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Kansas Hay Market Report

Hay trade slow. Demand moderate to strong for dairy and stock cow alfalfa, moderate for alfalfa pellets, grinding alfalfa and grass hay. Forecasts are calling for a wintry mix of ice and snow turning to all snow by Wednesday night with winds causing blizzard conditions over much of the State Thursday. Livestock producers and dairies are busy preparing for this next round of winter. Very cold temperatures and wind chills will again keep livestock producers busy feeding cattle and providing protection with wind breaks and bedding. If you have hay for sale or pasture to rent or need hay or grazing, use the services of the Hay and Pasture Exchange www.kfb.org/hayandpasture/default.htm.

Southwest Kansas: Dairy and grinding alfalfa steady. Movement moderate. Alfalfa, Horse, small squares, 190.00-250.00; Dairy, Supreme 130.00-160.00; Premium 115.00-135.00; Good, 100.00-115.00; Stock cow Fair-Good 100.00-105.00. Utility-Fair grinding alfalfa at the edge of the field, 85.00-95.00, mostly 90.00-95.00, a little 102.00. Ground and delivered locally to feedlots and dairies 110.00-125.00, ground-on-the-truck 100.00-110.00. The week of 12/14-19, 11,897T grinding alfalfa and 1,350T of dairy alfalfa were delivered. Bermuda good large square 125.00-150.00. PM6

good, small squares 150.00. BMR Sudan, good large round 60.00; Fair large bales 45.00.

South Central Kansas: Dairy and grinding alfalfa and alfalfa pellets steady. Movement moderate. Alfalfa, Dairy, 65-85 cents/point RFV, Supreme, 120.00-140.00, an instance 160.00; Premium 110.00-130.00; Good 95.00; Stock cow, mid square or large round, 75.00-100.00. Utility-Fair grinding alfalfa at the edge of the field 65.00- 85.00, mostly 70.00-80.00, Utility or wet 65.00-70.00. Ground and delivered locally to feedlots 100.00-120.00. The week of 12/14-19, 4,501T of grinding alfalfa and 1,475T of dairy alfalfa were delivered. Alfalfa pellets: Sun Cured 15% protein 143.00-160.00; Sun Cured 17% 157.00-160.00; Dehydrated 17% 205.00. BMR Sudan Good large round 60.00-65.00, instance 75.00 in barn; Fair large round 45.00. Southeast Kansas: Alfalfa, brome and prairie hay steady. Movement slow to moderate. Alfalfa: Horse and goat, mid square 140.00-200.00. Dairy alfalfa, Premium 135.00; Good, 100.00-125.00; Stock cow, mid square, 90.00-120.00; Bluestem: Good, small squares 85.00-100.00, mostly 90.00-95.00, mid and large squares 60.00-90.00, mostly 75.00-80.00, large rounds 40.00-60.00. Mulch, large rounds 45.00-50.00. Brome: Good, Small squares 100.00-110.00 mid and large squares 80.00-90.00, large rounds 50.00-70.00.

Northwest Kansas: Dairy and grinding alfalfa steady. Movement slow. Alfalfa: Horse, small squares 200.00-250.00. Dairy, Supreme 140.00; Premium 110.00-120.00; Good 100.00-105.00; Stock cow 80.00-100.00. Utility-Fair grinding alfalfa at the edge of the field 70.00-90.00; Ground and de-

livered to feedlots and dairies 100.00- 120.00. Millet, good large bales 60.00. Oat hay, good large bales 60.00.

North Central-Northeast Kansas: Dairy and grinding alfalfa, prairie hay and brome steady. Movement slow. Alfalfa: Horse small squares 220.00, mid square 130.00-200.00; Dairy, Supreme, 130.00-140.00; Premium 120.00-130.00; Stock cow, mid square, 90.00-110.00; Utility-Fair grinding alfalfa at the edge of the field, 60.00-75.00, alfalfa Ground-on-the-truck 80.00-90.00, Ground and delivered 90.00-105.00, mostly 90.00-95.00. Grass hay: Bluestem small squares, Good 90.00-100.00, Mid squares 70.00-80.00, large rounds 45.00-60.00. Brome: Good, small squares, 4.00-4.50/bale, Fair 2.00/bale, 90.00-120.00/T, Mid squares, 75.00-85.00, large round, 12.00-30.00/bale, 50.00-60.00/T, fair 40.00-50.00. Grass Mulch, large round 45.00-60.00. Straw, small squares 3.00-3.50/bale, mid and large bales 45.00-60.00/T.

***Prices are dollars per ton and FOB unless otherwise noted. Dairy alfalfa prices are for mid and large squares unless otherwise noted. Horse hay is in small squares unless otherwise noted. Prices are from the most recent sales. *RFV calculated using the Wis/Minn formula.

**TDN calculated using the Western formula. Quantitative factors are approximate, and many factors can affect feeding value. Values based on 100% dry matter (TDN showing both 100% & 90%). Guidelines are to be used with visual appearance and intent of sale (usage).

The Kansas Hay Market Report is provided by the Kansas Department of Agriculture with technical oversight from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

Two Kansas FFA members will ride float during Tournament of Roses parade

The Sunflower State will be well represented during the prestigious Rose Bowl parade on New Year's Day. Kansas FFA President Garrett Lister and former Kansas FFA president Bethany Bohnenblust who is currently serving as a National FFA officer will take part in the nationally televised event.

On the morning of January 1, 2010, the National FFA Organization will make contact with an estimated 42 million people in the United States, and more than 100 million people worldwide, through participation in the 121st Tournament of Roses Parade. Television viewers settled in to watch this New Year's Day tradition will witness history being made, as the first-ever FFA float in the Rose Parade not only makes its way down Orange and Colorado Boulevards before the crowds in Pasadena, but into the living rooms, and into the hearts, of families watching at home. On and surrounding the float will be the 2009-2010 National FFA Officer Team, National FFA Advisor Dr. Larry Case and the four Stars Over America, along with

a state officer from every U.S. state and Puerto Rico.

The float, "FFA Today", is one of the largest in the parade, at 75 feet long, 30 feet tall and 18 feet wide. It features three gigantic sculptures depicting FFA members engaging in agricultural, educational and development activities. The float will further be highlighted by several elements from the FFA emblem, each with a significant meaning. Alongside the emblem are a sleek horse, a combine, barn and windmill, a stand of evergreens, a grove of fruit trees, and finally urban buildings and a communications satellite - contrasting with the rural features to display the scope of FFA activities. The float is designed to represent all FFA members, past and present, as well as portray a most positive image of agriculture into rural, suburban and urban-based homes. In addition to more than 10,000 fresh flowers, the float will be decorated by FFA members with commodities grown by the American farmer, including corn, wheat, soybeans and cotton.

All of the FFA float costs and expenses

for this major communications effort are being underwritten entirely by RFD-TV and the sponsors and advertisers associated with RFD-TV's live broadcast of the 2010 Tournament of Roses Parade and Equestfest.

