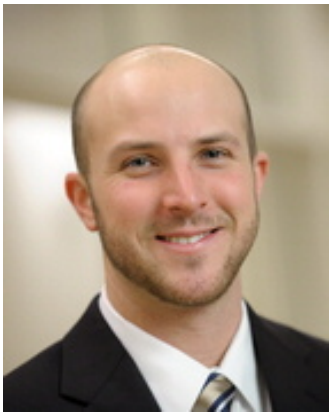
The Latest Across the Plains

Timely Reminders

- Prepare adequate wind shelter and protection from winter elements. A dry, clean hair coat reduces maintenance energy requirements.
- Test hay and silage to insure proper ration formulation, be sure to check nitrates on annual crops.
- Analyze winter feed supplies.
- Keep an eye on breakeven projections for cattle placed on feed.
- Consider limit feeding stock cows. High energy feedstuffs are relatively low cost compared to hay. Limit feeding high energy feeds may substantially reduce cow input costs.
- Monitor BCS of cows monthly.
- Keep pens scraped and get manure hauled to fields.
- Make sure waterers are clean and in good working order.
- Prepare supplies and pen conditions for weaning calves.
- Wean calves - contact us about setting up backgrounding diets.
- Use an internal parasite control product (white de-wormer) in both cows and calves after freeze up/dormancy occurs.

Welcome, Adam Schroeder!



Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc. would like to announce the addition of Adam Schroeder, M.S., MBA as our newest consultant! Adam developed a strong interest in the beef industry while growing up on a farm in Central Illinois. This led him to pursue a B.S. in Animal Science from the University of Illinois. Involvement in undergraduate research in fetal programming helped Adam decide to complete his M.S. degree in Ruminant Nutrition, also from the University of Illinois. After completing his M.S. degree focused on corn replacement feeds in feedlot cattle, Adam became the manager of the University of Illinois Beef Cattle Research Farm and concurrently worked on completing his MBA. After three and a half years managing the research farm, Adam is excited to start working for the Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc. team using practical experience and current research to help clients grow their business and improve their bottom line. Adam will begin working full-time for Great Plains Livestock Consulting, Inc. in January 2017.

Unused Feed

"It is no use saying 'We are doing our best.' You have got to succeed in doing what is necessary."
--Winston Churchill

Save Money $$$ Test Your Feeds

Tests are relatively inexpensive, usually costing less than $18, for the information derived. Contact our office to set up an appointment to have us pull feed samples if we have not done so yet.

Calendar of Events

- **Nov 1 - 17** North American International Livestock Expo (NAILE), Louisville, KY
- **Nov 8 - 10** Wichita Farm & Ranch Show, Park City, KS
- **Nov 11** Veterans Day
- **Nov 16 - 17** Kansas Agri-Business Expo, Wichita, KS
- **Nov 16 - 17** Gateway Farm Expo, Kearney, NE
- **Nov 16 - 17** McCook Farm & Ranch Expo, McCook, NE
- **Nov 29 - Dec 1** Amarillo Farm & Ranch Show, Amarillo, TX
- **Nov 29 - Dec 1** Ag Retailers Association Conference & Expo, Orlando, FL
- **Nov 29 - Dec 1** Greater Peoria Farm Show, Peoria, IL
- **Nov 30 - Dec 1** Farm News Ag Show, Fort Dodge, IA
- **Dec 5 - 9** ASTA's CSS & Seed Expo, Chicago, IL
- **Dec 8 - 10** Nebraska Power Farming Show, Lincoln, NE
- **Dec 8 - 10** Tulsa Farm Show, Tulsa, OK
- **Dec 11 - 13** NGFA Country Elevator Conference & Trade Show, Chicago, IL
- **Dec 13 - 15** Indiana - Illinois Farm & Equipment Show, Indianapolis, IN

The Great Plains News Feed

Getting Better Utilization Out of Your Hay

By Luke Miller, M.S.

Whether you live in a region that has had a plentiful hay year, or find yourself in an area that is always in short supply, winter hay feeding is never something that should be taken lightly. Many cow/calf producers spend much of their summer harvesting hay, and likewise most of the winter feeding it. The "hay cycle" is simple enough… bale hay - feed hay - bale hay - feed hay. However, daily activities on a farm or ranch are such that it can be difficult to fully appreciate the true investment in a bale of hay. When priced on a per unit of energy basis, hay is almost always the most expensive ingredient on any given operation – that is usually true for high quality alfalfa, low quality fescue, and everything in between. My objective with this article is to present some management considerations that may allow you to better utilize what is likely your highest priced commodity.

