



Pickens County
Cattlemen's
Association
222 West Main St., Pickens, SC 29671

Newsletter

Volume 13

October 1, 2017

July Junior Meeting was Really Interesting

by RD Morrison



Butch Knightner operates a drone while PCCA Junior member Xavier Johnson looks on.

The six rotor drone



A small group of Juniors, along with their parents and grandparents, mustered at Jeff and Cindy Pepper's farm

in Easley for a meeting on some of the technology available to producers. Although the weather was threatening, it was a nice evening for the program.

While Butch prepared the drone for flight, RD Morrison gave a short overview of apps available for iPhones and Android smartphones. Although a flip phone devotee, RD has recently purchased an iPhone because of the death of his flip phone and discovered that some apps are quite useful. A handout was given to all in attendance with a lot of information.

Butch flew the drone over Jeff's cow pasture, checking cows and calves while looking at the grass availability. He explained some of the features like GPS, video recordings and photos. It should be mentioned that Butch recorded the raw footage for the soil sampling video for the PCCA. The cows were quite unconcerned with the drone when it was at altitude, but were very leary of it when it was low to the ground. In fact, the cows can be driven with a drone.

A hamburger meal was provided by PCCA directory advertiser Century 21 Hometown Realtors and Cindy Pepper prepared the hamburgers.

Thanks to the Peppers for hosting this meeting, to Butch Knightner for demonstrating the drone, to RD Morrison for the app presentation and to Century 21 Hometown Realtors for providing the meal.



Putting Farm Safety into Practice

Successful Farming at Agriculture.com
Excerpts from an article by Jessie Scoot

In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a proclamation for a week dedicated to farm safety, bringing attention to the hazards and risks of farming. This was important at the time because the high injury rate in agriculture was taking a toll on the war effort. This week (September 17—23) is now recognized as National Farm Safety Week.

In 2015, 401 farmers and farmworkers died from a work related injury, according to NIOSH - 19.2 deaths per 100,000 workers.

Tractor overturns and transportation incidents are the leading causes of death for farmers. Rollover protection and seatbelt usage helps to lower this number. Steps should be taken to reduce runovers and PTO entanglements. A shortcut can have devastating effects.

Hearing protection, eye protection, and respirator use are all useful tools to keep your hearing, eyesight and to keep you off an oxygen tank. In addition to physical health, mental health challenges are apparent in the ag industry. The suicide rate of the ag related industries is 84.5 suicides per 100,000 people whereas the rate for the average population is 16.1 per 100,000 people.

About 110 youth under 20 die each year from farm related injuries, according to data from 1995 to 2002 (NIOSH). Educate the kids about dangerous areas on the farm and livestock.

Accidents between passenger and farm vehicles had two aspects. The farmer should use warning lights and turn signals and the cars should exercise patience.

Artificial Insemination Adds Value to Cow Herd

By Evan Whitley, Ph.D.

With permission of the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation

Due to the considerable herd expansion that has occurred over the last three years, forecasters predict that 2017 and 2018 cattle markets will be considerably lower than even the transition that took place during the latter half of 2016. Only time will tell, but cattle producers are pretty resilient, and most have seen this market transition before. A silver lining to keep in mind about this one is that we are transitioning from all-time record calf prices in 2014-2015. Hopefully, cow-calf producers took advantage of those market conditions to identify areas of opportunity to address as prices soften and are willing to implement measures that can either reduce costs or increase revenues in the event that we do need to buckle down due to choppy markets.

One such area that has potential to add value to a cow-calf operation is the implementation of an artificial insemination (AI) program. This topic is not a new one, but I find very few commercial producers, regardless of size, actually implement AI as a management tool to improve herd performance and revenue generation. The reasons are varied and in many instances ultimately appropriate. However, the sentiment of "I have never done it," or "It looks too hard," oftentimes rules the overall decision-making process and the potential benefits are left untapped.

Depending upon the individual situation, arguably the biggest benefit in utilizing AI is access to superior genetics as AI studs are selected. Electronic databases, available through many of the breeding services suppliers, can be easily sorted based upon a prioritized list of genetic traits that are specific to your operation. Oftentimes, this results in access to AI studs that wouldn't otherwise be available with greater ge-

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netic predictably than is available when purchasing younger, relatively unproven natural service sires.