"When we first learned of the 2010 Rose Parade theme, 'A Cut Above The Rest,' we immediately thought of FFA, and saw this as an opportunity to not only pay tribute to the world's premiere youth organization, but at the same time to also showcase FFA activities on a world stage in this continuing effort to connect and educate the urban world about the positive aspects of rural America," stated Patrick Gottsch, founder and president of RFD-TV.


"This is a tremendous opportunity to communicate the FFA message to the world," added Bill Stagg, strategic communications director for the National FFA Organization. "The float is beautiful, and it will be a beacon of pride for all associated with FFA. The opportunity to assemble so many FFA leaders in one place at one time has never happened before outside of our annual conven-

tion. What a way to start a new decade!"

The Tournament of Roses Parade is simultaneously carried live or on tape delay by six national or cable television networks in the United States (ABC, NBC, HGTV, Univision, RFD-TV/RFD HD, KTLA) and begins at 11 a.m. (Eastern time). The parade will also be distributed into more than 110 countries around the world. Extensive print and radio media cover the events and floats leading up to the parade and the afternoon Rose Bowl football game.

In addition to its regular live production and broadcast of the two-hour Tournament of Roses Parade hosted by Crook & Chase along with Pam Minick, RFD-TV will also air a one-hour special on the "Making of the FFA Float" beginning at 10 a.m. (Eastern time), and will repeat the entire three-hour Rose Parade broadcast set several times during the first week of January. There is will also be a live web feed of the float being built and decorated on the www.rfdtv.com website, plus "Float Updates" on the channel.

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60 choice reputation Simmental strs & hfrs, weaned longtime, all shots, 500-650 lbs.
50 choice reputation black strs & hfrs, longtime weaned, 750-900 lbs.
50 choice reputation Hereford steers & 20 Hereford heifers, 75 days weaned, 2 rds shots, bunk broke, 500-700 lbs.
40 black steers & heifers, 60 days weaned, 500-700 lbs.
35 black steers & heifers, weaned, 2 rds shots, 500-700 lbs.
20 black strs & hfrs, longtime weaned, 2 rds shots, 675-725 lbs.
16 Hereford heifers, 700-750 lbs.
15 Angus steers & heifers, out of Fink bulls, weaned, 3 rds shots, 550-625 lbs.
11 Red Angus older cross cows w/30 to 90 day old calves by side
10 Hereford steers, weaned, 600-650 lbs.

SPECIAL BRED HEIFER & STOCK COW SALE: Wednesday, January 13

Starting at 11:00 AM

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60 fancy Angus OCV 1st calf heifers, AI bred to Fink Beef Genetics LBW bull to start calving Feb. 15. Full brother clean up Fink Angus bulls for 60 day calving season
45 homeraised Angus 1st calf heifers, bred Angus for late February calves
32 big fancy Nebraska origin blk 1st calf heifers, bred to

LBW Hereford bull to start calving Feb. 15 for 60 day calving period
18 big fancy bwf 1st calf heifers, AI bred to Modern Design Angus bulls to start calving Feb. 16th. 1 round Scourguard shots

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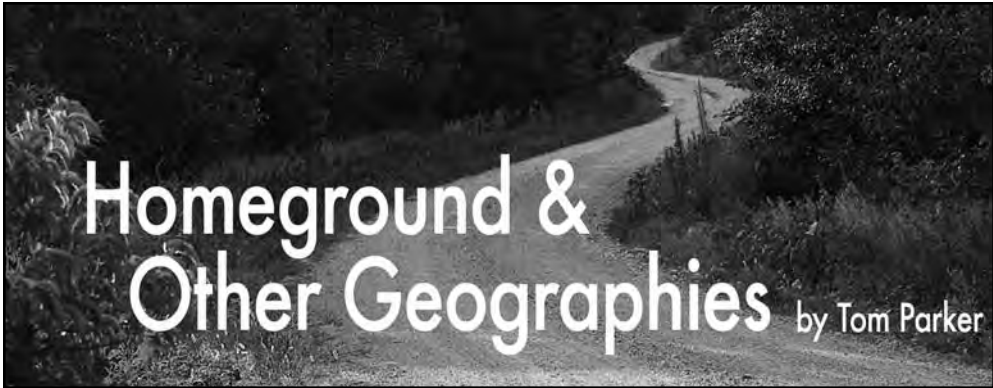
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Setting of the solstice sun

On the last day of autumn, with clearing skies and dropping temperatures and a low golden sun barely clearing the grassy ridges of our river valley, I headed out the door in a hurry. My intent was to join the setting sun on its autumnal departure, when winter is officially inaugurated and the longest night of the year descends. In particular, I wanted to watch the sunset from a vantage to the west of our house, just past the westernmost street where the land falls away toward a distant unseen gully and an old barn adds a bucolic element to the expansive prairie view.

It was also the completion of a photographic journey that had lasted 51 days. Since it inception in November, I'd planned on photographing the setting solstice sun as a grand finale. For most of the day clouds

had veiled the sky, vanguard to an approaching storm of biblical proportions, but an hour before dusk the clouds had inexplicably pulled back, leaving in the west a blessed strip of the palest cerulean. I hurried down the gravel road and cut through a field, my feet sinking in snowdrifts that seemed destined to last the coming winter. In our digital age where much of the population is divorced from the natural world, the winter solstice means little more than the first day of winter. It is,

however, one of the oldest known astronomical observances, dating back at least 30,000 years. Civilizations around the world charted the course of the sun to determine the solstices and equinoxes, with Stonehenge being perhaps the most famous celestial observatory known. It was far from being a singular monument to the moment the sun reversed its southern trajectory and swung back to a northward passage, bringing light back to a world threatened with eternal night.

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The magnificent Kukulkan Pyramid at Chichen Itza in the Yucatan was another observatory. In an addition to the stone serpent illuminated only twice a year during the spring and vernal equinoxes, the western face of the pyramid acted as a winter solstice calendar. On that day only, the sun ascends the 52 steps until it pauses at the crown of the upper platform. Woodhenge, similar to its stone cousin only transplanted to the shores of the Mississippi River outside of St. Louis, was another solstice observatory. As was the sun dagger of Chaco Canyon in northern New Mexico, where the solstice sun slipped through a narrow crevice to track across a spiral carved into the bluff.

Thirty thousand years of human observance should

count for something. The sun dipped lower, brushing the horizon. Its rays gilded the windswept ripples of snow and half-blinded me, but I forced myself on, staggering through the snow until breaking out onto the road. Within seconds I was in the far field, circling the barn for a good angle to set up my camera. The only sound was the beating of my heart and the distant whine of trucks on the highway a half mile off.

In the days preceding the solstice and immediately thereafter, the sun seems to lag in its southern arc. "Solstice" is a Latin word derived from the phrase, "sun stands still," which refers to this hesitation. That ancient civilizations, many of them stone age, could unwaveringly determine the exact timing of the solstice and

engineer entire cities based on the tilt of the earth at its most extreme ellipsis around the sun never fails to boggle my mind. Nor does the fact that we've largely forgotten the importance of the solstice, or its message of change and renewal.

