



Deadline For BEEF 20/20 Is Dec. 20

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension hosts BEEF 20/20 Jan. 7-9 in Brookings at the South Dakota State University Animal Science Complex.

BEEF 20/20 is designed to provide an intensive, hands-on, educational opportunity to enhance the understanding of the production and marketing of high quality, high value beef. Attendees do not need to be cattle producers to attend the program. Anyone affiliated with the beef industry — producers, allied industry representatives, locker operators, restaurateurs, retailers — is welcome.

The program begins at 2:30 p.m. Jan. 7 and ends noon Jan. 9. Due to the intensive, hands-on, nature of this program, registration is limited to the first 30 who contact Keith Underwood to sign up. Registration is \$75 and the deadline is Dec. 20.

The following topics will be covered during the three-day meeting:

- Evaluation of Live Market Cattle
- Beef Carcass Grading and Pricing
- Feeding and Management Strategies to Improve Carcass Quality
- Genetic Prediction of Carcass Merit
- Marketing the Calf Crop
- Meat/Food Safety Technology
- Beef Carcass Fabrication
- Factors that Affect Eating Quality
- Product Taste Panel

For more information, contact Keith Underwood (605) 688-5439 or Keith.underwood@sdsu.edu.

Estate Planning, Transition Conferences Set

BROOKINGS — Brookings will be the site for a series of SDSU Extension training sessions which will focus on estate planning.

Sustaining the Legacy conferences also help people who seek transition of their farm or ranch from one family member to another. Extension staff and industry professionals will help participants develop the tools they need in order to face estate-planning challenges with less stress.

The sessions will be hosted in Brookings — Jan. 3-4 and 10-11, 2013 — Days Inn, 2500 6th St.

Registration is required by Dec. 20, 2012. The registration form and more information can be found at www.igrow.org.

"Each session is filled with important information that can help farm and ranch families address questions they may face as parents or grandparents get older and consider their legacy," said Gessner, who is organizing the conferences. "Producers have told me that the value of this program was \$1 million, due to the changes they made to their estate plan and the reduction of potential estate taxes."

Each day of the four-day program is full of tools and how-to information families can use to create and implement their individualized plan, no matter how big or small the operation. Topics for the sessions cover communication styles, business structures, goals, asset distribution, wills and probate, retirement planning and funding, fair versus equal distribution, tax implications for the operation, life insurance, long-term care insurance, trusts, and other topics as determined by the audiences.

"Many of the past participants have utilized the information from the conference to reduce potential estate taxes and ensure that their operation is passed down to the next generation in a smooth, hassle free transition," Gessner said.

All family members are encouraged to attend the sessions. Both on- and off-farm heirs are invited to learn about the tools and participate in the discussions.

"Past participants have used this conference to interview attorneys and insurance agents while they are presenting the basics of using the many tools available to them," Gessner said. "If you are making plans to retire or becoming a partner in the operation, or if you own farm or ranch assets, this program is a great start for you. Our goal is to give you the tools to develop your estate plan and the motivation to get started, combined with some gentle nudging that keeps you moving forward with the process."

Partial funding for this program is provided by the South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council.

"SDR is proud to be one of the sponsors for this year's estate planning workshops. With rising land values and profit margins, estate planning has never been more important," said Doug Hanson, a SDSRPC board member and a past participant of the conference. "My wife and I have attended these workshops in the past and have found them very informative."

Date, location and registration information can be found online at www.igrow.org by calling Heather Gessner 605-782-3290 or by contacting one of the regional extension centers.

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Christmas Deadlines

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan will be closing at noon on Monday, December 24.

The following deadlines will apply:
Wednesday, December 26 newspaper – Thursday, December 20, 5 p.m.
Thursday, December 27 newspaper – Friday, December 21, 5 p.m.
Friday, December 28 newspaper – Monday, December 24, noon
Wednesday, January 2 newspaper – Thursday, December 27, 5 p.m.
Thursday, January 3 newspaper – Friday, December 28, 5 p.m.
Friday, January 4 newspaper – Monday, December 31, noon
Out On The Town will run Monday, Dec. 24 & Thursday, Dec. 27 – Deadline Wednesday, December 19, 5 p.m.

There will be no newspaper on Tuesday, December 25, 2012.

YANKTON DAILY

PRESS&DAKOTAN

The Need For Feed

The Trick Of Finding Winter Feed During A Drought Year

BY RITA BRHEL
P&D Correspondent

Six months ago, when the possibility of a major drought was first speculated, Midwest farmers and ranchers were still largely optimistic though worried. Every week, news of a deepening drought made headlines and the agricultural weather forecast was the talk of the town.

Now that the crops have been harvested and pastures have stopped growing, and producers have seen the full effects of what the drought could do and has done, it comes as no surprise that the Yankton area is suffering from an exceptional drought and that the U.S. Drought Monitor as of Dec. 4 predicts this most difficult situation to continue for the long term.

