



Master Cattleman Quarterly

Oklahoma State University

The Redefined Oklahoma Quality Beef Network

Doug McKinney

Successful cow-calf producers strive to receive the highest possible value for their calves at sale date. The Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (OQBN) is a joint effort begun in 2001 of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service and the Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association (OCA). It offers unbiased information on beef cattle value enhancement, providing producers and others in the industry education and tools to improve access to value-added programs. The program was originally designed to be a process verification and certification program for preconditioned calves. Today, OQBN is the “complete” value-added program as it is a network of OSU, OCA, beef producers, and allied beef industry. It offers participation in value-added markets such as health management verification, age verification, source verification, production system verification, and genetic verification.

The OQBN Vac-45 is an example of a health management verification option for beef producers to participate in a value-added market. It is a viable and important program, benefitting buyers and sellers in several ways. In addition to healthier, heavier calves when sold, sellers may earn higher prices. Research has found buyers paid \$3-6 per cwt more for preconditioned calves in recognition of buying healthier, higher-performing calves for a stocker or feedlot program.

Requirements that must be met for a beef producer to enroll his/her calves into the program include:

- bull calves must be castrated and healed
- calves must be dehorned and healed
- calves must be weaned at least 45 days
- Beef Quality Assurance guidelines must be followed

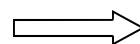
- calves must be tagged with a program-compliant ear tag, and
- producers must follow one of three vaccination protocols.

The OQBN Vac-45 program is “brand-neutral” meaning that you and your veterinarian select the vaccine products and the vaccination protocol that is best for your operation. Each vaccination protocol requires an initial vaccination and a revaccination of the products. The timing of vaccinations include: Option #1 (branding and weaning), Option #2 (pre-weaning and weaning) and Option #3 (weaning and post-weaning).

OQBN Vac-45 is also established as an “umbrella” program, meaning that you can be enrolled in another validated preconditioning program and still enroll in OQBN. This process allows dual certification of a health management verification program and sale as OQBN cattle.

OQBN recommends deworming and treating for external parasites, providing abundant high quality hay or pasture, providing clean and fresh water at all times, feeding concentrate for a minimum of seven days after weaning to train cattle to eat from a bunk, providing free choice mineral, and providing a coccidiostat.

Benefits of participating in the OQBN Vac-45 program include reduced cattle stress and shrink, improved immune system, increased sale weight of cattle, increased market demands, brand-neutral (you and your veterinarian select the products to be used and the timing of vaccinations), and OQBN can be dual certified in other health management verification programs.



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The Redefined Oklahoma Quality Beef Network (continued)

Three OQBN Vac-45 sales are scheduled this fall. OKC West in El Reno has a sale scheduled for November 4, 2009 with a weaning deadline of September 20, 2009 and a sale scheduled for December 2, 2009 with a weaning deadline of October 18, 2009. Red River Livestock in Overbrook has a sale scheduled for December 9, 2009

with a weaning deadline of October 25, 2009. For more information about OQBN, contact your local county extension office or visit the OQBN website at www.oqbn.okstate.edu. Additional information may be obtained by contacting Doug McKinney, OQBN Coordinator, at doug.mckinney@okstate.edu

Master Cattleman Summit Wrap-up

Damona Doye and David Lalman

We were excited to host approximately 160 participants at our recent Master Cattleman's Summit in Stillwater. Thanks to all attendees and speakers! Speaker PowerPoints and videos of the keynote speakers are now posted on BeefExtension.com. Participants said that as a result of the conference they better understand the management of cow/calf enterprise risk, how to assess forage availability and growth using different methods and how to calculate appropriate stocking rates. Many also had the opportunity to gain "hands on" experience with one or more software tools designed to improve their production and financial records and support ranch decisions. We were especially pleased with comments on the evaluations like these:

- "Presenters were very, very, very interesting and topics were unique"
- "This was the best program I have been to. The two main speakers were fabulous. Thanks for all of your hard work."
- "Excellent conference"
- "Thanks to OSU for all your hard work, especially all the speakers. Well organized. Thanks"
- "Thank you... best ever one I have attended these since the 1990's of various varieties."