A deep stillness fell as the sun slipped behind a far ridge. The last meadowlarks chipped and became silent. Snow shaded to a glacial blue. I snapped two photos but the shutter was too loud, too obtrusive, and so let the camera hang from its shoulder strap and watched as the clouds flared and flamed and cooled to a deep charcoal. As dusk settled in and the cold intensified, I turned to the warmth of the house. It might be the first night of winter, and the longest, but the solstice spoke of a returning spring.

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No-till on the Plains Winter Conference coming in January

The premiere crop production conference in the Midwest comes to the Bicentennial Center in Salina, Kansas January 26-27. The 14th annual No-till on the Plains Winter Conference has evolved into the most respected "continuous no-till" conference and trade show of its type in North America.

Take advantage of the early discount of \$150 (\$200 after Jan. 15) to reserve your spot at the 2010 Winter Conference, where you will have the opportunity to visit with other no-tillers from various regions. This year several "producer speakers" — each in a different stage of continuous no-till (CNT) with a variety of unique conditions — will offer presentations. In addition, several national and international no-tillage experts will engage the crowd. The speaking lineup features Dwayne Beck, SD; Dave Brandt, OH; Ademir Calegari, Brazil; João Carlos de Moraes Sá (JUCA), Brazil; Lyle Frees; Gail Fuller; Dan Gillespie, Neb.; Paul Jasa, Neb.; Dietrich Kastens; Josh Lloyd; Neonila Martyniuk, UkraiNeb.; Jim Millar, SD; Charles Rice; Moe Russell, Iowa; Alan Schlegel; Bruce Vincent, Mont.; Ray Ward, Neb.; Mark Watson, Neb.; Jeff Wessels, Neb.; and Nigel Wilhelm, Australia.

These experts are extremely knowledgeable, and growers will have the opportunity to ask questions, share trade secrets and interact with other attendees, participants and presenters.

Regardless of experience level, the 2010 Winter Conference will meet your needs. Courses are available for all experience levels. Topics include producers' real life experiences, fertility and soil health, cover crops and alternative crops, grazing systems/livestock, water management and utilizing no-till under irrigation, how to apply new technologies, rainfall simulator & soil demonstrations, managing residue, plus many more.

No-till on the Plains promotes solely continuous no-tillage because all data points to this practice as the most profitable cropping system in production agriculture. Continuous no-tillage is a system that includes the use of diverse rotations and cover crops, where soil disturbance is kept to an absolute minimum. Using this system ensures agronomic, economic and environmental benefits. One of the most important points that No-till on the Plains stresses to attendees is to take what they hear at the Winter Conference and apply it in their own ways on their own farms. Attendees must work within their management skills, their equipment, and their environment.

Brian Lindley, Executive Director of No-till on the Plains, comments, "If you are a producer looking for an agronomic advantage and a way to improve your management, then the 2010 No-till on the Plains Winter Conference is the place to be. The motivation, vision, and experience of the speakers offered at this event is absolutely of the highest quality. Regardless of your experience with no-tillage, we have sessions that you can utilize immediately. Additionally, the producer networking opportunity is unmatched. Come ready to learn!"

In addition to the Winter Conference, No-till on the Plains is once again offering the exclusive Agriculture's Innovation Minds (AIM) Symposium on Thursday, January 28, 2010 at the Bicentennial Center. The AIM Symposium is held in conjunction with the Winter Conference but is a separate meeting. The premise of the AIM Symposium is to challenge the innovators. The theme of this year's meeting will focus on cover crops and will feature South American Ademir Calegari who started the cover crop excitement at our 2006 conference. Several experienced producers from the area will share beneficial information about what has been tried and what is working.

For information or to register for the Winter Conference or the AIM Symposium, contact the office at (888) 330-5142 or visit the website at www.notill.org.

Home improvements can qualify for tax credits, savings

Efforts to stimulate the economy, including the Cash for Clunkers program that has provided incentives for retiring less fuel-efficient vehicles, have been in the news, yet lesser known financial opportunities still exist. They include cost-saving tax credits that also are part of the stimulus effort and can yield a tax savings for taxpayers.

The stimulus package, which is officially called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, is offering tax credits of up to 30 percent (with a maximum of \$1,500) of the cost of instal-

lation for qualifying energy-efficient home improvements, said Bruce Snead, Kansas State University Research and Extension residential energy specialist.

A tax credit is different than a tax deduction, Snead said. A qualified deduction can reduce taxable income; a tax credit reduces federal income tax by 100 percent of the credit.

The goal, said Snead, is to encourage property owners to improve energy efficiency, which, in turn will lower their heating and cooling bills and reduce overall energy use.

Many plants can withstand the cold temperatures of winter

When wind chill temperatures plummet, gardeners chafe about their landscape and fruit plants' odds for survival. Some gardeners actually worry too much.

"Cold can be a killer if people are growing marginally hardy plants or if air temperatures drop well below what's usual where they live. Hard freezes are particularly destructive when plants aren't fully dormant. But ... 'cold' and 'wind chill' aren't the same thing," said Jake Weber, horticulturist with Kansas State University Research and Extension.

Wind chill only affects warm-blooded animals — including people. It's an indexed, scientific measure of how wind speed and air temperature combine to impact animal heat loss, Weber said.

"We know, for example, that our heat-loss rate will speed up as the air temperature drops. The faster the wind is blowing, however, the more dramatic that heat loss is going to be," he explained.

Wind chill has no meaning for plants, Weber added. Unlike warm-

blooded animals, they don't try to maintain a particular body temperature year-round. Plants' hardiness zone — the area in which they're likely to survive winter — directly relates to a single factor: how low the area's air temperatures typically go.

"That's not to say winter

winds can't harm plants, too," Weber said. "Wind accelerates plants' moisture loss, and that can be a real problem in winter, especially for evergreens — plants that don't quite enter dormancy. Wind also can crack ice-covered trees into a shattered mess and whip climbing roses until they snap." Bundling up protects people, head to toe, from both wind and cold, he said. But mulching just insulates plant roots and some grafts from winter's air-caused temperature shifts. Fortunately, for healthy, sturdy plants growing in their hardiness zone, that's often enough.

"Protecting weak, brittle or damaged limbs from winter's wind is a separate and often more complicated issue. Gardeners simply have to do the best they can," Weber said. "The effective approaches can range from site selection and pruning practices to wraps and stakes."



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Qualifying taxpayers stand to benefit two ways. In addition to the savings from the tax credit, most should also benefit from long-term savings from reduced energy costs, he said.

Qualifying improvements include updating heating and air conditioning systems, installation of insulation, energy-efficient windows, doors, skylights, or water heaters placed in service after Feb. 17, 2009.

While qualifying improvements generally carry an "Energy Star" label, the label alone is not enough to qualify for the tax benefit. Qualifying energy efficient improvements also will need to exceed the energy efficient standards applicable to the 2007 credit, Snead said.

New, improved energy efficient standards must be certified by the manufacturer and such certification must be available to the taxpayer either as part of the pack-

aging or in an otherwise printable form.

To qualify, energy efficient improvements must be in use in the taxpayer's primary residence in the year that the tax credit is claimed.

To claim a 2009 tax credit, taxpayers will need to provide receipts for qualifying energy efficient updates and a copy of the manufacturer's certification, and file IRS Form 5695 with their taxes.