"The data are in, and the climate experts have made their forecasts: The chances of you having average soil moisture going into next year are slim and none," said Bruce Anderson, Extension forage specialist with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. "Drought is hard to prepare for and even harder to predict. Last summer caught a lot of people by surprise, and now we are paying the price with high feed costs and limited availability."

There will be no relief, he says.

"Next year, though, shouldn't catch anyone by surprise," Anderson continued. "We know already that it is nearly impossible to fully recharge moisture into the soil profile by next spring. Unless you receive lots of extra, good soaking moisture next spring, dryland yields are likely to be below average. And since there will be very little hay carry-over, prices are likely to stay high."

Warren Rusche, a beef cow-calf specialist for South Dakota State University's Regional Extension Center in Watertown, adds that grain prices have been exceptionally volatile this year.

"Even before the drought, livestock producers daily faced the difficult decision of figuring out which feed source was the best buy," he said. "The dilemma is even greater as feedstuff prices continue to increase due to the current drought."

The 2013 year will not be easier, even if more precipitation chances enter the picture, and if it continues dry and mild, next year could even be worse, he says.

"We also know that most pastures were grazed more heavily last year than usual," Anderson said, adding that was partly due to the drought and partly because the grazing season began much earlier than a typical spring. "They have almost no forage remaining for use next year, and most root systems were weakened going into winter. Therefore, carrying capacity next year probably will be less than average unless you receive way above-average precipitation. Even with rain, though, spring growth could be slower or later than usual."

Overall, it's a depressing forecast. Anderson says there is no option for livestock producers



PHOTO: RITA BRHEL

except to accept reality.

"If it stays dry, can you afford to keep doing what you have been doing? Should you plant annual forages to get more hay? Or rent more corn stalks for winter grazing? How about grazing more stockers and fewer cows? Or even sell all your cattle and rent out your pasture? And if it does rain, how can you take the most advantage of it?" he asked. "The time to think about and answer these questions really was a year ago, but now is better than next summer."

With the drought affecting two-thirds of the continental United States, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, every livestock producer is making difficult decisions at this time.

Mike Wallace of Nelson, Neb., says the unrelenting drought is forcing him to sell more livestock this year than he desires.

Jay Jung of Colwell, Iowa, says that he took advantage of the emergency rule earlier this year that allowed Conservation Reserve Program acres to be cut for hay. He was able to bale more hay than he needs, so he sold the remaining bales to a local feedlot. Jung says he has also been looking into alternative feed sources this year, including grazing a local pumpkin patch, purchasing corn screens from a local elevator to capture the otherwise wasted grain, and planting cover crops as a forage extender.

Dan Specht of McGregor, Iowa, says that to minimize feed inputs into his calves, he has decided to leave the calves on the cows through the winter, to then finish them on the spring pasture flush. A silver lining is that, because the pastures greened up so early last spring, some producers still have leftover hay from last winter, Specht says, which can help ease this year's winter hay need.

The first challenge producers need to overcome is how to overwinter the livestock they're keeping with stressed pastures, scarce hay, and soaring feed costs. Many farmers and ranchers, in years past, have relied on grazing corn stalks to help stretch fall and winter feed, but Anderson says that this option isn't as viable this year.

"Are your corn stalks providing all the nutrients your cows need?" he asked. "Not the way they used to, is my guess."

Even without the drought to contend with, corn stalks don't provide as high of quality forage as they once did, Anderson says.

"Corn production has changed," he explained. "More efficient combines lose less grain. Corn hybrids stand up to pests and weather, avoiding ear drop. Crop production practices provide just enough fertilizer and water."

Ten to 15 years ago, Anderson says that there was about 4 percent of corn grain left behind in the field after harvest. Today, it's only about 2 percent, which translates to one pound less grain per acre for every bushel harvested.

This means that producers will be grazing corn stalks for a shorter time period, even on years not affected by a drought. Anderson says that the rule of thumb is for producers to begin supplementing protein to their cows when grain is no longer showing up in their manure.

"I'd guess most cows already need it this winter," he said.

When should cows be taken off of stalks? Anderson says this depends not on how much forage is in the field but what kind: Husks are the most nutritious part of the corn plant, followed by leaves.

"Once the husks have been eaten, trampled, or blown away, it gets iffy," he said. "Cows eating a

fair amount of actual stalk will lose weight and body condition, even with protein supplements."

Producers need to be ready to take their cows off stalks early this year. Hopefully, they will already have their winter hay stores. If not, it may be time to sell.

"In historic times as these, it is easy to suffer from 'analysis paralysis' and not make decisions or take actions," said Darrell Mark, an economist with the South Dakota State University in Brookings. "The challenges of this year's drought could cause some to avoid making decisions regarding herd liquidation. Often, the advantage goes to the producers that make the difficult decisions first. Still, sometimes the best decision is to wait for a certain time or even to occur. Just be sure that, too, is a conscious management decision."

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