

## EXTENSION LIVESTOCK ACTIVITIES

**Mike Howell**

Northeast Area Livestock Agent

**Monthly Newsletter:** The Northeast Livestock Link is a monthly newsletter prepared for County Agriculture and 4-H Agents. The newsletter supplies information on the current local, state, and national production situation. In addition, this newsletter provides Agents with herd management guidelines that can be altered to fit their local situations and needs.

Agents use this information in their monthly producer newsletters, local mass media sources, and in their one-on-one producer visits.

The newsletter is also mailed to Northeast Mississippi producers that are actively involved in Extension's Integrated Resource Management program.

**North Mississippi Beef Agribition:** The 2001 Northeast Mississippi Beef Agribition held March 23 and 24 was a big success. This beef promotion consisted of two registered sales, Angus and Brangus and a Beef Cattle Improvement Association registered bull and commercial replacement sale. The sale averages were as follows: Angus – 54 lots - \$1420.00, Brangus – 32 lots - \$1708.00, BCIA bulls (16 months and older) - \$1600.00, BCIA bred commercial heifers - \$871.00.

The other popular attractions at this event included the livestock products trade show, the producer seminar held Friday evening and the youth beef skillathon.

The main feature of this year's event was the BCIA Satellite Video Sale. All BCIA animals offered through the sale were videoed with the consignor having the option of actually delivering their animals to the sale site or allowing the video to represent their consignments. This allowed producers with little knowledge of Video selling, to examine for themselves, the effectiveness of video marketing. Producers were impressed and the 2002 sale will again consist of an in-house Video sale.

**Integrated Resource Management (IRM):** The IRM program continues to be the primary tool Northeast Mississippi livestock producers use to have their beef farm evaluated for maximum efficiency and profitability. Currently, twelve Northeast Mississippi producers are enrolled in the program. The on-farm evaluation is conducted by Mike Howell, Area Livestock Agent, and a team is assembled from the Mississippi State University departments of Animal and Dairy Sciences, College of Veterinarian Medicine, Plant and Soil Sciences and Agriculture Economics to construct a management plan for the producer to follow. An analysis of the farm is done at the end of each year using the Standard Performance Analysis guidelines to measure positive or negative financial and production changes in the farm for the year.

**Holly Springs Experiment Station Beef Demonstration Herd:** The Holly Springs Experiment Station will be the site for the newest beef herd brought into production under the North Mississippi Research and Extension Center system. A committee from the Mississippi State University Animal and Dairy Science Department, North Mississippi Research and Extension Center at Verona and the Holly Springs Station created a beef demonstration herd specifically for the benefit of smaller sized producers with 40 cows or less to use as a prototype herd. The objective of this herd will be to utilize a two-way rotational cross system of Angus and Hereford cows for a fall calving program. This will be an artificially inseminated herd with all steer and cull heifer calves ear-marked for the feedlots, while the quality replacement heifers will be used as herd replacements and the over-run will be sold in the annual MAFES production sale.

A complete set of financial and production records will be kept and available to producers to verify cost and returns associated with the herd. The feedlot calves will have feedlot performance data and carcass data available for producers to examine.

The intent of this demonstration herd is to show producers how to incorporate herd health, a good record keeping system, predictable genetics, timely herd management, aggressive marketing and retained ownership into a profitable beef cattle business.

**Artificial Insemination Shortcourse:** More and more producers are discovering the benefits of Artificial Insemination in their beef herds. Registered and commercial producers are particularly interested in learning to artificially inseminate their first calve heifers to bulls that are proven calving ease bulls. In addition the beef markets are demanding higher quality calves and one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to achieve this is through the use of Artificial Insemination.

This year marked the fifth year the Mississippi State University Animal and Dairy Science Department and the Prairie Research Station collaborated to host a producer Artificial Insemination Shortcourse at the Prairie Station. The shortcourse is traditionally offered during the last weekend in October to accommodate producers that have off-farm jobs. This allows producers to attend without taking time off from work. Because this is a hands-on training, only 20 participants can be accepted each year.

In addition to learning Artificial Insemination skills, the shortcourse also provides producers with in-depth information on estrus synchronization, herd health, heifer development, understanding EPD's, and facilities and equipment needed to carry out a successful artificial insemination program.

**Beef Cattle Shortcourse via Satellite:** The Distance Learning beef cattle shortcourse has been well received by producers since it allows them to participate without traveling to Mississippi State University. The interactive video system allows the presenter and those attending off-campus sites to converse in real-time.

Producers enjoy having the option of hearing a University specialist present timely information without having to travel long distances to participate. This is one of the most cost-effective and time-efficient ways the Mississippi State University Extension Service has created to reach producers all across the state at the same time.

The 2001 Distance Learning Beef Shortcourse was completed November 13, and participating producers reported on their combined evaluations that they received \$146,000.00 worth of information from the shortcourse.

Each year at the completion of the shortcourse, producers are asked to list the topics they would like to have discussed in next years beef shortcourse. This system has allowed organizers to plan a year in advance and to line up speakers to address the topics producers are requesting.

**Contact:** Mike Howell, Area Livestock Agent, P.O. Box 1690, Verona, MS 38879, phone 662-566-2201, or e-mail [mhowell@ext.msstate.edu](mailto:mhowell@ext.msstate.edu).