

# Cattle Call - December 2011

Howdy Rockingham County Cattle E-mailers,

Included in this December 2011 Cattle Call is Extension's Beef Cattle related educational information & announcements for Rockingham & Guilford Counties. Please send me any announcements, or buy and sale items, hay or other that you wish to be included in EACH Cattle call. (SHORT AS POSSIBLE) THERE ARE NO CONTINUAL RUNNING SPOTS, SO YOU NEED TO SEND THESE TO ME FOR \*EACH\* Cattle Call.

\*\*\*PLEASE PUT IN SUBJECT LINE – \*\*\*Cattle Call. \*\*\*

If I forgot to include anything in this email it was a total oversight on my part. BUT LET ME KNOW!

\*\*\*\*\*GOT A QUESTION OR WOULD LIKE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SOMETHING, LET ME KNOW SO IT CAN BE INCLUDED IN THE NEXT CATTLE CALL!\*\*\*\*\*

As Always - I would like to hear your comments!

Included in This Cattle Call

1. **Rockingham County Cattleman's Christmas Gathering - December 8th**
2. **Winter Forage Conference Set – NC Forage & Grasslands Council - January 25<sup>th</sup> – Guilford Co Ag Center**
3. **Rockingham County January 12<sup>th</sup> Cattleman's Program**
4. **ATTENTION: YOUR FEEDBACK Is NEEDED!**
5. **Management Practices for More Profit**
6. **Management of Young Beef Females**
7. **Preparing for Bull Buying Season - Steps to think about before purchasing**
8. **Controlling the Breeding and Calving Season**
9. **Does age affect quality and yield grades of harvested steers?**
10. **What should I consider when selecting replacement heifers?**
11. **Cattle Management Reminders**
12. **Forage Management Tips**
13. **The Value of Good Records**
14. **HAY DIRECTORY**
15. **Take A Load Off**

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**1. Rockingham County Cattlemen's Christmas Gathering - \*\*THURSDAY December 8th\*\***

The 2011 Rockingham County Cattlemen's Christmas gathering will take place on December 8<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 6:30 pm at the Rockingham Agricultural Center in Wentworth.(525 NC Hwy 65, Wentworth) This program is once again being Sponsored by Southern States Reidsville Service.

As always, this event will be a great festive and educational program for area cattle producers. Summer Santana, Feed Sales & Tech Rep, SOUTHERN STATES will be providing the program. Make sure you come out for Good Food & Information. If you are planning to attend this event, PLEASE CALL Reidsville Southern States at [336-349-7074](tel:336-349-7074) by Monday, November 28<sup>th</sup> TO RESERVE YOUR PLACE FOR DINNER!.

I hope you plan to come on Thursday December 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. to be a part of what I know will be an excellent program! All Rockingham County Cattlemen are invited! Special Thanks to Mark Wood and The Reidsville Service Of Southern States Coop., Inc. for Sponsoring this event!

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**2. Winter Forage Conference Set – NC Forage & Grasslands Council - January 25<sup>th</sup> – Guilford Co Ag Center**

The North Carolina Forage & Grassland Council in Conjunction with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service will be hosting a series of winter conferences with one to be held January 25<sup>th</sup> from 12:30 -7:00pm in Greensboro at the Guilford County Agricultural Center located at 3309 Burlington Road. Ray Archuleta, a Natural Resources Conservation Service Agronomist will be this year's speaker. He will be discussing healthy Soils Reduce Chemical Inputs on Grazing & Cropping Systems and we will also be featuring a local Producer, as well as a Local Producer Panel discussing Dealing with High Input Costs. This producer panel is always an audience favorite.

The cost is \$15 for NC Forage and Grassland Council members, \$25 for non-members & \$10 for Students. For more information, give me a call at 342-8235.

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**3. Rockingham County January 12<sup>th</sup> Cattleman's Program**

Its hard to believe that 2011 is coming to an end but we already have 2012 in our sights with the first Cattleman's meeting of the new year scheduled for January 12<sup>th</sup> This program is set to begin at 7 pm. at the Rockingham Country Agricultural Center with a catered dinner and an informative program to follow.

At this program, we will be discussing Cattle Marketing and the New Livestock Marketing Facility in Alamance County. Fellow cattle producers Doug Gilliam & Frank Bell will coming to provide local cattlemen with very important information about this marketing opportunity that may be crucial for profitability and survival of the cattle farming enterprise.

