

Topic of the Month

Heifer Inventory

In recent years, heifer inventory has been a hot topic at lots of veterinary meetings. Raising heifers is expensive. Selling calves or springers won't make much money. Buying replacements may be a cheaper alternative, but you never know just what you'll get (in either heifer quality or diseases you introduce into the herd). Should you breed to beef? And what is the best strategy to make sure your herd is making progress?

These are all good questions and worthy of your attention and there is no one answer that is right for every farm. The first question to ask has to be "How many replacement heifers do I need for my operation?". That answer should help your decision making. Of course, you have to consider heifer facilities, and availability of replacements for purchase. But one of the biggest take-away points from these meetings is that the majority of farm operations, both large and small, are paying to raise more heifers than they will ever need.

Most likely, the answer for your farm involves some combination of options. But before you figure out who to breed to beef, you need to figure out replacement numbers. Then you can consider other parameters like genomic testing and current lactation data.

The one piece of advice I think we can all agree on is that raising replacements is expensive, and if you don't know what you need, your operation is surely bleeding money.

Commodity Futures

Prices

As of February 28, 2019

Corn	\$3.62/bu
Soybean Meal	\$302.30/ton
Milk (Class III)	\$15.24/cwt
Beef (Live cattle)	\$129.95/cwt

Practice News & Upcoming Events

- SW PA Regional Dairy Day will be held Thursday, March 7 from 8:45am until 2:30pm at Chestnut Ridge Golf Resort and Conference Center in Blairsville. Topics include rumen development, marketing, and heifer inventory. The meeting is free but registration is required. Contact PennState extension at 1-877-345-0691 to register.
- White Oak will be hosting a Beef Quality Assurance meeting in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Beef Council and Rob's Rations. The meeting date has been set for Wednesday, April 24 at 6pm. This meeting is not only for beef producers. Since most dairy animals will also enter the food chain as meat animals, some markets require dairy farmers to participate in meat quality programs such as BQA or the FARM program. Watch for flyers to be sent out ahead of the meeting.

In The News

- Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) and Sen. Ed Markey (D-MA) have released their "Green New Deal" plan. Offered as a solution to climate change, the plan suggests eliminating things such as air travel and cattle to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while offering alternatives such as high-speed rails and energy solutions that would be tremendously expensive. The current plan probably does not represent a serious threat to agriculture, as it has met strong resistance even within the Democratic Party and fails to offer a real solution to climate change as a real or imagined problem. However it has opened a door for many people to start offering what they believe are solutions to energy and pollution problems.