Of course, we also value suggestions for improvement and take them seriously.

When asked to estimate the economic benefits that participants from changes in production, management or marketing practices, all who responded indicated more than \$1,000 with the most frequent response in the \$3,000-3,999 bracket with one response over \$10,000.



Dr. Todd Thrift, University of Florida, takes questions from Master Cattleman's Summit participants.

Thanks again to our sponsors who helped keep the costs low for participants: USDA/CSREES, Southern Region Risk Management Education Center, Farm Credit Services of East Central Oklahoma, Farm Credit of Western Oklahoma, Chisholm Trail Farm Credit, Certified Angus Beef, and the Oklahoma Beef Council.

Upcoming Events for Beef Producers - See www.Beefextension.com for more information.

Southwest Stocker Conference
Lawton, OK, September 29.

Oklahoma Beef Quality Summit
Stillwater, OK, October 28-30.

Central Oklahoma Cattle Conference
Chandler, OK, October 29.

OQBN Sale Dates

- Oklahoma City West, November 4 and December 2.
- Red River Livestock Market, December 9.

Oklahoma Beef Industry Conference, Stillwater, OK,
April 8-9, 2010

Master Cattleman Producer Spotlight

David Pickle – “Staying Profitable in Tough Times”

By Brian Freking, Extension Educator—LeFlore County



This month, we highlight Master Cattleman David Pickle from LeFlore County, Oklahoma. David operates a commercial cow/calf and stocker operation on approximately 335 acres near Poteau and is a graduate of Extension Educator Brian Freking’s first Master Cattleman class in 2005. David is an example of a progressive beef producer as he utilizes proven practices and technology to improve his land, cattle and bottom line. Among those practices are detailed production and financial records, a controlled fall calving season, crossbreeding, selling calves in load lots, participating in the OK Steer feedout, various conservation programs, and a planned grazing program.

David took over the cow herd from his father in 1995. Since that time he has changed the genetics of the cowherd, which was predominantly Simmental cross. David began using Red Angus in 2005 to moderate cow size but also to improve heat tolerance. Currently Angus and Red Angus sires are used in a two-breed rotation with a Chi-Angus bull used as a terminal sire clean-up on selected groups. One of his goals is to develop productive commercial cows that average only 1000 lb with a BCS 5 at weaning time. David feels that the more moderate cow size will result in minimal feed inputs and allow him to run more cows. At the same time, larger-framed terminal breeds, such as Chi-Angus, are used to maintain or increase weaning weights and post-weaning performance. David has utilized artificial insemination extensively in his heifers to infuse new genetics into the herd. A timed A.I. schedule has been used to keep labor to a minimum. The success of the A.I. program has improved each year going from around 50% in the first year to 66% in 2008. His 2009 calves will soon be hitting the ground so he should know if he has continued to make improvement.

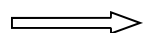
David is an excellent forage manager. His philosophy is to budget adequate forage (including hay) needed to run 150 cows and 250+ stocker cattle assuming precipitation and forage production is average. When drought conditions exist, fewer stocker cattle are purchased, providing substantial flexibility in ranch stocking. Each year, David plans for the worst case scenario in feeding hay by budgeting approximately one ton of hay (two 1100 lb bales) for each cow. This would supply adequate hay for 90 days of feeding. His goal is to not feed any hay and utilize all standing forage to meet the needs

of his cattle. In some years, little hay is actually fed and some hay can be carried over to the following year or sold. In drought years or years with severe winter

weather conditions, most of this hay is consumed by the cows. In essence, the hay operation is a risk management tool, adding flexibility during years when forage production is low. With excellent quality stockpiled forage and high quality hay, very little concentrate supplementation is required.