I know that this will be a Good program and a Great Start to 2012, so make sure you make plans to attend. *If you are planning to attend this program on January 12th, please call Ben Chase, Extension Livestock Agent 342-8235, by Friday January 6<sup>th</sup> and reserve your place. When you call, please leave your name, phone number and the names of those planning to attend.* The cost for dinner will be \$8.00 per person. *(You will be responsible for the places you reserve)*

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#### **4. ATTENTION: YOUR FEEDBACK Is NEEDED!**

**I need your comments about the "Cattle Call" (this newsletter) - Yes it is that time of year for me to do some needed reports that are sent into Raleigh. What I need from you is your comments about how this newsletter, or the Cattle Extension Program, has had an impact on YOU!**

**What is really helpful is if you can include any economic figures (money figures such as how much money it could have saved you or how much it made for you due to you doing what you learned from it or by attending one of the programs)**

**Thanks for any of your feedback!**

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#### **5. Management Practices for More Profit**

Surviving in the beef cattle business requires all the management skills one can muster. Trade magazines are full of articles on cost cutting practices and they are all of some worth. The following "MIX and MATCH" questions are not so much to determine the economic value of the management practice described, but more importantly, to remind producers that some practices demand more attention than others.

Numbers used USDA-NC Dept of Ag Market News NC Weighted Average Auction Report, Nov 3 2011

1. The number one means of increasing gross returns of the beef cattle enterprise is to increase the weaning % by 10 percentage points.

Assume a 30 Cow Herd: 80 % Weaning = 24 Calves per Year

90 % Weaning = 27 Calves per Year

Value of Three Extra Calves :3 calves @ 471 lbs. @ \$1.27 per lb. = \$1794.51 extra per year

(Steers \$134.94 Heifers \$119.24 Av \$127.09/cwt)

According to several surveys, the weaning % for NC is between 75 to 80%. The surveys also pointed out that the upper one-third of beef producers were weaning better than 90%. So the question is : Where are you losing calves and why? The first step to increase weaning percentage is to identify where it is that you are losing calves. Then you can focus on that particular aspect of management.

North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University commit themselves to positive action to secure equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, sex, age, or disability. In addition, the two Universities welcome all persons without regard to sexual orientation. North Carolina State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments cooperating

Time of Calf Loss

Possible Reasons

(1) prior to calving

A. open (age, nutrition, disease)

B. abortions (infectious diseases, molds, toxicants)

(2) at calving to calving plus 2 days A. Deworming at 3 to 4 months of age.

B. Improper presentation

C. underdeveloped replacement heifers

D. ditches, ponds, predators

E. cows not checked/assisted

3. the first two weeks

A. infections (unsanitary conditions)

B. genetic disorders

C. nutritional deficiency (Se or Vit. A)

D. inadequate colostrum

4. 14 to 90 days

A. milk (too much or too little)

B. accidents

5. 90 days +

A. diseases

B. nutrition deficiency

2. The second greatest return can come from using calf best management practices that include deworming, implanting, castration and fly control. It is bothersome to go to a stockyard and see calves that have not undergone these basic practices. For a 30-cow herd, the returns for these management practices are:

a. Deworming at 3 to 4 months of age. Data indicates that it adds 7 to 22 lb to weaning weight of calf.

If average 10 extra lb. at weaning:  $10 \text{ lbs} @ \$1.27 \text{ per lb} \times 24 \text{ calves} = \$ 304.80$

minus cost of \$ 2.00 per head = - 48

net return of = \$ 256.80

b. Implanting once prior to weaning. Data indicate an additional 15 pounds at weaning.

$15 \text{ lbs} @ \$1.27 \text{ per lb} \times 24 \text{ calves} = \$ 457.20$

minus cost of \$ 1 per head = - 24

net return of = \$ 437.20

c. Castration of bull calves. Steers weighing 450-495 lbs. (471 lbs.) sold for an average of 10 cents per pound more than bull calves.

$$471 \text{ lbs @ } \$0.10 \times 12 \text{ calves} = \$ 565.20$$

d. Fly control. Data indicate an additional 7 lbs at weaning.

$$7 \text{ lbs @ } \$1.27 \times 24 \text{ calves} = \$213.36$$

$$\text{minus cost of } \$ 2.00/\text{hd} = - 48$$

$$\text{net return of} \quad \quad \quad = \$ 165.36$$

1424.56 Total Return = \$

Adding up these four basic management practices yields a grand total of \$ 1424.56 return.