The tax credit initiative has been extended through December 31, 2010, so taxpayers who have not yet moved forward with energy efficient improvements can do so in the new year, the residential energy specialist said.

More information about the tax incentives and potential savings is available at www.irs.gov, at county and district K-State Research and Extension offices, and on the website: www.engext.ksu.edu/home_energy.asp.

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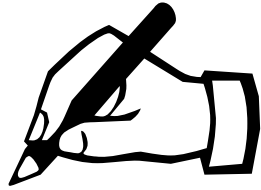
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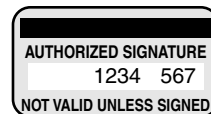
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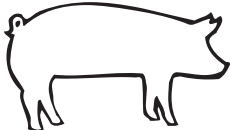
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2007 Case IH Magnum 275 MFD
2007 Case IH Magnum 275 MFD, front duals
2008 Case IH Farmall 95, 2WD, cab
1990 Case IH 5120, 2WD, cab
1994 Case IH 5240, 4WD, cab, loader
2004 Case IH MXM120, MFD
2001 Bobcat 753 skid steer loader
1999 JD 4200 HST loader, mower
1996 NH 7740 SLE, cab, loader

MISCELLANEOUS

2006 Kinze 1050 RC grain cart
1999 Krause 4241, 44' F.C.
1997 NH 654 twine baler
2002 Sitrex H90, 10 wheel rake
2000 Case IH RS 551 baler
2008 Case IH DCX131 disk MoCo
2007 NH 1432 disk, MoCo

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Case IH 1054 cornhead
'89 Case IH 1020 flexhead, 20
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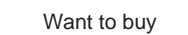
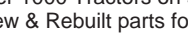
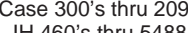
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Research shows a beef quality benefit to modest use of distillers grain byproducts

By **Miranda Reiman**
A decade ago, distillers grains were not common feedstuffs. Today they're routinely included in cattle finishing diets, at levels that can boost beef quality grades.

Chris Calkins, Universi-
ty of Nebraska meat scien-
tist, says when "wet dis-
tillers grains plus solubles" (WDGS) are fed at moderate levels, marbling scores in-
crease.

"It tends to be a quadrat-
ic effect. If you do not feed
any distillers grains, you
get a given level of mar-
bling," he says. "As [WDGS]
in the diet increases, we
see an increase in marbling
score up until about 30% to
40%; beyond that the bene-
fits to marbling tend to dis-
appear."

At national animal sci-
ence meetings last summer,
Calkins presented a meta-
analysis of studies that
looked at WDGS feed ef-
fects. Larry Corah and
Mark McCully of Certified
Angus Beef LCC (CAB)
cited that presentation in a
recent research review of
factors responsible for a
spike in beef quality
grades. Through July 2009,
60.1% of cattle in the na-
tion's harvest mix were
grading USDA Choice, a
7.5-percentage-point leap
in just two years.

An abrupt departure

Horticulturist breeding purple sweet potato

Plant breeder Ted Carey jokes that he's
spending so much time in developing a pur-
ple sweet potato because it could translate
into a fan-favorite "niche" product. His vi-
sion is purple french fries, sold at Kansas
State University ("purple pride") football
games. Carey's No.1 reason for the research,
however, is the cancer-reducing potential of
the root vegetable's anthocyanins — pig-
ments that make fruits and vegetables pur-
ple, blue or red. Anthocyanins are a special
class of phenolic compound. Foods with a
high phenolic content can also provide both
anti-aging and antioxidant factors.

No matter their color, however, all sweet
potatoes are basically fat-free, he said.
They're a low-sodium, low-calorie power-
house of vitamins and minerals. And,
they're "growable" in the central Great
Plains.

Kansas farmers used to produce lots of
them — especially in the sandier soils of the
Arkansas and Kansas river valleys. Carey's
based in the former production region at K-
State's Research and Extension Center
near Olathe. He enjoys reminding people
that Wamego, Kan., could once call itself the
sweet potato capital of the world. "Beyond
that, though, Kansas is now 45 among the 50
states in vegetable production. So, Kansans'
providing more of all kinds of fresh-picked
fruits and vegetables — including purple
ones — would be a health benefit for every-
one in the state," he said.

K-State has been a member of the Na-
tional Sweetpotato Collaborators Group
since 1939. The group played a supportive
role in K-State's early development of such
varieties as Kandee and Lakan (a joint proj-
ect with Louisiana State University).

Even so, Carey got the start for his cur-
rent "purple" search from scientists in
Lima, Peru — home of the International Po-
tato Center (Centro Internacional de la
Papa or CIP). The CIP is the germplasm
bank for the world's vast array of potatoes,
sweet potatoes, and other root and tuber
crops. It ensures that no variety's genes dis-
appear into history. It also provides docu-
mented source materials and improved
germplasm for research worldwide.

"The CIP breeder sent me about 2000
seeds from crosses between purple parent
plants that looked promising for regions
like ours. In 2007, we planted those seeds at
K-State's John C. Pair Horticulture Center
near Wichita. Each seed had the potential
to be a unique new variety," Carey said. In
general, only plant breeders grow sweet po-
tatoes from seed. If and when a promising
plant emerges, they clone it — reproduce it
vegetatively — from that point on.

Carey said the basic cloning process is

from the 30-year decline in
grades, the recent turn-
around may be partly ex-
plained by judicious use of
WDGS.

"Marbling increases, but
if you get the levels too high
it starts to trail off," Calkins
says. The data he presented
showed a marbling score of
518 for animals fed no
WDGS. The score increased
14 to 15 points, up to 533, for
animals fed WDGS at 20% to
30% on a dry-matter (DM)
basis.

"That seems to support
earlier findings that at in-
clusions above that 30% to
40%, distillers can actually
hurt quality grade," says
Corah. "Fortunately a large
majority of feedlots are
using the byproducts at a
fairly low rate."

A 2007 survey estimated
most feedlots used WDGS
at 16.5% of diets, but that
has likely jumped in recent
years due to availability.

Calkins says the mar-
bling score increase is
probably related to fat con-
tent of the feedstuffs.

"When you make
ethanol from corn you've
basically driven off about
two-thirds of the com-
ponents," he says, noting
that both ethanol and CO2
are produced from the
starch that comprises two-
thirds of corn grain. "So
everything else is concen-
trated by about three-fold.

That includes the fat con-
tent."

This higher-fat diet pro-
motes marbling develop-
ment. Theoretically, it can
increase external fat as
well, but Calkins says that's
a fairly small shift.

"I don't think there's a
big worry for producers in
terms of cutability issues
with using wet distillers
grains," he says.

WDGS also seems to in-
crease DM intake, especial-
ly in starter rations. One
Nebraska study shows
nearly a 30% increase.

"It's a highly effective
feedstuff in terms of in-
creasing average daily gain
and dry matter intake,"
Calkins says.

From a meat quality
standpoint, the only draw-
back to feeding WDGS
seems to be the increase in
polyunsaturated fats. They
can cause discoloration
and off-flavor more quickly
than other fats when ex-
posed to oxygen.

