Private Applicator Recertification

As many of you are aware, Private Applicator cards must be renewed by October 2014. We will be conducting a recertification meeting on Thursday, September 18 at the Ag Center & Fairgrounds in Evensville beginning at 6:00 p.m. Southeastern Farmers Co-op will be sponsoring a meal before the program. Please RSVP by September 11 by calling the Extension office at 775-7807. The cost for recertification will be $15.00.

If you cannot make this recertification meeting or you need to be initially certified, please contact the UT/TSU Extension—Rhea County office and make an appointment to watch the video. If you let your certification expire, you must go through the entire certification process again and the cost will be $40.00.

Steak & Potato Field Day

The Plateau Research and Education Center in Crossville will be conducting their annual field day on Tuesday, August 5, 2014. The day will focus on beef and forage production as well as forestry, wildlife, fruits and vegetables. The program is FREE to the public and lunch will be provided. Registration will begin at 8:00 am. CST.

Fall Forage Field Day

Mark your calendar!! We will be having our annual Rhea County Forage Field Day sponsored by UT/TSU Extension—Rhea County, the Rhea County Soil Conservation District and USDA-NRCS on Thursday, October 2 at the Rhea County Ag Center and Fairgrounds beginning at 9:00 a.m. We are currently working on the program and more information will be released as time gets closer.

Are Flies Just Pests?

Every cattle farm has flies and are considered a nuisance. However, fly infestation reduces performance and certain flies are responsible for spreading diseases such as pink eye and potentially anaplasmosis. To decrease disease risk to your livestock, it is important to understand where flies live and breed and the strategic control methods available.

Adult flies prefer to lay their eggs in wet organic matter, such as fresh manure and spilled feed. Moisture is needed for the fly eggs, larvae and pupae to develop. Therefore, controlling moisture is an important step in the reduction of fly numbers on your farm.

Manure piles are fly breeding heaven, so waste management is critical in creating a fly management program. An average 1,250 pound beef cow generates 75 pounds of manure a day, so manure management is a full time job!

For some species of flies, the life cycle can be as short as 2 weeks. In order to break the fly life cycle, you need to remove or spread fly breeding materials (manure, wet grain, spilled silage, moist hay, etc.) on a regular basis. Start by removing manure from livestock areas as frequently as possible. Take this manure and spread it thinly on fields or other large outdoor areas to facilitate drying. Also, drag your fields to more evenly distribute manure. Flies cannot develop in dry...
environments, so spreading manure thinly is the first step in trying to break the fly life cycle.

Pay special attention to areas where your herd congregates, such as water troughs, shady areas and gates. These areas should be cleaned weekly at a minimum to diminish fly breeding and control parasites. Remember, it's easier and more cost effective to prevent fly breeding than to control adult flies. So the quicker we can remove their habitat, the less likely we are to see these pests.

Feed and mineral mixtures with larvicide in it passes through the cow and the product kills the larvae in the manure so that adults cannot emerge. They are very effective at killing developing flies but must be incorporated at least 3 weeks prior to fly season. Blocks with insect growth regulators (IGR) help to reduce the population of flies and can be used early in the fly season to delay use of ear tags. Remember IGR’s do not keep flies off the animal. They only work to reduce the population of the flies.

Dusters or dust bags that contain insecticide work well for pastured cattle if the animals are forced to pass through them to get to feed, water or mineral. Monitor the dusters for use; cattle should use them every 2-3 days to be effective. To ensure insecticide is applied to their face, they should be placed low enough so cattle have to drop their heads to go through them. There should be 2 dust bags for every 50-60 animals to ensure every animal has access. With the smaller stature of calves, dusters must be hung at a level that is appropriate. Back rubbers or oils are similar to dusters; they rely on contact with the insecticide but use an oil solution (diesel fuel #2) instead of dust. There should be 20 feet of contact space for every 50-60 cows to ensure every animal has access. Add insecticide every 2-4 weeks to maintain effectiveness.

