



Ag News

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Have You Ever Considered A Replacement Heifer Enterprise?

Source: *CattleNetwork.com*

"Those are some great heifers," the Dickinson Research Extension Center's ranch manager exclaimed while sorting the bred, home-raised heifers that were headed for the local sale barn. The feeling that these heifers were too good to sell is a good feeling because it reflects positively on a successful bred heifer program. The heifers were all pregnant, well-grown and ready to start their careers as mother cows. The center sold 2-year-old replacement bred heifers and 3-year-old bred cows.

The bred heifers marketed in late October weighed 982 pounds and averaged \$721 per head. The bred heifers marketed in mid-November weighed 1,105 pounds and averaged \$925 per head. The bred heifers marketed in late December weighed 1,182 pounds and averaged \$1,033 per head. Three-year-old cows weighing 1,237 pounds were sold in November and averaged \$1,076.

Selling bred heifers and cows is a complex enterprise in the overall beef operation. For most producers, calves are marketed in the fall. Heifers needed for replacements are set aside and, essentially, that is the replacement heifer enterprise. Beef producers need to look at other opportunities. Expanding the heifer enterprise is one of those options. Most beef producers focus on producing feeder calves that end up in the feed yard for finishing.

Adding value and creating more demand for beef is critical. Equally as important is perpetuating the cow-calf business, which opens up the opportunity to create a different demand for the heifer calves born each year. Traditionally, the demand for steers overshadows the value of heifer calves. Why not give more thought to holding the heifers back, sell those that don't breed as open yearling heifers and sort the pregnant heifers into good, uniform packages for sale to other cow calf pro-

ducers?

As with any endeavor, there is always a top and a bottom. Heifer development is no different. Mistakes are costly and relatively unforgiving. For instance, the first set of October heifers was purchased heifers, pasture bred and resold. There really was nothing wrong with the heifers. The DREC purchased the heifers in early April at \$655 per head. Reselling the heifers as bred heifers in late October for \$721 only left \$66 for any kind of return. The heifers were put on grass from May 1 until mid-October and sold off grass. Only the bulls returned to the ranch. A simple calculation shows the heifers only returned \$12 a month. There is no need to get too complicated with the analysis. The bottom line was cheap grass. Two mistakes were made with that set of heifers. The heifers never got much of an opportunity to settle down and, hindsight revealed, a few of the heifers were pregnant when purchased.

The point for a producer is that heifer development needs to be done right with no shortcuts. For example, the center's heifers were managed with appropriate synchronization protocols and artificially bred. The center's heifers were accustomed to people and were the product of identifiable parentage and traceable genetics. In the end, there was improved producer demand. A couple of months in the lots after grazing allowed for the appropriate grouping of the animals and moved the sale date into established and traditional replacement sale activities at the local auction barn. The November heifers that were sold averaged \$925 per head, while the December heifers averaged \$1,033 per head. If we appraised these heifers similar to the purchased heifers (\$655 per head), the center added \$270 in value to the first set of heifers sold and \$378 to the second set of heifers. When done right and a producer is working with the right genetics, producers can add value to heifers.

National Veterinary Accreditation Program under revision

By: Edie Lau For The VIN News Service

Accreditation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to issue health certificates for animals is about to require more effort by the nation's participating veterinarians. Practitioners already accredited by the National Veterinary Accreditation Program (NVAP) must reapply for accreditation by Aug. 2 and plan to complete three to six hours of training within the next three years to maintain accreditation. There is no cost to apply; the training also is free. The program revisions affect a large number of veterinarians. The USDA estimates that some 71,000 people are accredited by the NVAP, amounting to more than eight out of 10 practitioners in the country.

Although the new rules do not take effect formally until Feb. 1, participants may renew their accreditation now. Revised application forms were posted online Thursday by the USDA. The forms and information about the changes are posted on the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) [Web site](#).