A management intensive grazing system is used with cattle moving to a different grazing paddock as often as every 12 hours during the growing season. The 335 acre operation is split into 22 permanent paddocks, and strip grazing techniques are used to further intensify the stocking density. For example, this year David has been fine tuning his operation to include MOB grazing. With this practice, a relatively large number of animals graze at a high-stocking density for a short time period. In fact, stocking density can be as high as 100,000 lb of cattle per acre. The use of MOB Grazing is an attempt to see if he can build his soil profile or increase organic matter. This is a real change in a producer’s mindset because in rotational grazing, the focus is on increased harvest efficiency. In MOB grazing, you want to actually trample mature forage into the stand to develop a mulch system for the next year. In an attempt to validate the MOB grazing practice, David will utilize soil sampling and testing to measure changes in the chemical profile of the soil over time.

David has been a great cooperator of the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service not only by participating in the Master Cattleman program, but also by hosting field days and Master Cattleman classes to showcase best management practices.



Master Cattleman Producer Spotlight (continued)



Temporary fencing used to strip graze using the MOB technique.



Stocker cattle are being used to strip graze high-quality excess forage.

Editors note: If you know a Master Cattle producer who is a good candidate for a future profile, contact David Lalman, 201 Animal Science, Stillwater, OK 74078, david.lalman@okstate.edu or 405 744-6060

New and Updated Publications for Cattle Producers

OSU fact sheets are available at: <http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu/docushare/dsweb/HomePage>

AGEC-258, Oklahoma Wheat Stocker Spreadsheet Decision Aid User's Manual

E-982, A Resource Guide for Beginning Farms in Oklahoma

AGEC-214, Developing Cash Lease Agreements for Farmland

ANSI-3288, Marketing Opportunities Available to Oklahoma Beef Cattle Producers

AGEC-619, Adding Value to Cull Cows

Three New Wheat Stocker Decision Tools Available for Producers

Eric A. DeVuyst, Extension Economist; Francis Epplin, Professor; Derrell Peel, Extension Economist; Gerald Horn, Professor; David Lalman, Professor

Three new computer programs are available to assist wheat stocker producers with decision making and budgeting. The programs can be downloaded at <http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/faculty/publications.asp>.

The Wheat Stocker Budget Generator allows for side-by-side economic comparison of steers vs. heifers. The program computes expected per head revenue, costs, and profit, as well as profit per acre, and breakeven stocker sale price.

The Wheat Stocker Purchase Planner allows for side-by-side economic comparisons for both steers and heifers for various purchase weights. The program generates expected revenues, costs, and net returns by purchase weight and gender.

Finally, the Graze Out Decision Aid, assists in projecting the optimal date to terminate grazing.

Marketing Opportunities Available to Oklahoma Beef Cattle Producers

Doug McKinney

Value is created when a product or service is enhanced to meet or exceed the expectations of the consumer consistently. Value-added marketing of cattle has received much attention in recent years. Progressive producers are capitalizing on opportunities to increase income by securing a better price for calves that have added value. Value may be in the form of weaning, various management practices implemented to improve health and performance, source and age verification, documented genetics, and (or) documented production practices such as “natural” or “organic.” Documentation of the value-enhancing characteristics is a necessary step in this process. The final step in adding value is to establish or identify a market outlet where the added value is rewarded. The purpose of this Fact Sheet is to identify marketing and management programs, and their specific characteristics intended to increase value of calves produced in Oklahoma and the surrounding region.

OSU’s Value Enhancement Program

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service at Oklahoma State University (OSU) in cooperation with the Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association recognized the increased interest and participation in value-enhancement marketing strategies for cow-calf producers. However, many producers are unaware and unfamiliar with value-added programs available to them. As a result of the challenges facing the Oklahoma beef industry, a Beef Cattle Value Enhancement Specialist was hired at OSU to assist producers in taking advantage of the programs and opportunities available. An interdisciplinary group acts as the advisory committee for the value enhancement program. One of the first tasks identified was developing benchmarks for current participation in value-added programs. Initial results of that research follow.

Value Enhancement Practices

Various market, food safety, and national security issues have resulted in impending opportunities for early-adopters to benefit from participating in value-added beef marketing and management programs. Several of these opportunities are briefly described below.