Doing so leads to another important potential benefit of AI, which is the possibility for the AI event to target specific traits in subsequent offspring such as replacement quality and/or carcass merit, and the cleanup event to target paternal endpoints such as weaning and/or yearling weight. The result will be heifer calves that are born early in the calving season and possess the maternal traits desirable to either go back in the herd or market as replacements as well as later born calves that possess the growth potential to overcome their lack of age and still wean at an acceptable weight.

Accompanying the AI program, consider whether to inseminate based upon standing heat or at a timed interval. The vast majority of commercial operations elect to implement a synchronization program and inseminate at a specified interval within the resulting heat cycle. Realistically, only expect around 50 percent conception from the timed AI event. But, by synchronizing you should get more females bred earlier during the cleanup period.

Depending upon the individual situation, arguably the biggest benefit in utilizing AI is access to superior genetics as AI studs are selected.

Keep in mind there are several different synchronization programs; they are specific to whether mature cows or heifers are the target animal and whether they are English or Brahman influenced. Implementing the appropriate estrus synchronization program and not synchronizing more animals than you can breed at any one interval are important points to learn from others' mistakes as opposed to making them yourself. An extremely helpful tool in implementing an

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AI program/protocol is the "[Estrus Synchronization Planner](#)" offered through Iowa State University.

Although there are other potential reasons (e.g., costs, labor availability, AI technician access, desire, etc.) that would yield AI infeasible, in my estimation there is really only one true deal breaker: if an individual operation doesn't have access to working facilities that are safe to both personnel and animals. AI technicians are similar to many veterinarians in that they can do a lot with very few resources in the form of fancy pens, yet if the basic functionality of your working pens is in question then definitely use the adequate number of bulls. It will make everybody happier, including the bulls.

Priorities When Starting an Artificial Insemination Program

By Evan Whitley, Ph.D.

With permission of the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation

The Noble Research Institute owns and operates approximately 14,000 acres that spans seven ranches and three counties. These properties are used in various ways including conducting applied research and demonstration as well as providing a venue for educational and training events. The process of undertaking these important endeavors starts with implementing an overall management plan that is consistent with commercial beef cattle production. Practically speaking, it is only possible to represent the commercial cattle producer in information collection and dissemination if we operate as a commercial cattle producer. Doing so opens opportunities to share our thought process and decisions as we develop and adapt this overall management outline.

I Predetermine outcomes prior to implementation based

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upon listed goals and objectives.

I realize setting goals isn't fun, but it is necessary, especially as we determine the value in branching into something new. These goals need to include optimizing soil and forage resources exhibited at the ranch level, minimizing costs of production, and maximizing marketing opportunities.

At the Noble Research Institute, we are keenly interested in ensuring a supply of calves for all of our research, demonstration, teaching, herd maintenance/expansion and marketing needs, taking full advantage of opportunities across all segments of beef production. Thus, our breeding program, including AI, must reflect this goal.

2 Determine limitations to implementation.

As I mentioned in the previous article, inadequate facilities and inaccessibility to qualified labor are very real obstacles. Keep in mind that an AI program will get you closer to your cattle, but you don't want them too close. Therefore, adequate facilities and access to labor (quality and quantity) are extremely important.

3 Differentiate the AI from the bull-bred calves.

Although benefits of a typical commercial AI program include less bull dependency and synchronized heat cycles (assuming timed breeding), utilize this effort as an opportunity to meet additional objectives by selecting the AI sire on different/additional criteria than cleanup bulls.

Here at the Noble Research Institute, we select our AI bulls (Angus) for maternal, paternal and carcass traits. We select our cleanup bulls (Charolais) for paternal and carcass traits. Doing so accomplishes three goals: increases access to the maternal genetics that will positively influence our cow herd

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long-term, utilizes bull purchases to increase the marketability of younger calves, and genetically stamps the calves so we readily know the difference.

