



**LSU AgCenter**  
**St. Landry Parish**

# BEEF CATTLE CONNECTION

March 2024



**St. Landry Parish**

**1065 Hwy 749 Suite A**

**Opelousas, Louisiana 70570**

**337-948-0561**

[www.LSUAgCenter.com](http://www.LSUAgCenter.com)

**\*\*To be added to our email list, please call the office or email Brittany Zaunbrecher at [bzaunbrecher@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:bzaunbrecher@agcenter.lsu.edu).**

## **March 2024 Events**

2: Here's The Beef Cookoff- St. Landry Cattlemen's Association

16: Acadiana Beef Cattle Spring Field Day

21: Private Pesticide Applicator Recertification:

St. Landry LSU AgCenter Office

21-22: Louisiana Women in Ag Conference

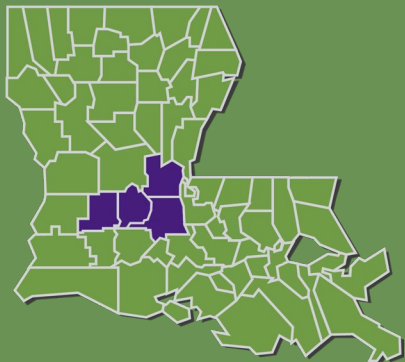
## **April 2024 Events**

10-12: Artificial Insemination School at Hill Farm

11: Master Cattleman Program Begins

## **May 2024 Events**

National Beef Month!



## Producers Take Advantage of Breeding Soundness Exams

Breeding soundness exams are an important component of a cow calf operation, as we discussed in depth in the January issue. On February 22 and 23, six producers got a total of thirty-five bulls tested by Dr. Grant Fontenot. This collaborative event would not have been possible without the use of facilities at Dominique's Stockyard in Opelousas, the St. Landry Cattlemen's Association, and the Lafayette Parish Cattlemen's Associations. Dr. Fontenot recommends getting bulls tested every year when planning for an upcoming breeding season. The drought conditions of 2023 as well as record high temperatures affected sperm motility and morphology in many bulls. While the long-term effects of those environmental conditions are not yet known, having your bulls tested before the next breeding season is the only way to be certain of their fertility.



*Pictured: Dr. Grant Fontenot, DVM, collects semen from one of the bulls in February's Breeding Soundness Exam held at Dominique's Stockyard in Opelousas. Producers also had the option to work their bulls with vaccines, dewormer, insecticides, tagging, etc. As always, be sure to follow the vaccine protocols from your veterinarian.*

## Private Pesticide Applicator Recertification

Beginning in January, the LSU AgCenter has hosted several opportunities for those individuals who need to attend a private pesticide applicator recertification meeting. Certification lasts three years and the expiration date on your card is listed as March 31 of that year. You may attend any meeting being offered if you have a conflict with the ones scheduled in your parish. There is one remaining recertification meeting scheduled for Thursday March 21, beginning at 5:30 PM at the St. Landry LSU AgCenter Extension Office in Opelousas, located at 1065 Hwy 749.

Remember to bring TWO checks or money orders, one written to LSU AgCenter for \$15 and the other written to LDAF for \$25. Cash will not be accepted. Contact your local Extension or visit our website and search for "Pesticide Safety Education Program" for more information.

# Tips for Selection of Replacement Heifers

*Drovers.com [Article](#) by Mark Z. Johnson*

Low cow herd inventories, historically high calf prices, looking for the first hollow stem, breeding season just a month or two away and the recent USDA Cattle Inventory report shows a tight supply of beef replacement heifers. All leading to the topic of selection criteria for replacement heifers. Selecting the heifers that will have the optimum mature size and milk level to fit our production system, breed quickly, wean a calf annually and have longevity is important. What should we consider when selecting yearling heifers as replacements?

**Early Puberty:** The younger a heifer begins to cycle, the better her chances of conceiving in time to calve by 24 months of age. Early puberty is moderately to highly heritable and positively related to future reproductive efficiency. Reproductive tract scoring can be used to evaluate puberty status. Typically, reproductive tract scoring is done four to six weeks prior to breeding season and serves as a tool to indicate reproductive readiness to conceive.