3. Marketing through graded sales.

a. Graded sales average \$0.05 per lb. over weekly sales.

$$\$0.05 \times 471 \text{ lbs.} \times 24 \text{ calves} = \$ 565.20$$

4. Intensive grazing and pasture management.

a. Data indicate that good forage management can increase carrying capacity 10 - 15%

b. With a 10% improvement, instead of 30 cows, you could run 33 and wean 2.4 extra calves

$$2.4 \text{ calves @ } 471 \text{ lbs @ } \$1.27 \text{ per lb} = \$ 1435.61$$

c. Cost\* fencing - (box, posts, wire, gates, time) \$ 1000 over 5 years = \$ 200 per year

\* seeding & fertilizing improved grasses \$ 300 per year

d. Returns to labor and management \$ 935.61 per year

5. Narrowing the calving season. - The average weaning weight of a herd may be 480 lbs, but within that herd, there are calves at exceed that average and others that fail to meet it. The variation within a herd is dependent upon many factors. In calculating what such variation costs, a figure of +/- 15% is a conservative figure.

a. Assume a 30 cow herd calved as follows:

Cycle	# Head	WW, lb
1st 21 days	6	552
2nd 21 days	6	516
3rd 21 days	6	444
4th 21 days	6	408
84 -90 day	24	480

b. Decide to keep extra heifers and cull late calvers.

- To accomplish this:
1. breed heifers 30 days ahead of cow herd
  2. pull bull after 63 days with cows
  3. cull cows not bred and late calving cows to keep 30 head

c. Calving sequence the following year:

	# head	WW, lb.
Heifers	6	3024 lbs.
1st 21 days –cows	12	6624 lbs.
2nd 21 days	3	1548 lbs.
3rd 21 days	3	1548 lbs.
cows calving within 63 days	24	531 lb. Average

d. Gross return  $531 - 480 = 51$  extra lb@ $\$1.27$  = \$1554.48

(From previous average above of 480 lb WW)

6. Genetic improvement or selective breeding

a. Cross-breeding can add 5% to ww (24 lb)

b. Use of EPD in bull selection can add 24 pounds to ww

c. Returns  $24 \text{ lbs @ } \$1.27 \times 24 \text{ calves} = \$ 731.52$

After looking over these six examples of management practices that can increase your income from beef cattle, are there some that you have overlooked in the past? Remember these are very conservative figures (LOW) and you can probably do better than these listed. Now is the time to seek more information on these and other practices and assistance in implementing a sound management program.

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## 6. Management of Young Beef Females

Probably the most difficult position in a cow herd is the first calf heifer. As she weans her first calf, she is two-and-one-half years old. She will be three years old at her next calving and the youngest producing cow in the herd. She is youthful, but she is also low on the pecking order.

After a summer of having room to run, she finds herself with all the old boss cows and wondering where to turn. Her life gives new meaning to stress: facing down mature fully grown cows when they are hungry, fighting for room to lay down on bedding, etc. Old cows out-weigh the first calf heifer by 220 pounds (about 17 percent) and have more energy reserve in terms of body condition.

Typical first calf heifers have a condition score of 4.9 while your mature cows will average 5 or more. Factor experience into the equation for the old cows and it is easy to see why the coming three-year-old needs special attention.

No one wants to run heifers with old cows. The same needs to be true for the first-calf heifer that is coming up on three years of age. The heifer may never be any thinner until she turns 11. Statistics from North Dakota CHAPS producers going back to 1979 show those first-calf heifers (two-and-half-year-olds as they wean their first calves) are always the lightest in the fall, coming in at 1,082 pounds. Fall is the most logical time to weigh cows and that is the weight which is discussed.

The numbers show the disadvantages for the younger cows. The weights and condition scores are: two-year-olds weighed 1,082 lbs. with a score of 4.9, three-year-olds weighed 1,184 with a score of 5, four-year-olds weighed 1,255 with a score of 5, five-year-olds weighed 1,279 with a score of 5.1, six-year-olds weighed 1,301 with a score of 5.2, and the seven-year-olds weighed 1,304 with a score of 5.2.

Cows continue to grow until they reach seven years of age. Body condition is more constant and levels off a year earlier at six years of age. The important point to remember is that cows are not fully grown as heifers and actually have seven years of growth before they start to decrease in weight. Cows slowly work themselves up to a peak weight at seven years of age and then start to lose weight until they leave the herd. Fourteen-year-old cows weigh the same as three-year-old cows in the fall of the year.