Because it is difficult to measure, minimizing hay waste, or shrink, is not often a major consideration when putting together an annual budget. However, data has shown that hay loss from improper storage, wasteful feeding, or both can result in over 50% waste (for tips on hay storage refer to http://www.gplc-inc.com/newsletters/2014/Jul-Aug2014_Newsletter.pdf). For some producers, feeding hay free choice in hay rings might be the best fit for their operation. If this is the case, using a ring with a cone can reduce waste by 50% compared to one without. If a traditional ring is what you have available, a solid barrier around the lower 1/3 of the ring is the next best option to a cone. Recent research from Oklahoma State University showed that feeding hay harvested with a pre-cut baler resulted in more waste than feeding long stem hay baled with a traditional round-baler. Cattle consuming the pre-cut hay tended to have slightly higher gains and improved feed efficiency, but if you are feeding hay from a pre-cut baler, investing in cones would result in a quicker return on your investment.

Since dry matter intake is highly related to forage quality, a cow can consume more high quality hay than is necessary to meet her energy requirements. Therefore, offering the proper amount of higher quality hay on a daily basis can help stretch hay supply. There is much debate about whether feeding in rings, unrolling hay, or grinding with a processor is more ideal. There is often a misconception that grinding hay will increase forage quality, which is not necessarily the case. Grinding hay of variable consistencies can decrease sorting and result in all cows consuming a more uniform diet. However, there is little data showing a significant benefit of one feeding method over the other. Forage quality, amount delivered, and environment are the primary factors to consider when deciding which option is best. If hay is plentiful but of lower quality, don't hesitate to over-feed and realize that some waste will occur, especially during wet or cold conditions. Cows will consume the better feed and leave lower quality stems for bedding. Remember that sometimes what we put under a cow is almost as valuable as what we put inside her. However, if conditions are relatively mild and dry, and hay is high quality, feeding to a calculated intake based off forage quality, body condition, and stage of production is ideal. The best advice is to body condition score the cows and have the ability to make adjustments based off these factors.

Another factor to consider is where to feed hay. If possible, the best place to feed hay is in your lowest producing pasture. A University of Nebraska report in 2014 calculated a $35.50 per ton fertilizer value in alfalfa hay due to excreted nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. Lower protein grass hay would be slightly less, at roughly $33.00 fertilizer value per ton of hay. This does not include the organic matter and micro nutrients added to the soil from both manure and wasted hay. Moving hay feeding areas around during the course of the winter season will in turn get better dispersion of nutrients throughout the pasture. Harrowing pastures in the spring will expedite the breakdown of manure patties and result in better nutrient absorption by the soil. The extra nitrogen availability will often result in a higher weed population during the first growing season after feeding hay in a given area, but usually the following season these pastures will produce your best grass. One big advantage of purchasing hay is the nutrients that you are bringing onto your operation that are typically not accounted for in initial hay cost.

Many parts of the country have experienced a decrease in hay availability in recent years, but many times these areas have high quality forages or corn by-product feeds readily available. Limit feeding cows a more highly fortified diet can greatly reduce the need for dry roughage, usually by 60%-80% that of a traditional cow diet. An ionophore is highly recommended in limit fed rations, but can also be a valuable tool in high roughage diets. Cows supplemented with Rumensin® at 200 mg/head/day have been shown to have similar performance on average/low quality roughage diets while consuming 5-10% less dry feed than cows on an un-medicated control ration. Because Rumensin® is not labeled to be fed free choice, be sure to visit with your nutritionist about putting together a supplement which would allow you to take advantage of this technology. (Refer to http://www.gplc-inc.com/pdf/2015/12-3/Nov-Dec-2015-Newsletter.pdf for more information on limit feeding cows.)

We often stress the importance of getting hay tested before going into winter so that your nutritionist can work with you on a supplementation program that will be the best fit for your operation. The nutritional value of hay can vary a great deal depending on stage of maturity at harvest, the presence of legumes, etc. If lower quality forages are your primary winter feed resource, remember that while corn can help provide calories, most energy based feeds will do little to increase dietary protein. Meeting minimum rumen degradable protein requirements will allow rumen microbes to function more efficiently and better utilize low protein forages. Gluten feed and distillers grains are a readily available resource in many areas, and can be a great tool to not only provide energy, but also much needed protein which can often be lacking. Cows supplemented protein every-other-day, or even twice per week, will respond similarly to cows that are supplemented every day due to the unique ability of ruminants to recycle nitrogen. However, if energy supplementation is necessary, cows should be fed every day to get an ideal response. Don't hesitate to contact your GPLC Nutrition Consultant to help develop a winter cow regimen that will work for you.

