

May 12, 2014

COWCHIP

DATES TO REMEMBER:

<u>May</u>	
22	Cattlemen's Night, Dominique Stockyard in Carencro, 6:30 pm, Educational Program and supper
30	Rye Grass Seed Order Form Due
30	Post Order Form Due
<u>June</u>	
1	Annual Barbecue at the American Legion Hall in Abbeville

POPULAR CULTURE AND AGRICULTURE:

The popular press: internet, magazines, newspapers, television, movies; is filled with scathing attacks and veiled innuendo about the sins of mainstream farming. Our mostly family-run farms are referred to as large-scale corporate farms. And while large corporations have an interest in our nation's food system, the people on the land growing plants and raising animals are for the most part country folk. Their families have been on the land for generations and rent a large part of their acreage from other multigenerational landlords and raise their children there.

There is a wide range of accusations leveled at our farmers, let us discuss a few of them.

But before we do, how did we get to our current food system? Over half the population was intimately involved with growing food a hundred years ago, today, it is about 2%. Efficiencies in mechanization, fertilizer, genetics, and pest control allow fewer and fewer people to grow food for more and more of us. Not being tied to the land allows the rest of us to develop one of the most diverse and richest economies in history. Likewise, these same efficient technologies allow us to feed a growing population on fewer and fewer acres. The Environmental Protection Agency reports that we have reduced acreage devoted to farming by 8% in the last 20 years. The need for continued development of technological efficiencies is highlighted in that same EPA land use article when it points out that we lose 3,000 acres of productive farmland every year to housing and business development .

It has been 40 years since a farmer could raise a family on a 100-acre farm. With costs for trucks, tractors, fertilizer, and fuel rising exponentially over the last half century, prices received by farmers for their crops have remained stable. In 1973, Louisiana farmers received \$17.50 for a barrel of rice, in 2011 that same barrel of rice sold for \$21.20. Farmers' margin of profit is small and to support their families they have to farm more acreage. Besides freeing up land and human resources to be used for other valuable purposes, technological advancements permit an abundant and cheap food supply, freeing up money to improve quality of life. It is because of yield per acre advances that farmers stay in business with the rapid escalation in cost for the things they use to farm.

Modern, mainstream farming has evolved into fewer farmers, smaller acreage available, larger farms, and an expanding supply of food at reasonable prices, all as a result of technological advancement and economic conditions. The majority of people lack the knowledge or desire to grow their own food and cannot relate to farming techniques. Combine that with the fierce independence of a farmer and misunderstanding and mistrust results.

A popularly held concept of agriculture is that the production of beef accounts for a significant portion of greenhouse gases and global warming. Often cited is methane production by the cow itself, the farming of land in row crops to feed cattle, and gases given off by the decomposition of manure. Cattle are ruminants and because they can digest cellulose, they produce more methane than other livestock, like chickens or pigs. However, there are fewer ruminants in North America today than there were in the 1700's. There were over 60 million bison inhabiting this continent in 1700, while USDA in January of this year estimates beef and dairy cows combined to be a little over 38 million. Also, because of advancements in genetics and nutrition, we produce more beef per animal than ever before.

Cattle are ruminants and produce food for humans from a product that is inedible. Cattle can digest grass and we can't. Much of our land devoted to agriculture cannot support corn, soybeans, wheat, and rice production due to it being highly erodible. However, we can grow grass on it with the resulting sod protecting the soil from erosion. Cattle use this grass to make meat. For most cattle, grasses and other forages make up over half of their lifetime diets. For others, grasses, legumes, and forages make up nearly 100% of their lifetime diets. On the other hand, other livestock, pigs and chickens, are simple stomached animals that rely almost solely on the starch from corn for their source of energy. They, like us, cannot digest grass. Also, corn used to produce ethanol in 2013 was 40% of all corn grown in the U.S., whereas, corn used to feed livestock represented 39.5% of corn grown. Animal agriculture's and, in particular, beef cattle's share of greenhouse gases from row crop production, while significant, is not the whole story.

It is true that as manure decomposes, it uses oxygen and gives off carbon dioxide. However the plants that are growing now to feed these animals, from which manure will be produced, are using carbon dioxide and producing oxygen. There is a balance in nature: plants use carbon dioxide, animals produce carbon dioxide. Plants produce oxygen through photosynthesis and animals use oxygen. That balance is fairly consistent as long as populations remain similar. Livestock numbers have decreased over time, however, but due to our advanced technology meat production has increased. On the other hand, human populations are growing. Also, the burning of fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide that was stored long ago, not stored by growing plants last year. Should we really point a finger at cattle ranches, when it comes to global warming?