The program is voluntary; veterinarians do not need federal accreditation to practice. However, only accredited practitioners may issue health certificates for animals slated to travel out of state or to other countries. Accredited practitioners essentially act as agents of the U.S. government when writing health certificates, said Madeline Fletcher, a spokeswoman for the USDA APHIS, which oversees the NVAP. "What that (certificate) says ... is that the U.S. certifies this animal to be healthy," Fletcher said. "If you as a veterinarian ascertain that this animal is healthy, you sign off. That tells the country or state where the animal is going that ... your animal will not introduce disease to the animal population there."

The program was established in 1921 so that private practitioners could help federal veterinarians control animal diseases. Until now, practitioners who became accredited maintained that designation for life, with no further training required.

The impetus to update the program occurred over the past decade with the appearance of several foreign animal diseases in this country, said Dr. Timothy Cordes, a senior staff veterinarian with USDA APHIS. He cited as examples contagious equine metritis, equine prioplasmosis, exotic Newcastle disease and West Nile virus. Large animals and birds have not been the only populations affected. "We've had a plethora of small-animal incursions as well, such as screw-worm in dogs and cats," Cordes said. "It's been a real eye-opener for us."

The revised accreditation program recognizes that incursions of exotic animal diseases may run the gamut. Whereas in the past, standards focused on livestock, now there are two categories for accreditation, defined as follows:

I: All animals except food and fiber species, horses, birds, farm-raised aquatic animals, all other livestock species; and zoo animals that can transmit exotic animal diseases to livestock.

II: All animals.

There are some caveats associated with the categories. Cordes said the classification of some animals depends on how they're kept. For example, he said, rabbits raised for food and fur in a farm environment would be considered Category II animals. But "One rabbit kept by a family in the same way as a dog or cat would be Category I," Cordes said. At the same time, not all animals kept as pets can be certified by a Category I accredited veterinarian. Horses, birds and pigs, for example, fall under Category II accreditation because of their ability to transmit diseases to livestock.

Practitioners already accredited by the National Veterinary Accreditation Program (NVAP) must reapply for accreditation by Aug. 2 and plan to complete three to six hours of training within the next three years to maintain accreditation.

The Final Rule on the NVAP published Dec. 9, 2009, in the Federal Register states: "It would be inappropriate to revise the definition of Category I animals to refer to pet, ornamental, display or companion animals. For example, pet birds are not bred for food or fiber, but they can transmit avian diseases such as avian influenza or exotic

Newcastle disease to poultry. Similarly, pot-bellied pigs are susceptible to the same diseases as farm-raised swine, such as pseudorabies. Because of this, we believe that veterinarians performing accredited duties on pet birds and livestock species that are raised for purposes other than food or fiber should be required to be accredited under Category II."

Among comments received by the USDA when the revisions were first proposed were several asking for accreditation categories more specific to certain types of animals. Members of the Veterinary Information Network (VIN), in an [online discussion](#) about the new rule, shared the concern that maintaining accreditation would require them to be trained in subjects, such as cattle diseases, that are irrelevant to their practices.

In the Final Rule, the USDA notes that veterinarians will be given a menu of training options. "Some training units that apply across all species — for example, general training regarding the NVAP or training regarding foreign animal diseases — will be required training for all Category II veterinarians," it states. "However, there will be some species-specific training courses that accredited veterinarians can elect to take — for example, training on exotic avian diseases or international equine health certificates. "We believe that this method of organizing the training addresses the commenters' concerns and makes establishing separate, species-specific accreditation categories unnecessary."

One source of confusion for some VIN members was the old NVAP application form, which listed 16 tasks that accredited veterinarians were expected to be able to perform. Those tasks included recognizing the common breeds of livestock and estimating the age of livestock using a dental formula. Several clinicians said such duties were completely foreign to their small-animal practices. Under the revised rule, Category I practitioners must be able to perform nine tasks that pertain specifically to Category I animals.

(See related chart.)