4 Don't get hung up on individual pedigrees, but execute a repeatable process.

Please don't interpret this to mean that individual data is not important and shouldn't be used during the selection process. However, the viability of an AI program will come down to AI pregnancies and cost of semen. Increasing AI conception is a stand-alone topic; however, minimizing semen cost is a balance between selected traits, accuracy of those traits and popularity of the individual sire. If the popularity of the bull grows over time, so will his semen cost. You need a backup proven selection process to maintain your breeding goals and objectives using another bull. We try to keep our semen costs below \$20 per straw. Last year, our average semen cost was approximately \$15 per straw.

5 Develop a good relationship with a reputable AI or breeding service representative.

This will be especially beneficial during the first year's transition. There are many out there to choose from, but a point to consider is access to a robust database of available sires. Last year, we sorted through almost 300 potential sires to a list of seven and made our pick from a list of four due to unavailability of semen for the other three, which is a good lesson. Just because a sire is listed in the catalog doesn't mean he is a viable choice. Start the selection process early and keep your breeding service representative abreast of your progress so they can keep you informed of important company information.

Our Selection Criteria

Specifically, our selection criteria consisted of an AI sire being in the top one-third of the Angus breed for calving ease (direct and maternal), growth (weaning and yearling) and marbling, and moderate (top 50 percent) on other im-

portant traits such as birth weight, milk, mature weight/ height and the price indexes. We feel this complements our cleanup bulls, which have been selected for high growth and carcass merit and will ultimately provide us with the greatest number of viable options to either retain or market the resulting calf crops.

Again, this is not an exhaustive list but points to consider based upon experiential knowledge regarding a progressive management practice that could add significant value to a well-managed commercial cow-calf operation, under the right circumstances and for the right reasons.

What Are These New Weeds in My Pasture? By RD Morrison

A good crowd was in attendance at the Pickens County Career & Technology Center to enjoy a brisket supper (from the Smokin' Pig) and a meeting on the drought affects on our pastures.

Area Livestock Agent Lindsey Craig gave an informative meeting on some of the new vegetation that has popped up in the pastures due to the drought. She pointed out that weed seeds can lay dormant in the soil for years and when Mother Nature puts a stress on the land (as with a drought) they come to life, germinating and growing, to fill in the bare spots.



Some are really beneficial (i.e., Bahai). Bahai is a hardy grass that can take a lot of abuse and survive. That is probably why the DOT plants it along the highways. It has a distinctive 'v' shaped seed head and is a pretty good forage.

Another one is purple top. Purple top is a pretty good forage and can be seen when traveling the highway



waving in the wind in the fields. A perennial warm season bunch grass well adapted to drought affected soils..

A video of this meeting will be available at the Moore Balliew Oil Company on Shady Grove Road in Pickens very soon.

Show your Cattleman Pride with a PCCA License Plate



The PCCA Board of Directors has authorized the purchase of these license plates to show our pride as cattlemen. They are aluminum, raised lettered and have our PCCA logo imprinted on them.

All members will get one for free. If you want additional tags or if non-members want a tag, they will be sold for \$10 for the first tag and any additional tags are \$5 each. The board feels like this will promote the cattle industry, the PCCA and our members operation. A WIN - WIN for all of us.



The tags will be available at meetings. Please check the website, www.pickenscountycattle.com, for meeting notices.

*Thoughts from the President -
Amy Finley Wilson*



I want to thank RD Morrison for his service and commitment to the Pickens County Cattlemen's Association. He has served as Secretary/Treasurer for years and though his dedication, our organization has grown and prospered, allowing us to do more for our members and community. He will stay on our board to continue serving in a different capacity, thankfully, and I personally want to express how grateful we are to him for all that he has done.

Thank you, RD!

Editors Note: Thanks to the PCCA for allowing me to serve as Secretary / Treasurer. The Officers and Board members have been a big help in the accomplishments of our association. - RDM

PCCA Synopsis Report		Sam's Club	\$45.00
for period as of 10/01/17 -		Postage	\$330.00
		Printing	\$4189.84
INCOME:	\$11922.00	Advertising	\$1485.79
Ads	\$6780.00	Azalea Festival	\$35.00
Dues	\$1465.00	Meals	\$3602.06
Reimbursed	\$2210.00	Website	\$620.00
Raffle/ contributions		Raffle	\$224.27
	\$1421.00	Repairs	\$87.95
EXPENSES:	\$12983.79	Tax	\$35.73
SCCA dues	\$1145.00		
Donation	\$2590.25		



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