Animal Identification

A traceability system records and transmits information on particular attributes about a food product as it travels through the food supply chain to provide informa-

tion at any specific point, and trace the food to its source. Livestock identification is the first step in a traceability system for meat and meat products. In an international trade market where agricultural systems and consumers are susceptible to both local and foreign animal diseases, integrating a farm to fork (production, processing, distribution) traceability system into current food safety control measures for all animal products is becoming essential. Consumers want stronger controls and source verification at the retail level, offering industry a unique selling point.

Age and Source Verification

As the Japanese export agreement becomes finalized, age verification and source verification are very likely to be key issues. Likewise, Country-of-Origin-Labeling (COOL) became mandatory March 16, 2009. These two programs will both require a set of verification procedures for cattlemen to follow. The Audit, Review, and Compliance Branch of USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is proposing to use the same process for both programs, and thus producers can use the same relatively simple procedures to qualify for both programs. These procedures are also the foundations for other niche and branded programs. Producers who are prepared for these systems may have a distinct marketing advantage.

Developments in beef export marketing have resulted in new requirements and opportunities for producers. Source and age verification is the ability for producers to qualify cattle for beef export markets, make other specific claims, and capture any associated premiums.

Source and age verification for beef cattle has two components. Source verification is the ability to trace beef back to the farm or ranch where the cattle were born. Age verification is the ability to determine and verify the age of the animal at any point throughout the production system, including post-harvest. Standards for age verification cannot be met without first meeting the requirements for source verification and your records alone do not qualify cattle to be sold as “source and age verified.” Source and age claims are validated either through a USDA Process Verified Program (PVP) or a USDA Quality System Assessment (QSA) program.

Marketing Opportunities Available to Oklahoma Beef Cattle Producers (continued)

Process Verified Programs (PVP) provide the beef industry the ability to make marketing claims about beef attributes beyond age and source verification, but nearly all PVP's include age and source verification as part of their program. Other attributes may include specific genetics, feeding practices, animal welfare, environmental production aspects, and other claims otherwise difficult to verify by visual inspection. Quality System Assessment (QSA) defines a type of USDA program with a narrower scope and less complex than PVP programs. USDA developed QSA programs beginning in 2004 primarily to qualify beef for export. The only beef attributes verifiable through a QSA program are age, source, and non-hormone treated cattle. More information is available in Extension Fact Sheet, AGEC-612, "Minding your Cattle P's and Q's: Basic Facts on Source, Age, and other Claim Verification through PVP and QSA Programs" (Raper and Richards 2008).

For participation in a USDA-approved Source and Age Verification Program, producers must be willing to share production records to prove the source and age of the cattle. At the very minimum, producers must be able to prove the first and last calf born in every group of calves marketed. Producers must also be willing to participate in an audit process to verify the birth dates of cattle enrolled in a source and age verification program.

Beef Export Verification

To qualify for export to Japan, beef must comply with the regulations of the Beef Export Verification Program (BEV) for Japan. Producers and processors of any cattle providing beef for the Japanese market must participate in a Quality System Assessment (QSA) program that has been pre-approved by the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. Cattle must have been raised by feedlots, backgrounders, and cowherds that were under a QSA program. Records documenting age of the cattle and signed affidavits by the producer are necessary, but not sufficient.

Genetic Verification

Beef breed associations have taken a proactive role in promoting their particular breed of cattle within the industry. Associations will assist producers by providing services enabling access to source and age verification, process verification, genetics, and management practices. Breed associations also provide marketing assistance to producers in locating and establishing markets for their cattle based on specific genetic characteristics.

Health Management Verification

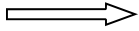
Improper management practices, particularly prior to marketing of cattle, leads to a high frequency of sickness among calves. These losses negatively impact producer profitability, impacting each and every level of the beef production chain. Preconditioning is a general term referring to management practices occurring around the time of weaning that are associated with improving health and performance of cattle post-weaning. For example, these practices may include vaccination, castration, dehorning, feeding cattle in a bunk, weaning, and deworming.