Body condition is held more constant and six-, seven- and eight- year-old cows all have similar body condition scores. However, at 11 years of age, cows drop back to body condition scores more typical of two-year-old cows. Numbers show that young cows and old cows need to be treated similarly and fed separate from the rest of the herd to maximize performance.

There are few studies detailing the management of old cows for calf production. Most old cow studies are geared to white or yellow fat, but that is another story. Keep on sorting, it's worth the effort.

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## 7. Preparing for Bull Buying Season - Steps to think about before purchasing

The Bull sale season is getting cranked up, and many producers will be looking to acquire additional bull power for the upcoming breeding season. Bull selection is Job #1 for genetic improvement, as nearly all herd improvement over time is a direct result of genetics infused through new bulls. Consequently, selection of the right bull is paramount. Finding the right bull is a process which should start long before arrival at the bull sale or opening the sale catalog. Identifying genetic priorities greatly enhance the ability to find the right bull, and ultimately make the genetic progress needed within the herd.

**Identify Herd Goals** - Herd goals serve as the basis for sire selection and determine should which traits have the most economic importance. Defining the production and marketing system, along with management strategies and environment (including forage and feed resources) are key factors that warrant consideration:

Will the bull be used on heifers, mature cows, or both? Will replacement females be retained in the herd?

How will the calf crop be marketed (at weaning?, backgrounded?, retained ownership? sell females?) What are the labor and management resources available? What are the feed resources and environmental conditions of the operation? How will this sire contribute to the overall breeding system plan? Evaluate Herd Strengths and Weaknesses

Fundamental records are key to identifying strengths and weaknesses. Basic performance parameters such as calving percentage, weaning percentage, weaning weights, sale weights, carcass merit, feed usage, etc. are necessary to serve as the basis for assessing areas of strength and those needing attention.

**Establish Selection Priorities** - Concentrate on those factors which stand to have the largest impact on profitability. Remember that income is derived from performance (sale weight, % calf crop weaned, carcass merit, etc.). Performance is a function of both genetics and management. Superior genetics can be negated by improper management, which emphasizes the importance of considering the interaction of management (nutrition, health program) and genetics when specific priorities for the herd are established. As an example, higher milk production is accompanied by increased nutritional requirements. These increased nutritional requirements must be met to realize more performance. Focus on a handful of priority traits rather than attempting to change many traits simultaneously. Establishing the few traits to focus on is the key factor. It is likely that several traits may be at optimum levels already in the herd, so the priority may be to hold these constant while focusing on a

few that need changed.

**Utilize Selection Tools** - Once selection priorities have been established through close examination of herd goals and current status, a number of useful tools are at the disposal of beef producers to assist in making genetic improvement. Genetic differences across breeds have been well established, and utilization of different breeds in a complimentary fashion through structured crossbreeding plans provides the opportunity for improvement in multiple traits. Most importantly, heterosis attained through crossbreeding has been shown to have significant favorable impacts on traits such as reproductive efficiency and cow longevity which are critical for herd profitability. The limited ability to select for reproductive traits in the form of EPDs further emphasizes the importance of capturing the value of heterosis. EPDs are available for many traits of economic importance. The introduction of economic indexes which combine several related traits and their economic values into one EPD are available to assist with simultaneous improvement in multiple traits which together impact areas such as carcass merit and post-weaning profit (Angus \$Beef and Weaned Calf Value, Simmental API and TI, etc.). Again, with the large number of EPD tools available, the critical step is to determine the EPDs which are most important and establish benchmarks relative to each.

**Establish Benchmarks** - Several tools can be utilized to assist in the determination of EPD specifications. EPD values for current and past sires can be used as benchmarks. With these benchmarks, EPD specifications can be set to reflect the desired increase or moderation in performance for a particular trait. As an example, establishing a benchmark for milk EPD can be determined through the relationship between previous sires' genetics for milk and the performance of his daughters in the herd.

**Find Source** - With the above defined, we can now begin to look at individual bulls. There are many sources of bulls that warrant consideration- test stations, production sales, and private treaty sales. Of critical importance is that the bull be from a reputable source which will stand behind their product.