"That's dose-depend-
ent," he notes. "In other
words, the more distillers
we feed, the bigger issue it
can become." Feeding
WDGS at 20% to 30% should
pose fewer challenges for
retail beef than those high-
er percentages. However, at
any level the problems can
be easily managed by sup-
plementing diets with vita-
min E, Calkins adds.

simple: Root some vine cuttings from the
seed-grown plant. "But kids have been
using another approach to since Grandma's
day. They stick four toothpicks into a sweet
potato's sides, so they can suspend it - point-
ed or root end down — on the rim of a jar of
water. Then they add water, as needed, and
watch the sweet potato change," he said.

In cold-winter regions, farmers and gar-
deners typically adapt the basics to make
larger scale cloning easier, Carey said. They
harvest and store selected plants' storage
roots. Then, in time for spring planting, they
allow those vegetables to sprout (bud) —
either above or below ground. "You get
more than one clone, because when the
budded vines reach a foot long, they qualify
as slips. And, every slip you twist off and
plant can grow up to be just like its mother,"
the plant breeder said. Except . . . sweet
potatoes do mutate occasionally while
they're sprouting slips, thus producing new
types.

"In fact, that's the traditional way of dis-
covering new varieties," Carey said. "It was
particularly important in our northern lati-
tudes, where sweet potato plants don't
flower very often."

Today, CIP-type researchers carefully
grow and cross-pollinate different varieties'
flowers. That way, they can experiment and
have more control in how they get seeds for
testing, he said. By nature, the plants have
complex genetics. So, the crosses between
varieties can vary greatly.

"Among the individuals in the families of
seed I planted," Carey said, "many pro-
duced no sweet potatoes at all. None. For
those that did, however, their storage roots'
flesh turned out to be white or yellow or
anything on the range from lilac to deep
purple. Their skin hues varied almost as
widely, even when their parent seeds were
as closely related as sisters or brothers."

From his first 2000 seedlings, Carey se-
lected about 60 that had good yields of in-
tensely pigmented, purple-fleshed storage
roots. He saved that harvest to use in devel-
oping slips and growing plants to evaluate
the following year. The plant breeder now is
down to on-going tests with less than a
dozen possibilities. He was disappointed
when last year's best performer didn't do
well in 2009, but says his overall results still
look promising. Carey's ultimate goal, of
course, is foundation seed stock for a vari-
ety that grows vigorously and well in
Kansas, plus produces sweet potatoes with
purple skin and flesh, loaded with antho-
cyanins.

Carey isn't quite as disinterested as he
sounds, however. He really does like the
idea of purple fries.



By Val Farmer

Rural Life

Advice for a family business: Operate like a business

Being in business as a family is complicated. There is the usual goal of being competitive in a free market economy where winners and losers are decided by the bottom line. Family or not, the business needs to make money.

The family goal is to have lifelong loving and harmonious relationships with your business partners, regardless of whether the business does well. Business success or not, the family needs to get along.

Business thrives on conflict. Management tries to create an atmosphere where the best ideas win no matter the source. In a good business, conflict of ideas emerges while maintaining respect and dignity in the workplace. Successful businesses harness the cooperation, energy, creativity, accountability and loyalty of relatively autonomous individuals whose social lives do not intersect.

A successful business replaces individuals who do not measure up to their jobs. Under adverse circumstances, a successful business makes tough decisions on reducing the work-

force to adjust to business realities. The bottom line is that business survival depends on unemotional decisions geared to bottom line considerations. Businesses may care, but that caring can only go so far.

We are family, no matter what. A successful family stays loyal to one another and cares about each other's well-being despite circumstances. Bottom line decisions are emotional and may not make much sense financially. It is precisely because of long term commitments and tenacious motivation that family businesses weather poor business cycles.

Well-run businesses take on the caring qualities of successful families. In family business, well-run families take on business sensibilities of successful businesses.

What is this middle ground that represents the best of both worlds?

Good companies:

Have vision and commitment for long term goals. They value the human resources in the organization and invest money and time to improve the abilities and specialty skills of its associates.

Involve its associates in the a process of management and leadership. The vision and challenge of the business is shared and believed. Each worker has a vested interest in the future success of the organization.

Have systems of communication in place where ideas at the operational level are heard and make a difference. This takes mutual trust and respect. Assumptions are freely challenged in an atmosphere where criticism is given and taken without offense.

Delegate responsibility and decision making to the lowest level possible. Associates are trusted to do critical jobs and are provided with the information, resources and support to carry out their duties. Evaluations are infrequent and are based on results.

Give abundant recognition, encouragement and appreciation for the work being done. The human need for being distinct and unique is understood and met.

What can a family business do to create this kind of atmosphere?

Some family members aren't meant to be in business together. A domineer-

ing family member may not understand the need for the growth that comes with shared decision-making, personal accomplishment and recognition. The power and control of certain family members can rob others of their dignity, self-respect and chances for personal development.

Adult children or siblings who are lazy, selfish, rigid, dishonest, addicted or dependent rob the rest of the family members in the business of enthusiasm and motivation. Consistently working around someone while walking on egg shells or carrying their load is no fun. Teamwork requirements and long term commitments of a family business demand mutual trust and respect.

If the owner/operators have personality traits that interfere with team-building, fairness or personal growth, children should seriously review their options even if the business opportunity seems attractive. Over time, these abrasive interactions take a toll on family relationships and make the workplace a source of pain and frustration. In non-family employment, people exercise their option of quitting and moving on.

The partners in a family business can offer support and encouragement to a family member who has difficult personality traits

or personal problems as long as they don't saddle the business with those problems. The more families that are involved in the business, the more difficult it becomes to blend personalities and capabilities without ruffling feathers.

Even when families get along famously and have wonderful working arrangements, family goals and circumstances start to differ markedly when cousins start to enter the business. Before family businesses reach that point, they need to start preparations for splitting the business into independent or semi-independent enterprises. Because business relationships work well in one generation doesn't mean that they will in the next.

Family business meetings are important. Most family businesses don't have formalized family business meetings. In a family business meeting, issues like accountability, long term goals, roles, fairness and mutual expectations can be discussed in a free-wheeling, democratic fashion.

In the interest of being a loving family, family members stuff their ideas, feelings and resentments. Disagreements are confused with disloyalty. The lack of communication chokes off needed improvements. Without this communica-

tion format to surface and resolve conflict, the business suffers.

There is great power and commitment in a family business. Successful family businesses separate business and family concerns so that the business benefits from creativity and accountability that might be inhibited by the family's need for harmony. If done well, usually in a family business meeting, a family business can have the best of both worlds.

For more information on family farming, visit Val Farmer's website at www.valfarmer.com.

Val Farmer's book, "Honey, I Shrunk the Farm," can be purchased by sending a check or money order for \$9.50 to: Honey, I Shrunk the Farm, The Preston Connection, PO Box 1135, Orem UT 84059.

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Val Farmer is a clinical psychologist specializing in family business consultation and mediation with farm families. He lives in Wildwood, Missouri and can be contacted through his website.