Most calves are healthy when they leave the ranch, but stress caused by weaning, transportation, change in environment, etc. lowers the level of resistance at the same time exposure to disease is increased. Vaccination programs raise the level of resistance and immunity to viruses and other pathogens before a health issue occurs. Proper vaccines, administered correctly and adequate time allowed for immunity to establish in an environment where stress levels are reduced are critical in a successful health program.

There are several vaccination management programs designed to get calves ready to enter subsequent marketing and production segments of the beef industry after they leave the ranch of origin. These vaccination protocols are designed to help cattle resist disease and address health issues. There are effective immunization programs to fit different management and marketing systems. Programs are available for administration before, during, and after weaning of ranch-raised calves and purchased calves. These immunization protocols will prepare calves for marketing at weaning or after the backgrounding phase.

Production System Verification

The beef industry is currently undergoing a marketing revolution where less beef is being sold as a commodity and more beef is being marketed based on specific characteristics and/or quality. These "branded" beef programs have grown tremendously during the past ten years and are increasingly resulting in price premiums paid to producers who can provide cattle that excel in the given program's carcass specifications. Two such companies, U.S. Premium Beef and the Iowa Quality Beef Supply Network, reported an average of about \$21 per head above the cash market during fiscal year 2004.

Numerous natural beef programs are available to producers to take advantage of the growing demand, each with different production requirements. To qualify for the natural program, producers must not use 

Numerous natural beef programs are available to producers to take advantage of the growing demand, each with different production requirements. To qualify for the natural program, producers must not use implants, growth promotants, antibiotics, or feed animal byproducts. It is recommended to contact the “branded” beef program to become familiar with the required practices.

USDA has set national standards that food labeled “organic” must meet. Certified Organic Beef is a fully verifiable production system that collects information on the history of every animal including the breed history, veterinary care, and feed. Furthermore, the cattle must have never received antibiotics, growth-promoting hormones, or been fed animal byproducts and must be born and raised with humane treatment on certified organic pasture. They must also only be fed organic feeds and hays.

Extent of Value-Enhancement Participation

To identify programs in which Oklahoma producers were involved in 2007, various marketing programs were contacted to measure producer participation and number of cattle marketed through value-added efforts. Contacts were made with source and age verification companies approved through USDA, breed associations, feedyards, pharmaceutical companies and livestock markets as reported by USDA/AMS.

In 2007, 85,575 calves were enrolled in a value-added marketing program, but this number is likely overstated as some calves may be enrolled in more than one program. For example, a group of calves could participate in a health certification program, but also be enrolled in a breed association alliance, and/or source and age program, then be sold through electronic marketing. Thus, that particular set of calves could be counted four times as participating in a value-added program. This extent of duplication is likely rare. However, in the data collection process, eliminating duplication was not possible.

The 85,575 calves represent a very small percentage of the total number of Oklahoma cattle numbers. With more than two million cows in the state, the total accounts for just 4.3 percent of possible calves (assuming 100 percent calving) available annually for value-enhancement marketing opportunities.

Data indicate that a health certification program is the most used with 31% of the total number of value-added marketing followed with source and age verification, 27%; breed association alliances, 20%; livestock markets’ value-added sales, 6%; and electronic markets, 16%. A summary of the value-enhancement program categories and number of calves enrolled in 2007 is shown in Figure 1. The figure shows the distribution of participation in

each program without the elimination of duplicate calves enrolled in multiple programs. Figure 2 shows the venue through which value-added calves were marketed.

A summary of the programs currently available to Oklahoma cattle producers along with services and/or requirements of each value-added program is shown in Table 1. Data presented in the table was provided by representatives of that particular program. As value-added program opportunities may change, we will continue to keep this publication updated electronically at www.beefextension.com. For corrections to the listed programs, or to add a program that is not included in this fact sheet, contact Doug McKinney at doug.mckinney@okstate.edu.