Pour-ons or sprays are absorbed by the animal and act to repel flies that feed on blood (as well as lice and grubs). They are directly applied to animals and have to be reapplied every 3 weeks in the case of horn flies. Pour-ons are more labor intensive than some other options listed here.

Impregnated ear tags can provide many weeks of protection against flies. Fly tags generally provide coverage for 12-15 weeks. The more appropriate time to begin using fly tags is when fly numbers reach greater than 50 flies per animal.

Spring will be a good time to initiate fly control in cows and calves. In most years in Tennessee this occurs in May. An integrated approach that includes feed through IGR blocks, back rubs, dust bags, spray and pour-ons and ear tags is often the most effective when used in this order. Current research suggests using only one class of insecticide (pyrethroid or organophosphate) in all of the products used during a single season. Rotating classes of insecticides every 1-2 years prolongs the effect of each and reduces the risk of developing resistance in the fly population. Also, be sure to remove fly tags at the end of the fly season.

Other classes of active ingredients are now available to help with resistance in flies. Spinosyn and avermectin impregnated ear tags are available to use if pyrethroid or organophosphate tags are ineffective. Work with your Extension agent or veterinarian to make an informed decision on which should work best in your area.

Late Spring and Summer Pasture Weed Control

Late spring and summer are good times to work on a number of broadleaf weeds that reduce the quality of grass pastures and hay fields. As we have discussed before, some are more easily controlled than others. Spiny amaranth (pigweed) is particularly challenging. While it is relatively easy to control with 2,4-D amine when it is small, producers will often see new flushes of this weed each time it rains. This is because of a heavy seed bank in areas where cattle congregate, such as around hay rings and watering structures. To make matters worse, these areas usually have a poor stand of grass and this allows the weeds to grow unimpeded. Clipping, followed by a second application of 2,4-D amine later in the summer if needed, will help keep seed production down in these troublesome areas.

Producers are encouraged to look for the emergence of Perilla (purple) mint in the spring. This is a very poisonous, summer annual weed and, unfortunately, a number of cattle are fatally poisoned from consuming it each year in Tennessee. Look for it to be most prevalent in shady areas such as at the edges of woodlands and around structures. The time to strike on this weed is when it is young and small for two reasons: one, at this stage it is relatively easy to control with 2,4-D amine and several other herbicides; and two, the concentration of Perilla ketone (the toxic substance in the plant) is lower at this stage as compared to the mature plant. When treating areas infested with this weed, producers are strongly encouraged to remove all grazing animals until the weed carcasses have dried and turned brown.

Horsenettle (bullnettle) is a common problem in pastures in our area. Fortunately, GrazonNext HL
Our website at herbicidestewardship.utk.edu. For more information on herbicide stewardship, please visit the label. For important information regarding crop rotation, use of and understand the label before using a herbicide. It is in everyone's best interest to practice good herbicide stewardship.

Summer is the time to treat brambles (blackberries, dewberries) in pastures. A well-planned approach is needed, in that producers should avoid moving the plants prior to spraying, and then moving should be delayed as long as practical after spraying. Spot treatment of individual bushes with a high volume hand gun applicator is usually the most effective and economical approach. PastureGard HL (triclopyr + fluroxypyr) gives very good control of brambles and many other woody plants. We have seen excellent results with mid-to late summer applications. If brambles are too scattered for spot spraying to be practical, broadcast options include PastureGard HL, Chaparral (aminopyralid + metsulfuron) and Cimmaron Plus (metsulfuron + chlorsulfuron). Keep in mind that metsulfuron causes temporary injury (yellowing and stunting) in established tall fescue.

Please remember that many broadleaf crops, garden vegetables and landscape plants are very sensitive to small amounts of pasture herbicides. It is in everyone's best interest to practice good herbicide stewardship. Producers are encouraged to avoid drift of pasture herbicides to sensitive areas. Be sure to thoroughly read and understand the label before using a herbicide. Important information regarding crop rotation, use of treated hay and other restrictions are on the label. For more information on herbicide stewardship, please visit our website at herbicidestewardship.utk.edu.

Neil Rhodes
UT Extension Professor & Weed Management Specialist

Sell Them Now or Later?