**Do Your Homework** - The first step to doing so is to evaluate the sale catalog, performance pedigree, and data. By examination of the bull's performance record, determine which bulls meet the EPD and other specifications that have been established (and likewise eliminate those that do not meet the specifications). Be prepared to make trade-offs, as the perfect record may not be attainable. Do not be surprised or alarmed when the bulls you have highlighted appear scattered throughout the sale order. Remember to stick to the selection criteria and qualifications/specifications that have been established. All this can and should be accomplished prior to ever looking at the bulls.

**Have a Look** - Once the list has been narrowed to only bulls which meet the criteria, these bulls can be further evaluated and selection refined. Having a list of suitable bulls prior to arrival at the auction or farm will not only save time, but also assist in making sure the right bull for the situation is purchased. Upon narrowing the potential candidates on paper, the bulls can be evaluated for suitability of phenotypic traits and the potential candidate list shortened even further. Not all relevant

traits have EPDs (examples include disposition, fleshing ability, etc.), and therefore must be evaluated visually.

**Make a Sound Investment** - For many cow calf producers, purchasing a new bull is a relatively infrequent occurrence. This emphasizes the importance of selecting the right bull, particularly in single sire herds. The value of the right bull cannot be underestimated. Investments in the right genetics will pay dividends both short and long-term through the influence the bull has on each calf crop as well as his daughters that are retained in the herd.

**Manage the New Bull Properly** - Of equal importance is the care and management of the newly acquired bull. Proper management and nutrition are essential for the bull to perform satisfactorily during the breeding season. With most new herd sires purchased as yearling bulls- management prior to, during, and after the first breeding season is particularly important. Plan ahead by acquiring a new yearling bull 60 to 90 prior to the breeding season so that ample time is available to allow for adjustment to a new environment, commingling with other bulls, and getting the bull in proper breeding body condition

The following guidelines can be used.

<b>Bull's Age</b>	<b>Number of Females</b>
12 - 18 months	15 - 12
15 - 18 months	12 - 18
18 - 20 months	18 - 25
24 months and older	25 - 35
3 years (up to about 7)	35-40

What do bulls need before the breeding season? A Breeding Soundness Exam (BSE) should be performed on every breeding bull within 60 days of his being turned with cows. Past performance means nothing to future breeding potential. Injury or disease can render a bull sterile without a producer's knowledge. It is better to know that a bull is sterile before he is turned in with the cows rather than after he is removed.

A bull needs to feel good and be in good physical condition when he is turned in with the cows for the breeding season. You need to evaluate bulls daily just as you do your cows. The day you turn a bull out with the cow herd is not the time to determine that he needs more weight or has a limp. Also, a bull needs the same vaccination program as do your cows. He also needs to be on a good deworming program. A BSE (Breeding Soundness Exam) needs to be performed on your bull by your veterinarian on an annual basis, preferably within 30 but not more than 60 days before the breeding season. A BSE evaluates body condition, feet and leg soundness, a semen check, and thorough reproductive exam. This exam is money well spent. Just because a bull was fertile last year does not

mean he will be fertile this year. Disease or physical injury that you miss seeing or knowing about can render a bull worthless as a sire. The worst time to discover a reproductive problem in your bull is 30 days after the breeding season ends. Bulls are a big investment. It is your responsibility to make sure that your bull performs up to your expectations.

- Why should I have my bull fertility tested if he looks healthy and worked last year? Many things can happen to a bull in a year. Injury, illness, low body condition score, chemicals, weather, etc. can all affect bull fertility. Many times, even a healthy-appearing bull can have fertility problems. It is a wise investment to have your veterinarian perform a complete breeding soundness examination at least 30-60 days prior to the beginning of the breeding season. If the bull has a fertility problem, this will allow time to find a replacement before the breeding season begins.

The Butner Bull Test Sale will be held on Friday, December 16, 2011 at the Granville County Livestock Arena in Oxford. Bulls will be moved to the sale site Thursday, December 15. The bull sale will start at 1:00 pm. [http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/an\\_sci/extension/animal/bcip/Ahbcip.html](http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/an_sci/extension/animal/bcip/Ahbcip.html)

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## **8. Controlling the Breeding and Calving Season**

**The first step in reproductive management is controlling the breeding and calving seasons. Whichever calving season (winter, spring, or fall) is chosen, the following reasons illustrate why a controlled, seasonal calving schedule is desirable.**

**1. The culling of cows and selection of replacements is based on production records; however, accurate comparisons in the production of cows within a herd cannot be made unless a certain degree of uniformity exists among their calves. Decisions to keep or cull cows should reflect relative performance of calves within the herd. Acceptable performance implies not only weaning weight but also that a cow produce a calf every 12 months.**

**2. Shortened calving seasons provide a better opportunity to offer improved management and observation of the cow herd, which should result in fewer death losses at calving (a source of reproductive failure among any herd of cows). This is vital because percent calf crop weaned is one of the major profit**

determining factors in a cow calf operation.