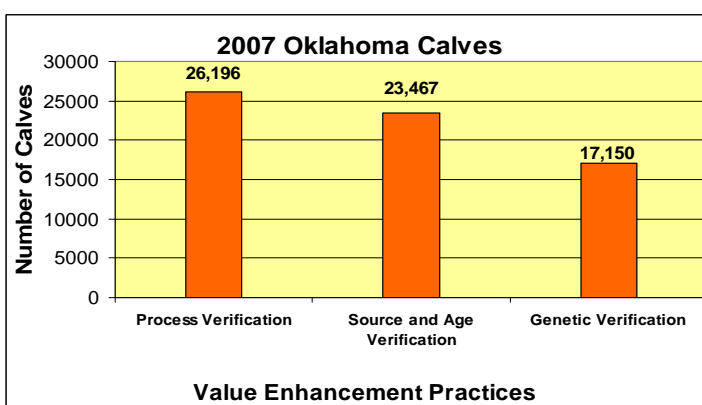


Figure 1. Estimated enrollment of OK calves in 2007 through value-added programs.

The information give here is supplied with the understanding that reasonable effort has been made to gather correct information. The programs and service companies listed in Table 1 were known programs available to Oklahoma producers at the time of this publication. No discrimination is intended and no endorsement is made by the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service or Oklahoma Cattlemen’s Association.

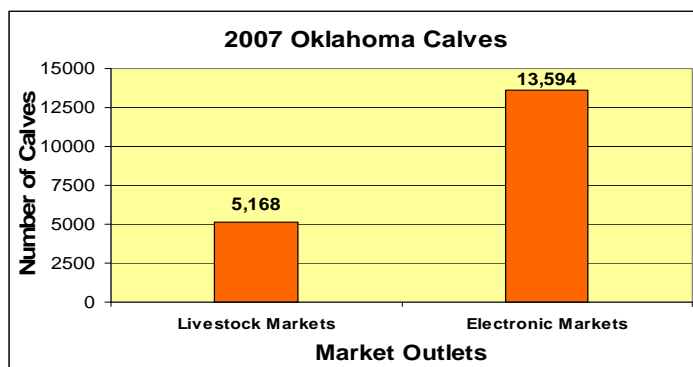


Figure 2. Estimated marketing of Oklahoma calves in 2007 through value-added programs.

Table 1. Summary of the programs currently available to Oklahoma cattle producers.

