

Topic of the Month

Breeding Soundness Exams

Whether dairy or beef, few things are as costly for a herd as reproductive failure. With this in mind, White Oak has begun offering breeding soundness exams for bulls. This testing requires only some simple equipment and basic restraint and is a worthwhile investment for any herd sire or clean up bull.

The procedure involves measuring a few parameters and assessing normal libido (drive to breed), structure and function of the testicles and penis, and semen quality. A breeding bull should be able to pass the test by the time he is a year old.

Libido is assessed by visual observation that the bull is interested in breeding. He also must be sound on his feet and legs, and with good vision.

Next his testicles are palpated. He fails the test if there are adhesions or abnormalities or if they are not sized appropriately for his age.

Using a machine called an electroejaculator, a semen sample is collected. During the process, the penis is observed for normal structure and function. The semen sample is analyzed under a microscope to ensure that the sperm are normally developed and free from defects, and that they move properly (as opposed to spinning in circles or just fidgeting in place, for example).

We are also in the process of purchasing the equipment for semen testing small ruminants.

With breeding season fast approaching, now is the time to consider having your bulls tested.

Commodity Futures

Prices

As of March 31, 2018

Corn (May '18)	\$3.88/bu
Soybean Meal	\$384.00/ton
Milk (Class III)	\$14.23/cwt
Beef (Live cattle)	\$113.75/cwt

Practice News

- Dr. Dan Zawisza recently completed a half marathon race. The race length is 13.1 miles. Dr. Zawisza also recently joined an initiative called Team BEEF, which is run by the PA Beef Council. Participants receive a jersey to wear during running races, cycling, or triathlons. They also go through a series of online modules called the Masters of Beef Advocacy program. The goal is to attract attention and create a public forum for discussion of the benefits of lean beef, while also dispelling ignorance regarding beef raising practices, antibiotic and drug use and residues in meat, and relative value of alternative protein sources, among other things. To learn more, you can visit their website at <https://www.pabeef.org/about-us/team-beef>.

In The News

- McDonald's is planning to introduce new items to their menu, increasing use of dairy products. This will include specialty sandwiches using larger slices of cheddar and McCafé drinks featuring milk. McDonald's has a partnership contract with Dairy Management Inc. which manages the dairy checkoff program.
- According to USDA data, February's dairy cow cull numbers were the highest they have been for that month since 2012. Estimates for the month were 260,700 dairy cows slaughtered and subject to federal inspection. That was 7,500 more than February of last year. Through February 2018, the total cull is about 550,500. That's about 28,000 more than the same period in 2017. USDA reports that there are 9.41 million dairy cows in the US herd.