Livestock Ledger

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Minimize Cattle Feeding Losses

The market for fed cattle has plunged $15/cwt. lower than prices received a year ago, but every cattle feeder probably knows this fact. Cattlemen also know the market prices do fluctuate, requiring management skills that are effective for both maximizing profits and minimizing losses.

As a cattle feeder, you do have some control over management factors which can influence costs. Failure to follow recommended practices can result in feedlot performance being lowered and profit losses greater than necessary.

- Failure to control internal parasites can result in 5-15 percent poorer feed efficiency and a 5-15 percent decrease in rate of gain.
- Failure to control lice and mange may cause a 10-15 percent reduction in gain and 5-10 percent reduction in feed efficiency.
- Failure to use growth promotants and feed additives may cost you 10-12 percent lower daily gains and 12-15 percent poorer feed efficiency.
- Failure to feed adequate protein can result in a staggering 20 percent reduction in performance.
- Failure to provide clean, fresh water can result in performance losses of 5-10 percent.
- Failure to properly manage your feed bunks will reduce consumption and performance.

Minimize your losses by maximizing on good management efforts.

Hot Weater Tips For Raising Hogs

Summer is just around the corner and the temperatures are already climbing into the 90's, during this time of your hogs reach the "upper critical temperature," increasing the risk of heat, stress, and even death. However, many steps can be taken to make your hogs more comfortable during the hot weather season.

Providing a water based cooling system is a good way to keep hogs comfortable during the hot summer months. Drippers, misters, sprayers, and evaporative pads are some of the water-based cooling systems available. If you use drippers, mister nozzles or sprinklers make sure the water outlet is not clogged.

Make sure the barn is well ventilated to remove heat during the summer, and provide adequate space for your hogs. A minimum of 8-9 square feet for each hog weighing 160-220 pounds is required.

Adjust your feeding program for finishing hogs during the hot weather. Heat-stressed pigs eat less which slows down their growth rate. A hog weighing more than 200 pounds can reduce its daily feed intake to nearly zero when temperatures exceed 90°F. Adjust amino acids, the most limiting nutritient for growing hots. Increase the lysine by 10 to 15 percent which should help market hogs maintain performance and sustain their full growing potential. Also, add energy-dense fat to their diet, which will help maintain the hogs calorie intake. Fat also reduces body temperatures.

Make sure hogs always have easy access to unclogged waterers —*Contributed by Jeff Bollinger, extension livestock summer assistant.*

Selecting The Right Ram

When choosing a ram for your purebred or commercial flock, many points should be remembered.

- Select a ram from a flock free of diseases.
- Choose a ram which is a twin or triplet which may produce more multiple births in his lamb crop.
- Select a quick growing, structurally correct ram.
- If possible, examine the ram's dam and sire to assure you that the ram has the qualities you are looking for.
- Select a ram containing two properly developed testicles in the scrotum.
- When you have chosen your ram, isolate him for 30 days away from the rest of the flock.

Contributed by Jeff Bollinger, extension livestock summer assistant.

Conservation Farmers On Schedule

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — About 90 percent of the conservation plans on Pennsylvania's most highly erodible cropland are being carried out on schedule, according to results of the 1993 status review conducted by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Conservation practices to protect these fragile soils have been fully applied for nearly half these plans.

"Most farmers have made great efforts to reduce soil erosion," said Richard Duncan, State Conservationist for SCS in Pennsylvania. "SCS field personnel, state conservation agencies and conservation districts have worked hard to help these farmers. I encourage them to continue to carry out their plans on schedule and meet the required deadline."

The conservation plans were developed on highly erodible cropland as a result of a conservation provision in the Food Security Act of 1985, which linked soil conservation to farm program benefits for the first time. Under the law, producers must carry out practices in their plans by December 31 to stay eligible for most U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm program benefits.

Duncan said SCS is progressing well in carrying out "the most intensive federal soil conservation effort ever undertaken on private lands in Pennsylvania".

The 1993 status review provides a statistically reliable sample on conservation plans on highly erodible cropland. SCS personnel conducted on-site reviews on 1,491 plans covering 84,007 acres.

These reviews indicate plans are on schedule on about 90 percent of the cultivated cropland covered. These estimates show that erosion on our most highly erodible lands will be reduced by about 60 percent, going from an estimated state average of 7.9 tons per acre in 1985 to 3.0 tons per acre annually when plans are fully implemented by the December 31 deadline.

Significant benefits from this soil erosion reduction include less erosion damage to the nation's water and air quality, wildlife habitat enhancement and the protection of the long-term productivity of the nation's most vulnerable cropland.

"Producers have accepted the challenge to change the way they operate in order to protect the environment," Duncan said. "The public has shown that it wants good stewardship."

A small percentage of plans are not on schedule because they were granted variances, or one-year extensions. The extensions are granted when producers have made the best effort possible to keep on schedule but could not due to uncontrollable circumstances, such as hardship or weather, or factors which had minimal impact on accomplishing the erosion reduction goals.

SCS does the annual status review to monitor conservation plan implementation. The agency also conducts annual quality reviews to ensure status reviews are accurate, adequately documented and completed in a timely manner.