Training will be offered free online, to be completed at practitioners' convenience, Cordes said. To maintain Category I accreditation, members must complete three units, equal to three hours, of training within three years. Category II accreditation will require six units, equal to six hours, of training during the same period. To start, some members will be given up to five years to complete their training because the agency is staggering the renewal dates. Cordes said that those who apply for renewal before Aug. 2 will be issued a renewal date three to five years in the future. The applicants will have until their assigned dates to undergo the required training. For every unit completed, the member will be given a certificate to print out as proof of his or her participation. Those who do not have access to a computer for the online training may request training in other forms. The agency will work with professional organizations to provide training opportunities at conferences, for example.

Dr. Shelley Lenz, a practitioner in North Dakota, said she supports the changes. In a VIN discussion, she wrote: "If (health certifications) are a major issue for biosecurity and disease prevention/control, why should we let just any vet that was accredited whenever have the ability to write a health certificate, and not have some sort of quality control?" First-time applicants for accreditation also will have to meet more rigorous standards, Cordes said. Starting in 2011, applicants will have to pass specific courses, likely to be offered in veterinary school, as well as complete a "core orientation," in order to be approved.

Veterinarians already accredited will not receive individual notices that they must reapply for accreditation. Because the agency's database of members is not up-to-date — owing to the fact that members historically applied for accreditation only once — the USDA determined it would cost less and be equally effective to spread the word through professional organizations and news media.

Prolapses in Beef Cows

by Glenn Selk, OSU Extension Animal Reproduction Specialist

Prolapses occur occasionally in beef cows. Most prolapses occur very near the time of calving. Two distinct kinds of prolapse exist.

- 1) Vaginal prolapses are those that occur in very late gestation. Vaginal prolapse is as the name implies, a protruding of the vagina through the vulva and exposed to sun, wind, and infectious pathogens. Vaginal prolapses are very repeatable. In other words, if the vaginal prolapse is repaired, the cow calves and rebreeds, then she is very likely to prolapse again next year. This type of prolapse is known to have a genetic component, which means that daughters of cows that have this problem will have an increased likelihood of suffering a vaginal prolapse themselves. Therefore, when the producer finds a cow with this malady, she should be marked for culling and daughters should not be kept as replacements. Certainly bull calves from this cow could also pass the genetic characteristics on to his offspring and proliferate the problem within a herd.

- 2) Uterine prolapses occur at or shortly after calving. Many times they occur with a difficult birth. The uterus is literally pulled through the birth canal with the calf or the afterbirth and again exposed to the weather elements, potential injury, and certainly infectious agents. Uterine prolapses, when repaired by proper veterinary attention, can have a very successful result. Cows with properly cared-for uterine prolapses are no more likely than others to have a prolapse next year. Because of the trauma, possible infection, and recovery time, cows with a uterine prolapse may take longer to re-conceive for the next year's calf. This often means that these cows will be late-bred or non-pregnant at weaning time when pregnancy checks are made. This may be a viable reason for culling these cows, but keeping pregnant cows that have experienced a uterine prolapse is not a bad risk. If you find a cow that you suspect has prolapsed, call your veterinarian immediately and discuss the best options for her in your herd.

Research (Patterson, et al, 1981) from the USDA station at Miles City, Montana, reported that 153 calvings of 13,296 calvings from a 14-year span were associated with prolapse of the reproductive tract. Of those 153 prolapses, 124 (81%) were vaginal prolapses and 29 (19%) were uterine prolapses. The subsequent pregnancy rate following prolapse among first calf heifers was 28% and the pregnancy rate among adult cows following a prolapse was only 57.9%.

USDA Livestock disaster payments exceed \$175 million *Source: TSCRA*

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said Thursday that USDA has already made more than \$175 million in disaster payments to America's livestock producers after implementing two new programs in 2009, demonstrating USDA's commitment to rapidly meeting the goals of Congress and providing farmers and ranchers with timely and effective disaster assistance.

"America's farmers and ranchers deserve efficient and effective assistance programs to help get through natural disasters," said Vilsack. "While the previous ad hoc disaster assistance too often was too little, too late, because we were able to get these new programs up and running quickly, we are already beginning to achieve Congress' goal of helping producers recover losses rapidly and more thoroughly."