The Great Plains News Feed

Advocating for Agriculture

By Clayton Baughman, GPLC, Inc. Intern

Agriculture is a very rewarding and self-fulfilling industry with which to be associated. Regardless of whether you are a producer or in an allied industry, your efforts contribute to the end goal of feeding people. Unfortunately, there are a lot of negative stigmas associated with farming and ranching. There is a phenomenon occurring in our society right now where consumers want to know more about where their food comes from. This is great, educating consumers on modern agricultural practices is a good way to bring transparency to our way of life. But issues develop when consumers make poor choices in where they get their information. With the growing use of social media, it becomes very easy for consumers to mistake a blog post from an animal rights activist for factual information. Most of these posts are written by people who have never stepped foot on a farm. It doesn't make sense for somebody to do this until they look a little deeper into the matter. Oftentimes these people make efforts to spread fear in an attempt to get people to purchase products they are selling. The fear mongering of consumers must be stopped if we want to continue using modern scientific practices in agriculture. The global population is expected to be at over 9 billion people by the year 2050. Not only are we losing more land to urban development but we have to figure out how we are going to feed all of these people with the remaining land base. The organic and non-GMO movements in developed countries require significantly more resources to produce food. Consumers believe paying the extra premium these goods require are going to result in better health and less impact on the environment. This could not be any further from the truth. What they are paying for is the extra resources, natural and otherwise, it took to raise the product, as well as the premium the farmer/rancher gets for meeting a certain standard.

The big question is what can we do as members of the agricultural community to help stop the spread of pseudoscience? One answer is to be an advocate for agriculture. We are past the point in time where we can stand silent and hope others will do this work for us. We are in an age where the consumer has tremendous influence in agriculture and they are the group with the least amount of knowledge regarding the industry. A person could come up with several ways to help spread the news, but it really just comes down to what works best for you. Young people typically find that they can reach a large audience on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, or perhaps partnering up with different agricultural associations and setting up stands at grocery stores or public places where they can educate the public. Many middle-aged folks see good results from organizing a public farm tour to show consumers how much they really care about their animals and the land. We can also do things such as making a trip to D.C. to help lobby or educate members of Congress. Getting involved with local organizations, such as your county or state cattleman's affiliate, is a great way to have a voice and use the power of numbers to get your message to more urban communities in your area.

One of the biggest challenges we face when advocating for agriculture is reception. We can talk all day with little to no results. This is an easy fix in most situations; tone is everything. Oftentimes consumers like to ask questions that can come off as offensive to us, and our natural instinct is to let our emotions get involved in the conversation and protect what we love. This becomes an issue because then the two parties spend the whole time bickering and no time getting to the bottom of issues. Negative emotions must be left out of the conversation if progress is to be made. Never react negatively, always respond in a positive manner.

Another thing we have to be careful about is credibility. If a consumer comes to you with a tough question that is over your head, call on somebody else with the knowledge to answer it. Too often conversations on social media involve a consumer asking a tough question or trying to outsmart the producer and the producer will unintentionally stretch the truth because they lack a better answer. Trust is a hard thing to earn, and misinforming people unintentionally will reduce any chance of progress in the conversation. The best way to avoid this mistake is to back every claim you make with peer-reviewed research articles. Provide links to your sources of information to solidify your claim. This also helps you stay current on what is going on in the industry.

As important as credibility and research are, sometimes all a person needs is to hear you share about your passion and way of life. This will often go further than cold hard facts. If you were unfamiliar with modern agriculture, you would probably make poor assumptions about the industry, too. Hearing how much somebody truly cares and loves agriculture is a great way to make progress. It sounds cliché, but people truly do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. Once you break down some of those trust barriers with a consumer, you will find it gets much easier to share the truth. Doing this and respecting the beliefs and background of the consumer you are talking with will warrant the most progress. We have to remember that not everyone lives and breathes our way of life like we do. Outside of eating, they may not have any exposure to the industry, so being sensitive to this lack of understanding is critical.

Speaking up and having a voice is the best way to promote the modern practices associated with agriculture. While it can seem like a lost cause at times, it is absolutely necessary. We all have a shared responsibility to uphold the industry that is home to us. Alone our efforts are minimal but together we can change the way people think about their food.

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The Great Plains News Feed

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