Bull Health
Jessica Anderson, Extension Agent, Anson County Center

The bull goes in with the cows, the bull does his job, calves are born 283 days later, all is well, right? In a perfect world, that’s how it should be. When it doesn’t happen that way, many get frustrated, disappointed, as they see the dollar signs slipping away. The job of the bull is to achieve a high conception rate in the breeding herd and impact the genetic gain of the offspring. To make sure the bull can perform, he must be kept in top physical condition so he can serve a large number of cows without injury or exhaustion and provide semen of high quality. The best way to ensure this is to annually inspect the bull, addressing some of the major concerns with bull health. Here we will discuss some common physical problems that occur with bulls.

Lameness
Lameness is a major cause of concern in bulls and can be caused simply by a physical injury to the hoof or leg, disease, or by poor leg and foot structure. Arthritis, an inflammation of joints, reduces the ability and desire to service cows, therefore decreasing conception rates. To prevent joint disease and arthritis:

- Prevent the bull from carrying excess weight, decrease grain feeding and increase exercise. This can be as simple as putting the feeder on one side of the pasture, and the water supply on the other, therefore making him walk.
- Ensure mineral balance in the ration- a phosphorous deficiency may cause swelling and lameness as can calcium deficiency, particularly if vitamin D and/or vitamin A are deficient
- Prevent bulls from fighting or other physical injury
- Be aware that arthritis is genetic and that some blood lines carry a predisposition
- Lameness can also be caused by a bacterial infection such as **Fusobacterium necrophorum**
which causes foot rot.

**Injuries to Reproductive System**
- Penis and sheath injury may prevent the bull from serving. They cause pain and swelling and occasionally become infected.
- Prolapse of the prepuce in a bull is a serious condition that causes infertility. It is more common in Bos indicus breeds, but does occur in some British breeds. Bulls with pendulous sheaths must be watched closely for this problem.
- Any form of deviation on the extended penis may affect the bull’s fertility by preventing a full service. An inherited problem through polled breeds is the premature spiral deviation (“corkscrew”) is a common penile defect. Its severity increases as the bull ages.
- Annually inspect your bulls, as an employee he should be doing his job!

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**Reducing Hay Loss During Winter Feeding**

Jamie Warner, Extension Agent, Agriculture, Montgomery County Center

It’s common knowledge that feeding hay gets expensive, but for most cattle farmers it is a necessary evil during the winter months. Below are a few suggestions that can possibly help minimize hay wastage during winter feeding.

- Limit the amount of hay fed. This can be achieved by using a hay ring or by feeding a day’s worth of hay at a time.
- Feed hay in well-drained areas to reduce losses due to excessive moisture. If possible, rotate the hay feeding areas to different spots around the pasture/farm.
- When storing hay outside decrease spoilage by covering bales or storing under a shelter.
- Make sure that adequate space around hay rings is provided so that all cows (not just the bullies) get a sufficient amount. A general rule of thumb is 10 cows per ring.

If you feed round bales that are unrolled on the pasture for cattle, do so on a daily basis. This will diminish hay waste but also allow you to move the feeding area around thus using the cattle as your manure/nutrient spreaders.

Hay wastage is inevitable, but with good management techniques, it can be reduced. For more help with winter feeding strategies, please contact your local Extension Agent.

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**Nickels for Know-How Vote Set for November 16, 2011**

Supporting Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching at North Carolina State University

A self-assessed, statewide check-off that supports agricultural research, extension, and teaching programs in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) at NC State University will be held **Wednesday, November 16, 2011**, subject to approval by the Board of Agriculture.

Users of feed and fertilizer in North Carolina will vote on November 16 whether to continue the voluntary 15 cents per ton self-assessment on fertilizer and animal feed produced in our state. Since 1951, the Nickels check-off has been voted on every six years and has passed in the 13 previous referenda by an average 90% favorable vote.

Andrew Burleson, a local
The following table provides average sale prices (avg. $/cwt) and average dollars per head (avg. $/head) using medium frame 550 lb and 750 lb black steers. Due to the economic “roller coaster” that we have experienced and the constant rise and fall of feeder cattle prices from week to week, comparisons have been made using sale prices from the Wednesday Auction and the perspective Feeder Calf Sale of the same week.

The take-home message for marketing feeder cattle is that we have multiple opportunities available for selling our calf crops and there is not just one method that fits all farms and management strategies. If you are willing to go the extra mile, then marketing through Value Added BQA Feeder Cattle Sales or the truckload opportunity with Rocky River Cattle Alliance can put some added dollars in your beef cattle operation. Also notable is that selling earlier in the season and selling heavier cattle can add some dollars per head to your pocket. Putting our bulls in with the herd earlier could be a possibility to move the onset of calving season a little sooner. Adding a creep feeding system and feeding commodity feeds to increase weaning/selling weights is another option. One word of caution though is to make sure you have the genetics that will grow efficiently and add a pound of gain for less than it costs you. The only way to know is to keep up with feed consumption and know what your calves are gaining. If you need help with these calculations and record keeping and want to give it a try, contact your local livestock extension agent. And finally numbers still prove that marketing through the graded feeder cattle sales still puts more dollars back into the farm than the weekly livestock auctions. 

**2011 Norwood Area Feeder Calf Sale Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sale Date</th>
<th>5 Wt/ Black Steers (M5A)</th>
<th>7 Wt Black Steers (M7A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avg. $/cwt</td>
<td>Avg. $/head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. July 13</td>
<td>125.71</td>
<td>$691.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 14 – Feeder Sale</td>
<td>131.75</td>
<td>$724.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed. July 20</td>
<td>122.75</td>
<td>$675.13</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 21 – BQA Sale</td>
<td>140.50</td>
<td>$772.75</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*The “Rocky River Cattle Marketing Alliance” marketed 5 truckloads of Value Added BQA Feeder Cattle on July 13, 2011.

Load 1 Steers– avg. weight-760 lbs brought 133.75 = $1,016.50 per head
Load 2 Steers– avg. weight-775 lbs brought 136.00 = $1,054.00 per head
Load 3 Steers– avg. weight-810 lbs brought 130.25 = $1,055.03 per head
Load 4 Steers– avg. weight-900 lbs brought 128.75 = $1,158.75 per head
Load 5 Split Load – Steers 790 lbs brought 132.00 = $1,042.80 per head
Heifers 680 lbs brought 127.00 = $863.60 per head

If anyone is interested in this beef cattle truckload marketing opportunity please contact Steve Lemons at (704) 983-3987.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sale Date</th>
<th>5 Wt/ Black Steers (M5A)</th>
<th>7 Wt Black Steers (M7A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avg. $/cwt</td>
<td>Avg. $/head</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. August 17</td>
<td>119.00</td>
<td>$654.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 18 – Feeder Sale</td>
<td>128.00</td>
<td>$704.00</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. September 7</td>
<td>120.25</td>
<td>$661.38</td>
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<td>Sept. 8 – BQA Sale</td>
<td>133.85</td>
<td>$736.18</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. September 14</td>
<td>116.25</td>
<td>639.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 15 – Feeder Sale</td>
<td>131.20</td>
<td>721.60</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Remember - Feeder Cattle Meeting on November 17.
Persons with disability or persons with limited English proficiency can request accommodations by contacting Steve Lemons, Extension Agent, 704.983.3987, Fax 704.983.3303, or e-mail steve_lemons@ncsu.edu at least five days prior to any event listed in this newsletter.