Another common complaint against animal agriculture is the inhumanity of farming. Ranchers and stockmen have always valued the well-being of their animals. However, due to economic factors, practices have evolved over time. In particular, we can increase growth and thereby meat produced by removing animals from their natural environments and raising them in groups, in a more controlled and sterile environment. By providing a diet that meets all needs, improving the genetics of the animals so that they grow faster and gain on less feed, keeping them warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer, we have increased meat produced per animal and per pound of feed. Is this natural? No, it's not. But, if we'd only provided food through natural means, we'd all still be hunters and gatherers. In the words of Temple Grandin, renowned animal behaviorist, "Nature is cruel, we don't have to be." Can we improve our handling of animals? We can and we have. Adoption of stress-free handling techniques, many suggested by Dr. Grandin, have swept across ranches and feedlots. Ranchers are bound to their cattle both economically and as a way of life. As new management methods of handling and caring for our stock develop, most, if not all, stockmen, will use them.

There are many more misconceptions of agriculture that we can address in future issues. But the key is communication. People must eat. Few have any concept or control of how food reaches their grocery store. It is only natural that they question. It is our job as agriculturalists to tell our story, openly, honestly, and often. I think when most hear it they will be more accepting and more tolerant of what we need to do.

BARBECUE:

The Vermilion Parish Cattlemen's Board of Directors has moved our annual Barbecue to June 1st. It will be held at the Abbeville American Legion. The festivities start at 11:00 and include food, dancing and an auction. A cash bar will be available. We hope to see you there and bring a few friends and perspective members. Call if you have any questions at 898-4335.

HORN FLIES:

Significant economic loss is experienced when horn flies exceed 200 flies per animal. Research shows a reduction in 10-20 pounds of weaning weight per calf when the 200 fly threshold is reached. When horn fly populations are high, cattle group together, reduce grazing, and expend considerable energy combatting flies. Milk production is affected, the condition of the cow herd suffers and weaning weights are affected.

We most often see a seasonal pattern in horn fly populations. In spring and early summer we see the largest outbreak, a drop off mid to late summer and then another significant infestation in the early fall. Additionally, horn flies tend to prefer darker colored cattle. With black cattle having the highest numbers, followed by red, then white. Also, numbers tend to be higher on bulls. The horn flies life cycle is a complete metamorphosis. Both male and female flies are present on the host, females lay eggs in the fresh manure. Within 18 hours the eggs hatch into larvae and may feed on manure for 3-5 days, then pupate. Adults emerge from the pupal stage 3-5 days later. Females will begin laying eggs within 8 days of emerging. A cycle takes 10-14 days during warm months, but can be repeated year round in south Louisiana, depending on severity of the winter.

There are multiple control measures to choose from, but relying on only one will not generally yield good results.

- Feed or mineral additives – Altosid or Rabon are both labeled to be fed to cattle to control the larvae feeding in the manure. Limitations to this method are: intakes of minerals are variable; we don't normally feed during fly season; and horn flies can migrate from cattle bordering your pastures.
- Fly tags – High concentration insecticide tags are quite helpful. Use organophosphate tags for two years followed by pyrethroid tags for one. Do follow the label directions for tags per cow. Some do require two tags per cow and one per calf. Cut tags out of cows at 3-5 months. These practices are important in managing insecticide resistance by the flies. Tags are a consistent low dose delivery system and can easily result in insecticide resistance if abused.
- Pour-ons – If using in combination with ear tags, follow the same rotation. In other words, if using a pyrethroid tag use a pyrethroid pour-on. Using pour-ons several times a year can result in resistance development.
- Back rubs – If placed where all cattle must use it, as in a gate between pastures and water source; it is a highly effective and economical choice. Keeping it charged with insecticide is key.
- Sprays – Timely spraying of cattle throughout the year is effective, but can be time consuming.

Whatever your choice, realize that we will never eliminate horn flies, a combination of strategies is best and follow a smart rotation of organophosphates and pyrethroid classes to control resistance.

GRASS FED BEEF:

The USDA has formulated guidelines to be certified as Grass Fed Beef, the rule follows:

Grass (Forage) Fed Marketing Claim Standard (October 16, 2007, Federal Register Notice (72 FR 58631). Grass (Forage) Fed—Grass and forage shall be the feed source consumed for the lifetime of the ruminant animal, with the exception of milk consumed prior to weaning. The diet shall be derived solely from forage consisting of grass (annual and perennial), forbs (e.g., legumes, Brassica), browse, or cereal grain crops

in the vegetative (pre-grain) state. Animals cannot be fed grain or grain byproducts and must have continuous access to pasture during the growing season. Hay, haylage, baleage, silage, crop residue without grain, and other roughage sources may also be included as acceptable feed sources. Routine mineral and vitamin supplementation may also be included in the feeding regimen. If incidental supplementation occurs due to inadvertent exposure to non-forage feedstuffs or to ensure the animal's well-being at all times during adverse environmental or physical conditions, the producer must fully document (e.g., receipts, ingredients, and tear tags) the supplementation that occurs including the amount, the frequency, and the supplements provided.

PULLING TOGETHER CATTLE ON FEED, COLD STORAGE, AND BEEF DEMAND INDICATORS:

Over the past ten days the market has received three critical pieces of information including updated Cattle on Feed and Cold Storage as reported by USDA and Beef Demand information. The interpretation follows.