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The Salebarn Cafe will be open

For more information call the salebarn at 913-294-3335 or

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Ron Weatherbie, 785-241-1932 • Hug Thompson Jr., 913-856-5213

Mark Weigand, 785-214-7162

Mid-America Fruit Growers to gather near Nebraska City for tour, conference

The 2010 Mid-America Fruit Growers Conference will be Jan. 12-14 in the Lied Lodge and Conference Center at the Arbor Day Farm near Nebraska City, Neb.

“Growers make life-long friends at this annual conference. Some probably eat too much, too. Given this year’s program, however, they’ll be going home with all kinds of valuable ideas and information — no matter the size of their operation,” said Ted Carey, horticulturist with Kansas State University Research and Extension.

The program for Tuesday, Jan. 12, is a conference “extra” — a day-long bus tour of operations in Iowa and Nebraska. Stops will include orchards, a garden and landscape design/installation center, a vineyard with wine tasting, a U-pick operation, cider and handcrafted ale enterprises, and an assortment of country-style entertainments and “value-added” orchard products. The conference itself begins at 8 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 13, with the opening of registration, the event’s trade show and a breakfast buffet. Keynote speaker Brad Lubben will follow at 8:30 a.m. with his analysis of the future for U.S. farm programs. Lubben is an Extension public policy specialist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

From then through Thursday’s final session, just after lunch, the program will offer a banquet of topic choices, Carey said. Three concurrent “tracks” will organize the sessions by overall topic: tree fruits, small fruits and marketing.

“Some awesome growers are coming in to help lead the sessions — from mid-America and beyond. They’ll include representatives of Flamin’ Fury® Peaches in Coloma, Mich.; the Hollabaugh Brothers Orchard near Biglerville, Pa.; and the

Kuipers Family Farm of Maple Park, Ill.,” the horticulturist said. Other session leaders will be research and Extension specialists from Clemson, Cornell and Kansas State universities, as well as the universities of Massachusetts-Amherst and Nebraska-Lincoln. Growers can register online or download a mailable registration form at <http://www.midamericafruit.org>. The site also provides more details about the program and reservations to stay at the Lied Lodge. The registration fee — which covers the Jan. 13-14 conference materials, lunches, reception, and a prime rib or smoked pork banquet — is \$125 until Dec. 31 and \$150 thereafter. The Jan. 12 bus tour and lunch is \$50.

The conference’s tree fruit track will include sessions on peach orchard cultivars and systems management, fire blight management, apple cultivars and rootstocks, integrated pest management for apples, farm marketing, and trellis systems (including pruning the tall spindle).

The small fruit sessions will cover strawberry production with plasticulture, blackberry production, blackberry high-tunnel trials, raspberry high-tunnel trials, an overview of small fruit production and marketing, plus an overview of fruit and vegetable production and marketing. The marketing sessions will start with a farm and business testimonial and then progress to farm marketing; “hiring, firing and more”; social media; branding a farm and its products; and two “how we do it” presentations. The conference schedule also allows time for informal gatherings, a reception with complimentary wine tasting, and the annual meetings of the Kansas Fruit Growers and Missouri State Horticultural Society.

Kansas climatologist reviews weather terminology

Like the terminology in many businesses, the words used among weather forecasters can be confusing. What is the difference between an ice storm warning and a winter weather warning? What triggers a blizzard warning?

Mary Knapp, who serves as the state climatologist for Kansas, provided definitions for several winter weather-related terms and phrases. Knapp directs the state’s Weather Data Library, based in K-

State Research and Extension at Kansas State University.

Winter Storm Watch: Possible heavy snow, and/or significant accumulation of freezing rain/drizzle or sleet.

Snow Advisory: Worsening travel conditions with 1 to 5 inches of snow.

Winter Weather Advisory: Combined snow with accumulations of freezing rain/drizzle or sleet.

Freezing Rain Advisory: Travel problems are expected

due to accumulated freezing rain. Damage to trees or power lines not expected.

Sleet Advisory: Accumulation of between 1/4 and 1 inch of sleet is expected.

Winter Storm Warning: Combination of heavy snow, significant accumulations of freezing rain/drizzle or sleet, and low wind chill.

Heavy Snow Warning: Snowfall accumulation to 6 inches or more in 12 hours, or 8 inches or more in 24 hours.



Yard & Garden Tips

By Gregg Eyestone

Using Ice Melts

Winter includes periods of snow and ice. The organic method is to let it melt or use a shovel. Applying woodchips, sawdust, sand, kitty litter, bird seed or other material to provide traction is helpful. This approach is practical when there is a quick warm up after the weather event.

Different materials have been used to aid in melting and removing slippery conditions. They differ some in how they work and at what temperature. Like pesticides, they should be used according to their instructions. We don’t want to add a pollutant into our environment. The majority of misuse I encounter is over application. Using more than recommended doesn’t make it work better. All of these products have an effect on the environment and adding more than needed only increases this impact. There are two things that can be used to reduce their use. Don’t try to melt everything. Remove as much of the snow and ice first. Use a

combination ice melt and traction material. Ammonium sulfate, potassium chloride and urea are plant fertilizers. In low doses they won’t hurt plants. Unfortunately, they all can damage concrete.

Once the ice is gone, washing the product off the concrete is best for the concrete. Sodium chloride which is rock salt is commonly used. It does dry out the surface. Corrosive and damaging to both concrete and plants are its challenges. Calcium chloride and magnesium chloride work faster and at lower temperatures than rock salt. As it works, it makes the surface slippery. Calcium magnesium acetate prevents snow from sticking together. It is applied prior to moisture. You see this applied to roads in antici-

tion of moisture. This chemical is the safest for concrete and plants.


Ice melt products are a tool along with shovels and traction materials. All ice melts have the potential to damage plants, surfaces and corrode metal. Moderate use and natural rainfall or dilution with water should prevent plant and concrete damage.

You can find out more information on this and other horticulture topics by going to the K-State Research and Extension website at www.ksre.ksu.edu. You can contact Gregg Eyestone at the Riley County office of K-State Research and Extension. Gregg may be contacted by calling (785) 537-6350 or stopping by 110 Court-house Plaza in Manhattan or e-mail: geyeston@ksu.edu.



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More consignments by sale time.

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700 lbs. - 799 lbs.	80.50-87.50	
800 lbs. - 899 lbs.	72.50-90.75	
900 lbs. - and Up	56.00-83.25	
HEIFERS	300 lbs. & Lighter	106.00-112.00
300 lbs. - 399 lbs.	98.50-106.00	
400 lbs. - 499 lbs.	85.50-110.00	
500 lbs. - 599 lbs.	- 83.00-88.00	
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700 lbs. - 799 lbs.	NT	
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Feeder Bulls	73.00-93.00	
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Hay Sale: Every Tuesday	at 9:30am	
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Fresh-cut Christmas trees have new uses

The reusing and recycling that many people practice throughout the year can inspire a new "green" holiday tradition: giving that fresh Christmas tree a second life.

Christmas trees aren't just for Christmas anymore. When the lights and tinsel come off, a fresh-cut tree is ready for a second career as a wildlife habitat, or nurturing the soil of home landscapes or community green spaces.

Chuck Otte, an agriculture and natural resources agent with K-State Research and Extension's Geary County office, shared ideas for stretching that evergreen a bit farther.