3. Shortened calving periods facilitate improvements in herd health and management. Uniformity in timing of vaccinations and routine management practices result in decreased labor requirements and enhanced efficiency. Pregnancy testing and culling of open cows, which can reduce feed expense and improve herd efficiency, cannot be accomplished with year round calving.

4. Brood cow nutrition can be improved by grouping cows according to stage of gestation and feeding each group accordingly. When cows are strung out in their expected calving dates, it is difficult to provide cows adequate nutrition in a cost effective manner.

5. Calf crops that are uniform in age and size can be marketed to better advantage and thereby exceed returns over calves that lack uniformity in either age or weight. Calves born in the first 21 days of the calving season can weigh 30 pounds more at weaning than those born during the second 21 day period. Calves born 42 days into the calving season have been found to weigh as much as 70 pounds less than those born in the first 21 days and 42 pounds less than calves born in the second 21 days. Data from Cattle Fax indicates a \$7 per cwt increase in the value of 7 like calves marketed together compared to marketing a similar calf as a single.

Hence, shortening the calving season results in: \$ heavier, more uniform calves at weaning \$ better use of available labor \$ better opportunity to select for fertility in the cow herd \$ greater income potential

One management tool to shorten and manage the breeding and calving season is estrus synchronization.

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## 9. Does age affect quality and yield grades of harvested steers?

Yes, but that answer needs to be discussed in detail. Many factors contribute to carcass quality and yield grades such as management, genetics, previous nutrition, and marketing.

Age becomes a factor in carcass grading when it is coupled with other factors, such as nutrition and genetics.

One of the major carcass factors that affect quality is marbling. Marbling is intramuscular fat (stored body energy); therefore, it will increase as cattle get older and remain on a positive energy diet. The rate that marbling grows is dependent on genetic potential and the amount of excessive energy consumption. Young cattle (calf-feds harvested prior to 15 months of age) have been shown to have equal or greater marbling scores than genetically similar yearlings (harvested between 18 and 24 months of age) if they are fed diets energy dense enough to allow for marbling expression. Another factor used to determine quality grade is bone maturity. Young cattle (A maturity, less than 24 months of age) all have the same marbling standards apply to reach a particular quality grade (Select, Choice, Prime). Marbling standards increase for carcasses older than A maturity.

For yield grade, the major carcass characteristics are hot carcass weight, ribeye backfat, ribeye area, and percent kidney, pelvic, and heart fat. As would be expected, as age advances from 12 to 24 months of age, body weight and thus carcass weight increases. Also, as calves get older and are maintained on a high-energy diet, they will get fatter and thus have a negative effect on yield grade. Marketing systems that harvest cattle at a constant fat endpoint (0.4 to 0.5 inches of backfat) will not have an age factor influence.

USDA Quality grade is defined by marbling score, maturity, and lean characteristics.

Quality is usually defined in two ways; one is yield grade or the relative amounts of lean muscle to fat. Yield grade is assessed on a scale of 1 to 5, with YG 1 considered better because there is

more muscle relative to fat. The factors that lead to better (i.e., lower) yield grade are carcass weight, ribeye or longissimus muscle area, fat depth, percent kidney, pelvic and heart fat, and then marbling or intramuscular fat.

The second measure of carcass quality is usually quality grades. The quality grade breakdown is based on Prime, Choice, Select, and Standard. There are premiums for Choice and Prime compared with Select. There is a discount on Standard carcasses. The quality grade is based on the amount of marbling or intramuscular fat in the ribeye.

The challenge is that these two quality indicators tend to go against each other in the population of cattle. When we select for better marbling, we have cattle that will deposit marbling at lower backfat depths. However, the population still fattens when marbling occurs, so some improvement in marbling tends to lead to poorer yield grade.

There are differences between calf-feds (15 months of age) and yearlings (greater than 18 months of age) in terms of performance. As a general rule, we tend to feed yearlings different than calves. Therefore, yearling cattle are leaner (better yield grades) but may not be better at quality grade. In a review of Nebraska research (attached article and Web accessible) by Klopfenstein et al. (1999), there were no differences in quality grades between calf-feds and yearlings when cattle were compared at an equal fat endpoint. What that means is that if you compare them on an appropriate basis, there are probably little differences between conventional calf-feds and conventional yearlings. However, most times, yearlings are fed to a leaner endpoint (less backfat) and, therefore, may not grade as well. So, in the industry, our calf-feds probably grade well (good quality) but at a higher (poorer) yield grade than yearlings.