Company	Website	Weaning	Health Management Verification ¹	Age Verification	Source Verification	Production System Verification ²	Genetic Verification
ABS Global, Inc.	www.absglobal.com			x	x		
AgInfoLink USA	www.aginfolink.com			x	x	NHTC	
American Gelbvieh Association	www.gelbvieh.org						x
American Maine Anjou Association	www.maine-anjou.org			x	x		x
American Shorthorn Association	www.shorthorn.org			x	x		x
American Simmental Association	www.simmental.org			x	x		x
American-International Charolais Association, Charolais Advantage	www.charolaisusa.com			x	x		x
AngusSource, American Angus Association	www.angussource.com			x	x		x
Arkansas Agriculture Department	www.aifpc.org			x	x		
AZTx Cattle Co., LTD	www.aztx.com			x	x	NHTC	
Beef Verification Solutions	www.agsolusa.com			x	x		
Boehringer Ingelheim Vetmedica, Inc.	www.productionvalues.com		WVP				
Cargill Cattle Feeders, LLC	www.cargill.com			x	x	NHTC	
Cornerstone Cattle Company, LLC	www.cornerstonecattle.com			x	x	N	
Creekstone Farms Premium Beef	www.creekstonefarms.com			x	x	O	
Dakota Beef LLC	www.dakotabeefcompany.com			x	x		
Decatur County Feed Yard, LLC	www.fortdodgelivestock.com/beef/beef-prime-protect.htm	45d	CDWVBP				
Fort Dodge Animal Health	www.gardinerangus.com			x	x		x
Gardiner Guaranteed Genetics	www.mygamonline.com			x	x		
Global Animal Management, Inc. (ISPAH)	www.gottschatttlecompany.com			x	x		
Gottsch cattle Company, LLC	www.gottschatttlecompany.com			x	x		
Hereford Verified, American Hereford Association	www.herefordbeef.net			x	x	NHTC, NE3	x
IMI Global, Inc.- US Verified	www.imiglobal.com	45d	CDWVBP	x	x		
Integrity Beef / The Noble Foundation	www.int-brangus.org			x	x		x
International Brangus Breeders Association, Optimaxx	www.intervetusa.com	0, 45d	CDWVBP	x	x		
Intervet/Schering-Plough Animal Health (ISPAH)	www.intervetusa.com	0, 45d	CDWVBP	x	x		
Joplin Regional Stockyards	www.joplinstockyards.com	30, 45d	CWVP	x	x	N	
Laura's Lean Beef	www.laurasleanbeef.com	0,30,45d	CDV	x	x		
Livestock Marketing Association	www.livaweb.com	45d	CDWVBP	x	x		
Merial	www.mfahhealthtrack.net	45d	CDWVBP	x	x		
MFA Health Track Beef Alliance	www.micropvp.com			x	x		
Micro Beef Technologies, CattleLog PVP	www.mda.mo.gov			x	x		
Missouri Cattleman's Association	www.mvma.us			x	x		
Missouri Department of Agriculture	www.montanaranchbrand.com			x	x	NE3	x
Missouri Stocker-Feeder Quality Assurance Program		0, 45d	CDWVP	x	x		
Montana Ranch Brand		45d	CDWVP	x	x		
Morgan-Davis International	www.naif.org			x	x		
North American Limousin Association	www.livestock.novartis.com	45d	CDWVBP	x	x	N, NHTC	x
Novartis Animal Health	www.beefextension.com	45d	CDV	x	x		
Oklahoma Quality Beef Network	www.organicprairie.coop/	0, 45d	CDWVBP	x	x	O	
Organic Prairie	www.selectvac.com			x	x		
Pfizer Animal Health	www.powergenetics.com			x	x		
Power Genetics Company Passport Program	www.rancherrenaissance.com	45d	CWVB	x	x		
Ranchers Renaissance	www.rancherrenaissance.com	45d	CWVB	x	x		
Range Ready, Boehringer Ingelheim	www.rangeready.com	60d	WVP	x	x		
Red Angus Association, Red Angus Feeder Calf Certification Program	www.redangus.org			x	x		x
Samson, LLC	www.samson-inc.com			x	x	N	
Sterling Solutions	www.sterlingtraceback.com			x	x		
Superior Livestock Auction Inc.	www.superiorlivestock.com	0, 45d	CDWVP	x	x	N, NHTC	
Texas Cattle Feeders Association	www.tcfa.org			x	x		
TriMerit	https://www.mvdamonline.com/trimerit			x	x		
US Natural Beef	www.usnaturalbeef.com/			x	x	N	
US Premium Beef	www.uspremiumbeef.com			x	x		
Value Added Calf-Vaccination Program (VAC-45)	www.uspremiumbeef.com/animal-science-tamu.edu	45d	CDWVP	x	x		
Verified Beef, LLC	www.verifiedbeef.net			x	x	NHTC, NE3, GF	

1. Practices that are required for the health management verification programs; Castration-C, Deworming-D, Deworming-D, Deworming-W, Vaccinations-V, Bunk Broke-B, or Parasite Control-P

2. Production system verification; Natural-N, Organic-O, Non Hormone Treated Cattle-NHTC, Never-Ever 3-NE3 or Grass Fed-GF.

Central Oklahoma Cattle Conference Scheduled

Glenn Selk

Maintaining a productive forage base and matching it to the appropriate cattle is key to successful cattle operations in Oklahoma. That's why those will be the key topics at this year's Central Oklahoma Cattle Conference in Chandler. "This program will appeal to all ranchers in the region," according to Mick Jones, Lincoln County extension educator. "Regardless of whether you're large or small, the techniques will work: adding value to livestock is adding value to livestock."