Sell them now or later is a question cattle producers have asked for ages, and the question is running rampant in the cow-calf sector due to record high calf prices. But, why would the decision process to answer this question be any different today in a strong cattle market than it was a few years ago when cattle prices were much lower? The answer and the process should remain the same. The decision process should not change due to changes in market price. What might change is the final decision or result of the decision process.

Assuming the objective of every cattle producer is to maximize profits, a number of factors must be considered and evaluated to answer the question to sell calves now or later. Some of the on-farm factors that should be considered include evaluating land constraints, feed resources, labor resources, ability to cash flow, condition of cows with calves, ability to precondition calves, marketing alternatives for preconditioned calves, price risk, potential for death loss and a number of other producer specific factors. Producers should also examine cattle industry dynamics such as international trade and geopolitical issues during the decision making process. Ultimately, a producer must use today’s information to determine if selling calves later will result in a greater profit than selling them soon. A producer must also determine if he or she is willing to take the risk associated with cattle production to achieve the greatest expected profit.

The decision making process should be the same regardless if cattle prices are high or if cattle prices are low. However, it does not mean the result of the decision making process will be the same under different cattle market price conditions. Thus far, cattle prices have been strong given the market conditions experienced in 2014. Conditions supporting cattle prices include the smallest national cattle herd in more than a half century, relatively inexpensive feed, moving U.S beef into the Chinese market via Hong Kong, and Mexico beginning to accept beef from cattle older than 30 months of age among a number of other factors occurring in the industry.

The oddity of well supported and relatively high cattle prices in most producer’s eyes is at least two fold when it comes to the decision making process. The first is when producers recognize the opportunity to market calves at the highest price they have ever witnessed and sometimes the greatest profit they have ever received. However, recognizing high prices and positive profits alone do not mean cattle are not more profitable when marketed at a different time period. The second is in relation to the risk of cattle prices falling. When prices are strong, most producers selling cattle are constantly concerned with the potential of cattle prices falling and thus want to capitalize on the current market even if there is potential for a higher return at a later date. This is a real concern and some market conditions call for a producer to consider price decline potential with more scrutiny. Some market conditions are short term while others are long term and it is necessary to implement such information into the decision making process.

Alternatively, when prices are extremely low, cattle
producers’ viewpoint sometimes changes. Producers figure prices will not decline further and thus the producer holds out for higher cattle prices, because the thought is that it cannot get any worse. Additionally, many producers feel any positive information to the cattle industry will supply the boost in prices that justifies growing calves for a longer period of time.

None of these thought processes are necessarily incorrect. What is incorrect is if these are the only thoughts that cross a producer’s mind. There are methods of protecting against calf and feeder calf price declines such as the use of futures, options and livestock risk protection insurance. Cattle prices can be volatile and there is no shame in playing the cattle marketing game to protect against price declines on a seller’s market.

With that being said, market conditions are set to continue supporting cattle prices of all classes of cattle. The small national cattle herd leads the way when discussing price support and it will continue to do so for the next several years. There is always the risk of drought, some media event casting beef and cattle in a negative light, or international political tensions that could disrupt cattle markets in the short term, but the long term risk of these situations is relatively small. Producers should look for continued strength in cattle markets and evaluate their management decisions and marketing alternatives to maximize returns. So the answer to sell them now or later is yes. It is up to each producer to decide what risks he/she is willing to take.

Andrew P. Griffith
UT Agricultural Economics

New TSU Extension Agent

UT/TSU Extension-Rhea County would like to introduce our new Tennessee State University Extension Agent. Thomas Greenlee of Rutledge, Tennessee in Grainger County, is a 2013 graduate of the University of Tennessee. Thomas earned a bachelor’s degree in animal science and has worked for the Knox County Co-op as an assistant manager. During college, he competed on the UT Livestock Judging team and judged numerous county and area livestock shows.

Thomas will work with 4-H members, home owners and agricultural producers. His main focus will be Master Gardeners and 4-H livestock projects. We are pleased to welcome Thomas to our staff.

Sincerely,

Jerry Lamb
Extension Director