You can see that it is a complex issue. Cattle can be to be USDA Yield Grade 1, but the chances of them grading USDA Choice are not great. Conversely, they can be fed to mostly grade USDA Choice, but their yield grades are poor. The only fair comparison is to compare calf-feds and yearlings on an equal fat endpoint basis.

Another consideration is some recent work out of the University of Illinois and elsewhere looking at the influence of early calf nutrition on eventual carcass quality. This is a different issue that we can address if interested. However, for conventional calf-feds (large framed, large calves at weaning) that are fed for 200 days and go to market at 15 months of age, there is probably little difference if marketed at an equal endpoint as yearlings. However, the industry probably markets calf-feds fatter than yearlings, and therefore they tend to have poorer USDA Yield Grades and similar or slightly better USDA quality grades.

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**10. What should I consider when selecting replacement heifers?**

As you are well aware, the process of selecting replacement heifers is very important in a commercial cow/calf operation. These females represent the future factory. Because puberty is related to weight, it is important that weaning weight be part of your selection criteria. To start, we would suggest culling the upper 1% of the heaviest and lightest 25%. The heaviest heifers at weaning may represent big, growthy heifers that may not fit your environment. Make the selection on actual weaning weight because that's the weight you will be using to develop a feeding program so that they reach puberty (about two-thirds of their mature weight) before the start of the breeding season. Then make selections on conformation (body type, feet, and legs) and apparent disposition. Of the heifers that are remaining, look at their dam. If their mother is old, meaning she has been part of the herd for many years, this is a heifer that you might consider keeping because her mother has been a productive part of the herd for many years and therefore must be adapted to the environment (forage resources, management, etc.). You might expect similar performance from her offspring

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**11. Cattle Management Reminders - December - *Fall Calving*- Start breeding yearling heifers...December 20, they should weigh between 600 & 800 lbs. Conduct breeding soundness exams on bulls. Start checking for estrus. Consider creep feeding calves on 1st calf heifers. *Spring Calving* - Prepare for calving season. Maintain condition on cows. Check identification on all animals. Clean & disinfect calving area. ALL CATTLE: \*Provide (and check) clean fresh water. \*Check cattle regularly\*. \*Continue parasite control.\*Provide High Magnesium mineral supplement. \*Deworm and treat for grubs. \*Monitor for health problems. Forage Test!**

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12. Forage Management Tips - (December) Take soil samples to be overseeded or planted next spring. Sample all hay prior to feeding to livestock and prevent possible

problems such as nitrate poisoning & to ensure adequate nutrition. Feed hay stored outside before using hay stored inside. Allow lactating cows access to best quality pastures and hay be fed to cows with nursing calves. Limit grazing of winter pastures by feeding hay on pasture or restricting acres available to animals. Check alfalfa plantings for nodule formation & complete weed control. Stretch grazable feed by cross fencing with electric wire. If pasture availability is limited, graze one day in 2 or 3 or 2-4 hours per day. Don't graze permanent pastures planted in the fall until the root systems have developed sufficiently to withstand the "plucking" action of grazing animals. Rule of thumb, don't graze until growth reaches 6 to 8 inches. Rotate or Clip pastures as needed. Drag pastures to break up manure piles. Keep good records for tax purposes, and for future management decisions. Weed control in fall plantings of legumes should be done November early January.

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### **13. The Value of Good Records**

Few farmers really enjoy record-keeping but it is a critical component of good business management. If your current record-keeping system isn't quite meeting your needs winter is a great time to get a system in place that will really work for you in 2012.

There are two distinct types of records—financial and production. Financial records relate primarily to the income and expense transactions of the farm. Product sales, operating expenses, equipment purchases, accounts payable, accounts receivable, inventories, depreciation records, loan balances and price information are all examples of financial records.

Production records are items that relate to quantities of inputs and levels of production by enterprise and/or by resource type. They consist of crop yields, plant populations, calves born, pounds of milk produced, weaning weights, death loss, etc.