"To me," Otte said, "that tree has so much value that we can't end it on New Year's Day, when the tree comes down. I just hate seeing them thrown out with the trash."

The first, and perhaps easiest way to reuse your tree is to put it near a bird feeder. Otte suggested laying it on the ground, perhaps anchored with a cinder block or some other heavy object.

"Having it around the bird feeder gives some protective cover, especially for the small birds — the juncos, the sparrows. They're down there scratching around, and I will watch birds jump in and out of that tree all day long."

Otte added that the old Christmas tree provides shelter from wind and wintery precipitation. It also offers protection from predators, especially cats and smaller hawks.

There's a potential bonus with this strategy if you lay the tree on or near a flowerbed, or garden patch.

"You will be amazed, when you pick the tree up and move it several months later," Otte said, "at how many bird droppings have collected under it. If it's in a flowerbed, that's great — a bit more natural fertilizer for the flowers or plants that you'll grow there later."

Fishing enthusiasts have a good reason to save their Christmas tree from the landfill: The trees can be used to enhance and create fish habitats. Otte said this isn't a project for individuals to undertake on their own.

"A lot of times there will be a wildlife group, or a local conservation group that will work with a municipal lake, or maybe one of the Corps of Engineers lakes, to create fish habitats," he said. The project

usually begins by collecting the trees in one location before taking them out to the lake.

"They'll take them out, anchor them with something," Otte added, "and drop them in appropriate locations in the lake. The trees provide structure for brooding, protection for the smaller fish from the bigger fish."

The same groups might also combine large numbers of trees to create large brush piles in wildlife areas. A pile that's several feet long and five or six feet high would appeal to birds, as well as smaller animals like rabbits, squirrels, or even raccoons.

"Basically you're just doing natural recycling," Otte said. "That tree shelter will eventually break down into mulch, into the organic matter from which it came. That adds to the tilth of the soil — always a good thing."

Otte said these kinds of projects are usually announced in local newspapers, or bulletin boards at local businesses.

"You may also want to check with your local game warden," he added. "A lot of times your conservation officer is going to know if there are groups that are doing this."

In recent years, municipal and county governments have discouraged citizens from filling up local landfills with summer yard and garden clippings, and big plastic bags of autumn tree leaves. Following that same trend, Christmas trees in some communities are diverted to a recycling program.

"They will actually set up the big chipper shredder at a park or some other location," Otte said. "They'll put your tree through it, and you can take the mulch home. You could also add it to a big pile that will be given to other homeowners, or used in municipal parks or green spaces."

"Once again," he continued, "we're taking that tree and finding more uses for it. It's a natural material that has a lot of good use to it."

Otte said he enjoys taking his tree to the chipper shredder for what might be called the "olfactory bonus."

"You start chipping up that evergreen, and just get that smell of Christmas all over again. It's really fun."

Whatever option is chosen, a used Christmas tree has no business in the landfill.

"It's far too valuable, in so many ways," Otte said.

GRASS & GRAIN Auction Sales Scheduled

check out the on-line schedule at www.grassandgrain.com

December 29 — Ag equipment Online Only (www.purplewave.com).

Auctioneers: Purple Wave Auctions.

January 1, 2010 — 25th Annual New Years Day Consignment Auction at Lyndon for Harley Gerdes.

January 1 — Guns, ammo, rods & reels, bows, trap & hunting, fishing, camping accessories at Olpe. Auctioneers: Swift-N-Sure Auctions.

January 1 — Furniture, antiques & collectibles at Tonganoxie. Auctioneers: John Shoemaker Auction Service.

January 2 — Jewelry, antiques & collectibles, household, pictures at Abilene. Auctioneers: Reynolds, Mugler & Geist.

January 2 — Equipment, tools, new generators, new forced air heaters at Ottawa. Auctioneers: Eastern KS Auction Barn.

January 2 — Antique furniture, collectibles, household & misc. at Topeka. Auctioneers: Prudential Auctions.

January 2 — Tractors, machinery, livestock equip., trucks & trailers & misc. S. of Hiawatha. Auctioneers: Hoffman Auction Service with Tom & Rex Lockwood.

January 6 — Clay Co. real estate at Clay Center for Sam & Nora Goodin. Auctioneers: Landmark

Real Estate, Harold Mugler.

Online Only (bidding ends January 7) — Forage harvesting equipment. Proxibid.com or UCSalina.com. Auctioneers: Blomquist Auction/United Country Mid West eServices.

January 9 — Antiques & collectibles, Fiesta, household & other at Mankato for Alma Garman. Auctioneers: Thummel Real Estate & Auction, LLC.

January 10 — Furniture & collectibles at Salina for Then & Now Antiques. Auctioneers: Thummel Real Estate & Auction, LLC.

Online Only (bidding ends Jan. 12) — Surplus pipe & fencing material. www.purplewave.com. Auctioneers: Purple Wave Auctions.

January 19 — Forklifts, shop supplies, residential & commercial property at Sylvan Grove. Auctioneers: Omli & Associates, Inc.

January 20 — Clay Co. real estate at Clay Center for Agnes K. Scripser Estate. Auctioneers: Landmark Real Estate, Harold Mugler.

February 27 — Coins at Emporia. Auctioneers: Swift-N-Sure Auctions.

March 6 — Machinery, equip., tractors & combine at Paxico for Duane & Diane Hund. Auction-

eers: Murray Auction & Realty, Steve Murrar.

March 6 — 32nd Gelbvieh Balancer & Red Angus bull sale at Pomona for Judd Ranch.

March 7 — Farm equipment & misc. consignments at Wetmore for St. James Building Fund. Auctioneers: Local auctioneers.

March 8 — Farm sale E. of Agenda for Richard Anderson Estate. Auctioneers: Larry Lagasse Auction & Real Estate.

March 13 — 24th annual Concordia Optimist Club consignment sale at Concordia.

March 13 — Harley Gerdes consignment auction at Lyndon.

March 13 — Jewell Co. real estate at Formoso for Taylor & Edna Ruth Clark Estates. Auctioneers: Larry Lagasse Auction & Real Estate.

May 31 — 17th annual Harley Gerdes Memorial Day consignment auction at Lyndon.

August 7 — Harley Gerdes consignment auction at Lyndon.

September 6 — 15th annual Harley Gerdes Labor Day consignment auction at Lyndon.

November 6 — Harley Gerdes consignment auction at Lyndon.

January 1, 2011 — 26th annual Harley Gerdes New Year's Day consignment auction at Lyndon.

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SATURDAY, JANUARY 16-Moser Ranch influenced customer commercial female sale 1 p.m. (see website for early consignments)

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More consignments by sale time.

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Cattle Sale Every Thursday 11:00 AM



BAXTER BLACK

ON THE EDGE OF COMMON SENSE

Texas Thank You Tour

I made the trip to Texas this fall and was able to revisit a couple of monumental memories, just to see if they were real.