Under the standing provisions of the Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), authorized in the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill), producers are better able to recover from their losses stemming from 2008 and subsequent disasters. The 2008 Farm Bill provisions replace previous ad-hoc disaster assistance programs and are funded through the Agricultural Disaster Relief Trust Fund.

LIP provides payments to eligible livestock owners and contract growers who suffered eligible livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality as a direct result of an eligible adverse weather event including hurricanes, floods, blizzards, disease, wildfires and extreme heat and cold. Eligible livestock under LIP include beef cattle, alpacas, buffalo, beefalo, dairy cattle, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats,

lambs, poultry, reindeer, sheep and swine.

LFP provides payments to eligible livestock producers who have suffered livestock grazing losses due to qualifying drought or fire. Eligible livestock under LFP include beef cattle, alpacas, buffalo, beefalo, dairy cattle, deer, elk, emus, equine, goats, llamas, poultry, reindeer, sheep and swine. For losses because of drought, eligible areas are determined using the U.S. Drought Monitor, which can be found at the FSA website at fsa.usda.gov.

To be eligible for LIP for livestock losses suffered during 2009, livestock owners and contract growers must file a notice of loss no later than 30 calendar days of when the loss of livestock is apparent to the producer and an application for payment no later than Jan. 30, 2010.

To be eligible for 2009 calendar year grazing losses under LFP, eligible livestock producers must submit a completed application for payment and required supporting documentation to their administrative county FSA office no later than Jan. 30, 2010. For more information or to apply for LIP or LFP and other USDA Farm Service Agency disaster assistance programs, visit your FSA county office or <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

Beef checkoff works to publish the positive about beef *Source: TSCRA*

If you have been on a Southwest Airlines flight in the last three months, found yourself lacking reading material, and reached into the seat pocket in front of you, you may have noticed articles published in their in-flight *Spirit* magazine that contained negative information about beef (one in October 2009 and another in November 2009).

As you read the original *Spirit* articles, you may have noticed how they were misleading readers about the environmental implications of raising cattle. What you need to read is that your beef checkoff issues management team continues to work with several researchers in an ongoing effort to better understand the greenhouse gas emissions associated with cattle production.

The checkoff, with the "eyes on the ground" help of the Texas Cattle Feeders Association, immediately went to work with university contacts to respond. The resulting letter to the editor was published in the December edition of *Spirit* and told readers looking for ways to reduce their personal carbon footprint to look at their energy and fossil fuel use, not what they eat.

In her response to the magazine, Jude Capper, Ph.D., assistant professor of dairy sciences, Washington State University, says, "As the population increases, we must identify areas where we can have a meaningful impact on reducing our carbon footprint – like fossil fuel use – rather than vilifying the industries that ensure our population is well-fed and healthy."

This is just one example among many in the repertoire of responses that your issues management team handles through your checkoff investment.

"The issues management program is (unfortunately) becoming more and more important to beef producers as there seems to be an influx of myths that threaten consumer confidence in beef," says Mike Stahly, backgrounder and cow/calf producer from Cavour, S.D., and chair of the issues management subcommittee. "This program is designed to protect the image of beef and strengthen the reputation of the entire industry and its producers. It's vitally important that our checkoff is on the front lines for us while we're dealing with business at home on our farms and ranches."

Through checkoff-funded programs and in collaboration with state beef councils, the checkoff gives producers a number of outlets to express their viewpoints, have a voice in the debate, and get involved. Whether you're most comfortable responding to a blog, writing a letter to the editor, giving a presentation or something else of the like, there's an avenue for every producer to help secure the future of their industry and tell their own story. If not, someone is likely to tell it for you and you might not like what they say.

The Beef Checkoff Program was established as part of the 1985 farm bill. The checkoff assesses \$1 per head on the sale of live domestic and imported cattle, in addition to a comparable assessment on imported beef and beef products. States retain up to 50 cents on the dollar and forward the other 50 cents per head to the Cattleman's Beef Promotion and Research Board, which administers the national checkoff program, subject to USDA approval.