Both production and financial records are important to the efficient management of today's farm business and used together they provide a valuable picture of a farm's viability. There are two key reasons why you need an effective record-keeping system. The first one that usually comes to mind is compliance. If you are a business owner then you will need to supply information regarding your business to a number of agencies including your lenders, the Internal Revenue Service, and your state and municipal tax departments. You will also need good business records if you are considering purchasing crop insurance or other risk management products subsidized by the federal government. Finally, in the event of a disaster you will be required to present past records in order to participate in many state or federal emergency programs.

The second, and probably most important, reason for having a good record-keeping system is to have the data you need to make sound decisions regarding your business. Having accurate, up-to-date records is one of the best tools you can have when choosing where to focus your management effort for the future. Will you add new products? Diversify your farm? Raise your prices? Seek out more customers? Expand

your business? Try a new marketing strategy? Any of these are fair questions to ask but if you don't have good records it will be tough to find answers. Selecting a record-keeping system should depend on how the records will be used, who will be the record-keeper, and how many individuals will need access to the data. There is no "best" record-keeping system for all situations but any farm records system should:

- provide accurate and necessary information
- be user-friendly
- be flexible enough to provide information in a variety of ways

A common question is whether a computer system is "better" than a paper ledger. While a computer-based record-keeping system might make the job easier, the question is really what system works best for your management team? If you don't like computers then investing in one just for record-keeping is probably not a good investment. Either way, it is not where you keep track of your records that matters –it is the fact that you make a commitment to keep your records up-to-date and accurate.

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**14. HAY DIRECTORY - A Hay Directory is maintained by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service for the Rockingham County and Guilford County area. This directory is intended as a service to both hay producers and buyers in the area. If you are in need of hay or would**

**like to be added (or removed) from this list please call me at [1-800-666-3625](tel:1-800-666-3625) or 342-8235 and let me know your name, address & phone #, type of hay, number of bales, (square or round bales) and weight per bale.\***

**\*MANAGE YOUR PASTURES!\***

**If you have hay to sell, please let me know & I will put you on the list!**

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**15. Take A Load Off - Senior Wedding**

**Jacob, age 92, and Rebecca, age 89, living in Miami , are all excited about their decision to get married. They go for a stroll to discuss the wedding, and on the way they pass a drugstore.. Jacob suggests they go in.**

**Jacob addresses the man behind the counter:**

**"Are you the owner?"**

**The pharmacist answers, "Yes."**

**Jacob: "We're about to get married. Do you sell heart medication?"**

**Pharmacist: "Of course, we do."**

**Jacob: "How about medicine for circulation?"**

**Pharmacist: "All kinds."**

**Jacob: "Medicine for rheumatism?"**

**Pharmacist: "Definitely."**

**Jacob: "How about suppositories?"**

**Pharmacist: "You bet!"**

**Jacob: "Medicine for memory problems, arthritis and Alzheimer's?"**

**Pharmacist: "Yes, a large variety. The works."**

**Jacob: "What about vitamins, sleeping pills, Geritol, antidotes for Parkinson's disease?"**

**Pharmacist: "Absolutely."**

**Jacob: "Everything for heartburn and indigestion?"**

**Pharmacist: "We sure do."**

**Jacob: "You sell wheelchairs and walkers and canes?"**

**Pharmacist: "All speeds and sizes."**

**Jacob: "Adult diapers?"**

**Pharmacist: "Sure."**

**Jacob: "We'd like to use this store as our Bridal Registry."**

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I always want to know what you think of the CATTLE CALL, good or bad, especially if it has had ANY IMPACT on you. Let me hear from you!

I NEED YOUR IDEAS FOR FUTURE CATTLE CALLS!

Please remember our Troops who are serving our Country (and there families) those who have come home with wounds and the families that paid the ultimate sacrifice.

The Rockingham County Extension Staff would like to Wish You:  
**A Very Safe Holiday Season & A Very Merry Christmas!**

Thanks  
Ben

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North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University  
Is committed to equality of educational opportunity and does not  
discriminate against applicants, students, or employees based on race,  
color, creed, national origin, religion, gender, age, or disability.  
Moreover, North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State  
University is open to people of all races and actively seeks to promote  
racial integration by recruiting and enrolling a larger number of black  
students. North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State  
University regards discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation to  
be inconsistent with its goal of providing a welcoming environment in  
which all its students, faculty, and staff may learn and work up to  
their full potential. The Universities values the benefits of cultural  
diversity and pluralism in the academic community and welcomes all men  
and women of good will without regard to sexual orientation.

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