When I was going to veterinary school in Colorado I worked summers in the feedlots managed by Diamond A Cattle Co. The second year I hired on at the 50,000-head yard in Thermal, Ca. Yes. Thermal ... a summer job. I was batchin', eating greasy tacos and renting a room with no air conditioning. Occasionally one of the men on the doctor crew would take me home with him for lunch. I'm sure his wife thought of me as a stray dog... "Can't you feed him out on the porch, Simon?"

But he and I sat at his little kitchen table with bowls of Chile Colorado, using homemade tortillas she handed hot from the stove which we used as spoons. It is still one of my finest dining experiences.

He moved to Rockport, Texas. I went by to see him for the first time in thirty years. It was important to me to let him know that, to this day, I have never forgotten his kindness.

I also swung by the little town of Schroeder. Several years after working for Simon, I had fallen on hard times. Red Steagall, western singer and Texas treasure, invited me to go with him to play a dance at Schroeder Hall. It was humbling for me. I was kinda star struck. We loaded in his new Cadillac. During the five-hour drive from Ft. Worth, I soaked up his wisdom and companionship. When we arrived at Schroeder Hall, we could have been in Kenya, for all I knew. I'd not paid any attention to the road or the scenery. Red said, "Bax, do me a favor."

I said, "Anything." It would give me a way to show my gratitude. He dug a ball of car keys out of his pocket bigger than a hippopotamus cud! "Would you mind holding these while I'm singing? I hate to carry this big wad around."

"Of course," I said obsequiously. We walked off. Well, I didn't want to go to the dance with that big wad of car keys in my pocket either! I peeled off the Cadillac key and threw the wad on the car's floor mat. At midnight I hooked up with another ride who was going to San Antonio. I went into the dance hall and said my goodbyes to Red and went to get my bag out of his car. It was then I realized that Cadillacs had two keys; one for the door and one for the ignition. I had kept out the wrong one! It was 3:00 a.m. before the locksmith arrived from Victoria.

On my Texas tour I hunted up Schroeder Hall. It was still there and still had a dance hall. I stared at the light pole in the gravel parking lot and had a nostalgic chill. I remember, in my embarrassment that I insisted on paying for the locksmith.

I also remember he said, "Okay" just a little quicker than I'd expected!

Time growing short to register for January 11 Ranch Management Seminars around Kansas

The registration deadline for the Jan. 11, 2010 K-State Winter Ranch Management Seminar is Jan. 6.

The seminar, which will be held simultaneously at four locations in Kansas, will begin at 2:30 p.m. and end at 8:00 p.m. Dinner will be provided. The sites include Ashland, at the Ashland High School Auditorium, 311 Clipper Street; Parsons, at the K-State Southeast Agricultural Research Center at North 32nd and Pefley Streets; Phillipsburg, at the Huck Boyd Community Center, 860 Park Street; and Manhattan, on K-State's campus in Room 111 of Weber Hall.

The event is sponsored by K-State Research and Extension, K-State's Beef Cattle Institute, and Pfizer Ani-

Manageable crossbreeding systems help drive profitability

Every crossbreeding system has its advantages and disadvantages, cattle experts agree, so producers must evaluate programs in terms of providing the best possible performance within their own unique situations.

Scott Greiner, Ph.D., an Extension animal scientist at Virginia Tech, said an ideal crossbreeding program should optimize, but not necessarily maximize, hybrid vigor (heterosis) in both the calf crop and, particularly, the cow herd; use breeds and genetics that match the enterprise's feed resources, management and marketing strategy; and be easy to apply and manage.

Cattle producers should find a way to capture heterosis in their herds, said Gary Hansen, Ph.D., an Extension livestock specialist for North Carolina State University. He noted that breeds from diverse genetic backgrounds will express higher levels. For example, British breeds crossed with each other will result in less hybrid vigor than when crossed with Continental or Bos indicus breeds.

Cathy Bandyk, Ph.D., an animal scientist at Quality Liquid Feeds, Dodgeville, Wis., said some basic points always apply when selecting breeding stock that meet the specifications; complementarity of the breeds used; cows and calves that fit available resources and the local environment; and crosses that produce animals suited for the target markets.

Concerning that last point, Greiner advised, "specifically include the targeted carcass-merit end point. Considerable differ-

ences between breeds exist and may be effectively utilized by crossbreeding."

When constructing a crossbreeding plan, each breed should help meet marketing objectives and enhance the quality of calves, said Matt Spangler, Ph.D., a beef geneticist at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He cautioned, however, that expected progeny differences (EPDs) are not helpful in selecting between breeds because EPDs from one breed are not directly comparable to those of another.

He noted, although, that producers can use the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center's (USMARC's) across-breed adjustment factors to categorize breeds based on their genetic potentials for certain traits. He suggested looking at the existing herd composition then choosing another breed that complements those cattle.

Hansen also encouraged producers to use the breeds that are the most economically productive for their enterprises and management styles, reminding them that no single breed is best at everything.

For example, Greiner offered, coupling the British breeds' general advantages in marbling potential with the Continental breeds' red-meat-yield advantages results in offspring that have desirable levels of both quality grade (marbling) and yield grade (retail yield).

Today's genetics offer the opportunity to stabilize coat color and polled status while maintaining a crossbreeding program, he added. Technological advances, such as DNA genotyping, have made it possible to manage such qualita-

tive traits in several breeds; therefore, they do not need to be limiting factors.

Hansen encouraged commitment: "Use breeds that complement each other. Do not become the 'bull of the month' club with your bull battery."

Utilize the various breeds' strengths for a viable crossbreeding system, Greiner said, and maintain uniformity from one generation to the next with sire selection - both within and between the breeds.

"Bull selection within a breed is equally important," he explained. "EPDs are very useful and important tools in accomplishing that task."

Spangler agreed that EPDs and economic indexes are necessary for choosing individual animals.

"Those tools really center on the genetic aspects of individual animals," he said.

A crossbreeding program requires quality cattle if it is to outperform straightbreeding and produce a product that meets consumer demand, Hansen stated.

"Crossbreeding will not overcome poor genetics," he said. "Use quality animals when selecting the bulls to use in your herd."

Greiner noted several factors and challenges to consider when evaluating different crossbreeding systems: the number of cows in the herd; the number of available breeding pastures; labor and management; the amount and quality of feed available; the production and marketing sys-

tems; and the availability of high-quality bulls of the various breeds.

Bob Hough, Ph.D., executive vice president for the North American Limousin Foundation (NALF), listed a few more items: a source of replacement females, identification and recordkeeping systems, matching biological types, and fitting the production environment.

"The 'ideal cow herd' and breeding program vary depending on the area in which the enterprise is located, the product and the target market," he explained. "Once you have analyzed those aspects, you can design and implement a crossbreeding program that will help you achieve your production goals and marketing plans. The system must fit practical constraints."

Overall, the cumulative effect of crossbreeding when you consider several traits is more important than the effect on any one particular trait, Greiner reiterated, so you must design effective crossbreeding programs to optimize performance, not necessarily maximize it.

"Still, a major challenge to making a crossbreeding program work is keeping the system sustainable without sacrificing optimum levels of heterosis and breed complementarity," he cautioned. "A well-designed, manageable crossbreeding system is an important aspect in making genetic progress in the various economically important traits that drive profitability in today's beef industry."

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