auburn University
	15	Chilton County BCIA Open and Bred Heifer Sale, 7 p.m., Clanton. Contact Jack Tatum at (205) 316-8382.
	23	Ag O Rama Heifer Sale, 11 a.m., Upper Coastal Plain Research Center, Winfield
	29	Herdbuilder Replacement Female Sale, Uniontown
September	12	One-Day Grazing Clinic, Wedowee

Triennial Stocker Conference

August 15, 2008	Auburn, Ala. 7:30–8:15 Registration
8:15–8:30	Welcome
8:30–9:30	Perspectives from a Kansas Stocker Operator — D.J. Edwards
9:30–10:00	Vaccine Decision Making — Dr. Soren Rodning, Extension Veterinarian, Auburn University
10:00–10:15	BREAK
10:15–11:15	Receiving Programs — Dr. Ken Blue, Veterinarian, Lawrenceburg, Tenn.
11:15–12:15	Producer Panel Clint Hardin, Keith Glover, Calvin Freeland
12:15–1:00	LUNCH
1:00–2:00	Nutrition Programs for Southeastern Stocker Cattle — Dr. Matt Poore, Extension Animal Scientist, North Carolina State University
2:00–3:00	Getting the Most for Your N Dollar — Dr. Charles Mitchell, Extension Soil Scientist, Auburn University
3:00–3:15	BREAK
3:15–4:00	Forage Options for Deep South Stocker Cattle — Dr. John Andrae, Extension Forage Agronomist, Clemson University
4:00–5:00	Discussion Session – Ask any question

Triennial Stocker Conference Registration Form

Name:_____

Tel: (_____)_____

Address: _____

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Mail to: Kathleen Swenson, Department of Animal Sciences, 212 Upchurch Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849. Please enclose check for $50 payable to: Dept of Animal Sciences

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