**Fertility:** Heritability estimates of fertility are extremely low. But because reproduction is so economically important, it should be a priority in heifer selection. Realistic goals for heifers would be 60-70% first service conception rate and 90-95% bred after a 60-65 day breeding season. Heifers should be held accountable and culled if they don't meet these standards. Keep in mind, early preg checking of replacement heifers permits opens to be marketed at yearling prices. Over time, culling the heifers that don't get pregnant in a defined breeding season will result in a cowherd with more fertility. Furthermore, heifers that calve in the first 21 days of calving season have increased longevity and wean more pounds of calves over their lifetime. Keeping 5 – 10% more heifers than needed for breeding, permits you to cull the sub-fertile heifers and maintain adequate replacement heifer inventory moving forward.

**Milking Ability:** Research clearly indicates the optimum level of milk production in a beef herd is relative to the forage/feed resources available in their production environment. Milking ability is low in heritability. The most effective means of selecting for an optimum milk level is through the use Milk EPDs on the sire. Keeping heifers from heavy milking cows comes with the risk of heifers getting overly fat prior to weaning. When this happens, the heifers subsequent milk production may suffer due to fat deposits in the developing mammary system.

**The Mammary System:** While difficult to assess the mammary system of virgin heifers, it is important to avoid heifers with teats that are barely visible and appear embedded in hair or fatty tissue. When possible consider the udder and teat structure of the dam who produced the heifer.

**Disposition:** Disposition is reported to be moderate to highly heritable. Culling heifers with bad dispositions will improve the ease of herd management, producer safety and conception rates.

**Body Type/Fleshing Ability/Muscle Thickness/Structural Soundness:** Heifers that are easy fleshing typically are structurally sound, have a wider structural frame and a body type of more rib shape and depth. Heifers with this body type will be heavier muscled. Evaluating replacement heifers for structural soundness should include the evaluation of feet, legs and eyes as soundness contributes to longevity in production. Fleshing ease equates to breeding females that better maintain body condition and energy reserves on a given amount of feed.

**Growth Rate:** Heifers with good growth rate and of moderate frame size should make the best cows. Those that are extremely light, extremely heavy or too large framed at a given age should be culled. Commercial cow-calf producers sell pay weight and replacement heifers with more growth should transmit this advantage. That being stated, much like milk, there is an optimum mature cow size relative to the production environment. Keep in mind, puberty is a function of age and weight. The target weight of yearling heifers is 65% of their mature size.

**Calving Ease:** Measuring the Pelvic Area (PA) of yearling heifers and considering the Calving Ease Maternal (CEM) EPD of sire can be used as selection tools to reduce dystocia. PA is typically measured in square centimeters. As general rule of thumb, dividing the yearling PA by 2.1 indicates the size of calf (in pounds) she should be able to deliver unassisted. For example: a yearling heifer with a PA of 175/2.1 = 83, indicating she should be able to deliver a calf of up to 83 pounds. CEM EPDs predict the likelihood of a bull's daughters delivering their first calf unassisted. For example: a heifer sired by a bull with a CEM of 15 is 11% more likely to calf unassisted than if sired by a bull with a CEM of 4.

As importantly, sire selection of the bulls to mate to virgin heifers is of paramount importance in reducing the incidence of dystocia. Calving ease bulls will have lower Birth Weight (BW) and higher Calving Ease Direct (CED) EPDs within their respective breed.

**Final Thoughts:** Selecting the oldest heifers has long been considered an effective method of identifying replacements produced by the earliest calving cows. Heifers born late in the calving season or less than 13 months old at the onset of their first breeding season will be more challenged to breed quickly.

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# ACADIANA CATTLE PRODUCERS SPRING FIELD DAY

Date: Saturday, March 16, 2024

Time: 8:00 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.

Place: LSU AgCenter Iberia Research Station  
(603 LSU Bridge Road, Jeanerette, La 70544)

Registration starts at 8:00 A.M.