2010 Young Cattlemen's Conference - June 2-11, 2010

With the beef industry changing so rapidly, identifying and educating leaders to help guide and strengthen the industry has never been so important. Because NCBA serves the grassroots trade association representing the U.S. beef cattle industry, it is our responsibility to see that leadership development is successful. That is why we continue to offer Young Cattlemen's Conference (YCC). The YCC tour has proven to be an effective vehicle in identifying and developing potential leaders. Over 950 cattlemen and women have graduated from the YCC program since its inception in 1980. Many of these alumni participate in committees and councils and even more serve on the board of directors. Several presidents and officers of NCBA and predecessor organizations have also participated in YCC. This program has become and will continue to be the cornerstone of leadership training efforts within the cattle industry.

The tour will begin in Denver with a comprehensive overview of the industry. The group will take an in-depth look at many of the issues affecting our industry and what NCBA is doing to address these issues on behalf of its members, plus receive a comprehensive view of market information from Cattle-Fax. The group will then travel to western Kansas to visit various cattle producing operations in the area. From there, the group will travel to Sioux City, Nebraska to tour Tyson Fresh Meats, one of the largest beef packing and processing plants in the world. Tyson will host the group and will be sharing with them their views of the beef industry from a processor standpoint. Chicago is the next destination. Here the group will visit the Chicago Board of Trade and the Bruss Company - a large meat purveyor. The participants will then travel to the

nation's Capitol. Here they will get a chance to meet with their respective congressmen and senators. In addition, the group will visit with a number of regulatory agencies that make decisions affecting agriculture.

Click here for [Program Details](#) or here for an [Application - Microsoft Word](#) or [Application - PDF](#) or for more information, contact Stacy Fox at (800) 242-7820 ext. 145 or sfox@texascattleraisers.org

FASS expresses concerns on Pew report

Source: *Feedstuffs.com*

There are indeed significant flaws in the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production's report "Putting Meat on the Table: Industrial Farm Animal Production in America," according to the Federation of Animal Science Societies (FASS). FASS took its position following just completed reviews of the Pew report as well as the American Veterinary Medical Assn.'s (AVMA) response to the report. As an organization dedicated to sound science as the foundation of any policy recommendations, FASS said it is concerned that the process utilized by the Pew Commission to ensure an unbiased work product was insufficient.

As pointed out by AVMA, the process for gaining scientific expertise in the technical reports was biased and did not incorporate the findings and suggestions of a significant number of participating scientists. This represents a fundamental problem in the way the report was constructed, said FASS. In addition to procedural deficiencies, there are substantive problems with many of the recommendations in the report. For example, FASS said the Pew report recommends restricting the use of antimicrobials in food animal production to reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance to medically important antibiotics. Banning the use of antibiotics before science-based studies and risk based evaluations are done to determine if there is an actual risk to human health would be detrimental to animal and human health (*Feedstuffs*, Jan. 4). Additional research is needed to determine what, if any, policy changes to antibiotic use are appropriate, said FASS.

In the area of animal welfare, the Pew report seems to assume that all intensive farming operations are inherently inhumane, said FASS, noting that it is possible to have good animal welfare in both small- and large-scale production systems and there are positive and negative trade-offs when choosing among different production systems. FASS said it also believes that housing type cannot be considered in isolation from other important factors that influence animal welfare, including management, feeding systems, environmental features and animal type.

FASS is encouraging policy makers and other interested parties to consider both the Pew report and AVMA response when looking at policies for animal agriculture. Pew and AVMA recognized the value of more research in their reports and FASS said it agrees with both about the importance of maintaining a continued dia-

logue on these issues and increase support for additional research in the area. Science must be the foundation as animal agriculture looks to the future, said FASS

FASS was formed in 1998 by the three founding member societies: the American Dairy Science Assn. (ADSA), the American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) and the Poultry Science Assn. (PSA). The mission of FASS is to strengthen the common interests and collective good of member societies through a unified science-based voice that supports animal agriculture, animal products and food systems globally.



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