Scheduled for October 29 at the Lincoln County Agri-Civic Center at the county fairgrounds, the program will be introduced by Ron Hays of the Radio Oklahoma Network. The four major presenters and their topics will be: Bob Woods, Extension area plant and soil science specialist, "Managing the forage base on a central Okla-

homa farm or ranch"; Doug McKinney, Oklahoma State University value enhancement specialist, "Opportunities to add value to the sale price of calves"; Bob Kropp, OSU professor of animal science, "Matching the cows to the ranch"; and Derrell Peel, Extension livestock marketing specialist, "Looking ahead at calf and cull cow markets." There will also be a trade show at the conference with up-to-date products from major agricultural suppliers.

Participants are asked to pre-register by October 22 by contacting the Lincoln county extension office at 405-258-0560. Registration forms also can be found at County Extension offices in Oklahoma. The biennial conference is sponsored by the Lincoln County Cattle Producers' Association and the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service.

Is Your Farm Information System Telling You What You Need to Know?

Damona Doye

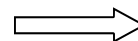
Every business has key areas where things must go well for the business to succeed, critical success factors, if you will. Identifying these factors is useful in determining information needs and what needs to be monitored on an ongoing basis. Think about it...What is critical to your business' success? Cash flow management? Labor supply? Soil fertility? Product quality? Managing debt? Is your record-keeping system providing you with the information that you need to support timely decisions? If you aren't satisfied with your current records, now is a good time to either refine your existing system or explore alternatives. Making changes now will ensure that by year's end you have a better system in place. It will also help prepare you for end-of-year tax planning and summaries and next year you'll reap the benefits of a better system for a full calendar year.

Give some thought to strengths and weaknesses of your current information system. The information system goes beyond financial and production records to include planning and budgeting tools as well as external sources of information, from markets to weather to government policy. On a piece of paper, jot down your information systems strengths on one side, information system weaknesses on the other. Next, use that assessment to begin developing a long-term plan for improving your system. Specify goals for the information system, then

identify specific steps to achieving that goal along with a time line for accomplishing them.

If you don't currently have your financial records on a computer, consider investing some time and money to do so. Reports—transactions, cash flow, account balances, balance sheet, comparison, tax summary—can be generated with a few clicks or key strokes rather than pushing a pencil for hours. You can quickly view how much you've spent with a particular vendor to see whether a 1099 may be needed at the end of the year or to see how much you've spent on repairs. Loans can be amortized with scheduled pay-ments. Whole farm budgets based on historic data can be generated quickly and easily, as can budgets developed from "scratch." Comparison reports highlight budget versus actual figures.

For about \$50, you can purchase Quicken®, a popular personal record-keeping package that is user friendly and flexible enough to sort and summarize personal and business income and expenses in many ways (other commercial software has similar features). Quicken has superior cash flow features, numerous online banking/credit options (that can be ignored if not of interest) and investment tracking features to facilitate monitoring off-farm investments such as retirement accounts. Step-by-step instructions and video-clips on adapting Quicken for farm and ranch use are available at agecon.okstate.edu/quicken



A new version of Quicken is typically released annually in September so if you want the latest version, watch for advertisements and give us 6 weeks or so to update instructions and post them to the website. Quicken® files can be imported easily into QuickBooks®, a popular small-business accounting package, if a more sophisticated financial record-keeping system is required in the future.

For about \$160, you can purchase QuickBooks, popular accounting software for small businesses. QuickBooks, like Quicken, offers excellent capabilities for organizing your finances and preparing summaries for decision-making and tax purposes. In addition, you can

create invoices, monitor accounts receivable/payable and generate payroll reports.

If you aren't convinced that you need a software program, you can print pages for recording income and expenses along with summary tables from our website: <http://agecon.okstate.edu/farmbook/>

Selecting the right tool comes down to matching your needs with a tool's capabilities. By focusing first on your information needs, you will be better equipped to choose an appropriate tool or software package. Before purchasing software, determine the level and cost of software support that is available locally, online or will be provided by the company.

Damona Doye
515 Ag Hall
damona.doye@okstate.edu
405-744-9836

David Lalman
201 Animal Science
david.lalman@okstate.edu
405-744-6060

Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, OK 74078



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