- Approved for Master Farmer Phase II/CEC credit

## Indoor Program

- Welcome/Introductions - (Administration, LCA, & LFGC)
- Program Updates - (Beef Extension Program and Master Farmer)
- How Will the 2023 Drought Affect Forage Production in 2024?
  - An Update on Available NRCS Programs and Services
  - Bull Breeding Soundness Exam and Breeding Considerations
- Backgrounding Calves: Management Decisions and Opportunities
  - Producer Panel Discussion

## Outdoor Program

- Filling Early Spring Forage Deficiencies with Cover Crop Mixes
- Current Experiments Being Conducted at the Iberia Research Station:  
Preliminary Results
- Equipment Rental Program Through Soil and Water Conservation District

**Lunch Provided -- Door Prizes -- Vendor Exhibits**



**Contacts:** Iberia - Blair Hebert (337-369-4440); Iberia Research Station - Dr. Al Ogeron (337-276-5527); Lafayette and St. Martin - Lanie Richard (337-291-7090); Vermilion and Acadia - Abigail Sartin (337-898-4335); Louisiana Forage and Grassland Council - Ed Twidwell (225-578-4564); Beef Cattle Nutritionist - Marcelo Vedovatto (318-473-6520)







# 2024 Central Region MASTER CATTLEMAN PROGRAM

When: Every Thursday for 10 consecutive weeks  
Beginning April 11 to June 13- 6-9 PM

Where: St. Landry Farm Bureau Federation Board Room  
5265 I49 S Service Rd, Opelousas LA 70570

Cost: \$200 includes materials, meals, certificate of completion, and sign

## *What is the Master Cattleman Program?*

The Louisiana Master Cattleman program began in the summer of 2004. The course includes 10 three-hour lectures on all aspects of beef production. It is a commodity-specific program to enhance the profitability of beef producers by equipping them with important information on all aspects of beef production. The program will be provided statewide in various multi-parish areas. It will allow participants to add farm management/marketing components related to beef production. Upon completion of the Master Cattleman program, participants should be better able to increase farm profitability while being environmentally sustainable.

## *The Master Cattleman Program curriculum consists of 10 three-hour blocks including:*

Animal Handling  
Animal Health  
Beef Quality Assurance  
Breeding and Selection  
Economic and Marketing

End Product  
Nutrition  
Pasture Agronomy  
Reproduction  
Weed Management

## **Complete Registration and Submit Payment by March 15**

For more information contact:

Brittany Zaunbrecher - Extension Agent  
Agriculture and Natural Resources (Beef Cattle & Forages)  
St. Landry, Avoyelles, Evangeline, and Allen Parishes  
337-948-0561    bzaunbrecher@agcenter.lsu.edu



# *Central Region Master Cattleman Program*

## **2024 Registration Form**

(Please Print or Type)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State: LA Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Parish of Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish of Cattle Operation if different from Residence: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

To complete the Master Cattleman Program, persons must meet the following requirements:

Animal Handling	End Product
Animal Health	Nutrition
Beef Quality Assurance	Pasture Agronomy
Breeding and Selection	Reproduction
Economic and Marketing	Weed Management

The cost to participate in the Master Cattleman Program is \$200.00. Cost includes meals, supplies, certificate of completion, and sign. Please make check or money orders payable to: **LSU AgCenter**

Classes will begin on Thursday April 11, and continue for 10 weeks on Thursdays until June 13. Classes will be held from 6-9 PM with a meal provided at the St. Landry Farm Bureau Federation Board Room, located at 5265 I49 S Service Rd., Opelousas, LA 70570.

Mail to or drop off registration form and payment to:  
LSU AgCenter St. Landry Parish Extension Office

c/o Brittany Zaunbrecher  
1065 Hwy. 749 Suite A  
Opelousas, LA. 70570

## **Registrations must be received by March 15th 2024**

# Online Resources

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- **Website:** [www.lsuagcenter.com/beefcattle](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/beefcattle)
- **Beef Brunch Educational Series:**
  - [www.lsuagcenter.com/beefbrunch](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/beefbrunch)
- **YouTube:** [LSU AgCenter – Livestock](#)
- **Remind App System:**
  - Text @labeeff to 81010
- **Social Media:**
  - Facebook – [@LSUAgCenterBeefCattle](#)
  - Instagram – [@lsu\\_agcenter beef cattle](#)
  - Twitter – [@BeefLsu](#)

## St. Landry Parish has a Facebook Page!

<https://www.facebook.com/StLandryLSUAgCenter>

Membership and participation in activities and events are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, veteran status or disability. If you have a disability that requires special accommodation for your participation in an activity, please contact us at 337-948-0561.

### St. Landry Parish

1065 Hwy 749 Suite A

Opelousas, Louisiana 70570

[www.LSUAgCenter.com](http://www.LSUAgCenter.com)



For the latest research-based information on just about anything, visit our website:

[LSUAgCenter.com](http://LSUAgCenter.com)