- **CATTLE ON FEED** - inventory on April 1st was down 1% while expectations were for a 0.4% increase. March marketing's were down 4%, which is a slightly larger reduction than pre-report estimates of 3.5%. Placements in March were down 5%, which is substantially lower than the pre-report expectation of +1.6%.
- **COLD STORAGE** - Total red meat supplies were down 8% on March 31st from prior month and down 14% from last year. Looking specifically at beef supplies, the 20.8% decline since last year stands out. This 20.8% decline in beef supplies is the largest reported since April of 2005.
- **BEEF DEMAND** -The Choice Retail Beef and All Fresh Beef Demand (AFBD) Indices for the first quarter of 2014 each fell by 1.8%. This is the first quarter the AFBD Index experienced with a year-over-year decline since the second quarter of 2010. The AFBD index decline reflects per capita consumption declining by 5.6% and real (inflation-adjusted) prices increasing by 4.9% (\$5.32/lb nominal price). If real prices would have increased by 6.8% then the AFBD index would have been unchanged from Q1.2013.

Overall these three points of information are reinforcing a similar message:

1. Beef supplies are tight and are likely to get tighter;
2. Historically high retail prices are being realized yet even higher prices are needed given reductions in availability.

In aggregate, these signals offer support for both cattle and beef prices in the near term. While notable uncertainty remains, the underlying situation of tight cattle and beef supplies coupled with reasonably stable demand is a positive condition for industry stakeholders to make management, marketing, and possible expansion decisions within.

POSTS:

Since Hurricane Rita, the Vermilion Cattlemen's Association has brought in several truckloads of wooden posts. It allows ranchers to purchase these at wholesale prices. To make it work we need about 2,500 posts ordered. We will take orders for 3" x 6' 1/2", 2 1/2" x 6' 1/2", 6' x 8' and 5' 1/2" x 8' posts. The prices are on the order blank. To participate, fill out the attached order blank and mail it to Andrew Granger with full payment by check, made out to Vermilion Parish Cattlemen's Association by May 30th. We will hold all checks until delivery of the posts. Again, at least one truckload must be ordered for us to proceed.

RYEGRASS ORDERS:

It is time to take orders for ryegrass seed. This is the 35th year we have booked bulk ryegrass seed. The program continues to allow for price advantages to participants. Last year those who booked seed with us paid 46¢/lb. for Gulf and 55¢/lb. for Prine and \$142.50/25 lbs. for Durana White Clover

In addition, due to high nitrogen fertilizer costs and the benefits of clover, the Cattlemen's board voted to offer Durana White Clover Seed to producers. Durana is more productive than LAS-1 and more persistent than ladino type clovers like Osceola. White Clover comes in 25 lb. bags so you must order in 25 lb. increments. Seeding rates are 3 lbs./acre in a mixture with ryegrass or 5 lbs./acre if planted alone. For a deposit of \$10.00 per 25 lbs. of clover seed you will be guaranteed that amount and for a deposit of \$5 per 100 pounds of ryegrass seed, you will be guaranteed that amount. All seed not booked will be available on a first come, first served basis; however, this will be a very limited amount. If you want seed through the program, then you should put a deposit on the amount you desire.

Please indicate which variety you prefer on the order blank. Be aware that Prine or Nelson Tetraploid is generally 10¢/lb. more than Gulf. Prices are not final at this time. Bids will be solicited from Vermilion Parish dealers only. We will accept bids on Prine and Nelson Tetraploid and accept the lowest bid on either of them. Performance on these two is similar.

If you wish to be guaranteed ryegrass seed and/or clover in this year's program, then fill out the form enclosed and send it to Andrew Granger, 1105 W. Port St., Abbeville, LA 70510 along with a check made payable to the Vermilion Cattlemen's Association and in the amount needed to guarantee your seed. Deposits are due by ***Friday, May 30th***. Deposits will be non-refundable after July 15th.

Sincerely,

Andrew Granger
County Agent
Vermilion Parish

It is the policy of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, or disability.

RYE GRASS ORDER FORM:

RETURN TO ANDREW GRANGER, 1105 W. PORT ST., ABBEVILLE, LA 70510 BY FRIDAY, MAY 30th.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ CELL _____

Amount of Ryegrass Seed _____ x \$5/cwt.

Amount of Clover Seed _____ x \$10/25 lbs. (order only in 25 lb. increments)

Amount of Deposit = _____

Type of ryegrass you prefer:

Prine or Nelson Tetraploid

Gulf

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO VPCA

POST ORDER FORM:

PLEASE RETURN BY FRIDAY, MAY 30TH TO ANDREW GRANGER, 1105 W. PORT ST., ABBEVILLE, LA. 70510.

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ CELL _____

I would like to order:

_____ 3" x 6 1/2 line posts x \$3.70 = _____

_____ 2 1/2 x 6 1/2 line post x \$2.10 = _____

_____ 6" x 8' corner posts x \$11.60 = _____

_____ 5 1/2" x 8' corner post x \$8.85 = _____

TOTAL = \$ _____

MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO VPCA.