
THE CATTLEMAN'S ROUND TABLE

A UGA EXTENSION NEWSLETTER FOR
NORTHEAST GEORGIA BEEF PRODUCERS



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SO...YOU WANT TO BUY MEAT DIRECTLY FROM A FARMER?

Amid this pandemic consumers seem to have a renewed and heightened desire to buy locally and know exactly where their food comes from. There were several months last year when you couldn't even find a deep freezer not on back-order. You may have been approached by neighbors and friends about buying your cattle directly. If you are not taking advantage of

this marketing opportunity, it's something that should at least be considered. Your UGA Extension agents are here to help you navigate the do's and don't's of selling meat to the public. We can also provide resources for your potential customers that explain the process of having a beef animal slaughtered and what type and quantity of product to expect in return. You may know that one 1200 pound steer does not yield 1100 pounds of Ribeye steak, but that doesn't mean your customer will. Check out the fact sheet page 8 of this newsletter contributed by Morgan County Extension. Consider sharing this or other educational tools with those inquiring about live beef purchases from your operation.



"ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT BUT OFTEN NEGLECTED TOOLS IN TRANSPORTING CATTLE IS THE STOCK TRAILER."

TIPS FOR THE MODERN CATTLE DRIVE

By Carole Knight
Madison County Extension

Long gone are the days of the traditional cattle drive. Cowboys on horseback would round-up cattle and drive them hundreds if not thousands of miles to railheads and stockyards. Cattle drives had to strike a balance between speed and the weight of the cattle. While cattle could be driven as far as 25 miles in a single day, they would lose so much weight that they would be hard to sell when they reached the end of the trail. The modern cattle "drive" takes on a little different mode of transportation.

Hauling cattle using a stock trailer is an integral part of most operations. One of the most important but often neglected tools in transporting cattle is the stock trailer. Trailers should be kept in good condition and repairs made when needed.

Trailer tires should be routinely checked for proper air pressure, tread wear, and should be free of dry rot. One way to check the age of tires is to read the DOT serial number on the face of the tire. For example, a DOT serial number of 1410 means that the tire was manufactured in the 14th week of the year 2010. Tires with five or more years of age should be looked at for replacement. When replacing tires, make sure the replacements are of the same size and load capacity of the old tire.



Look for the size marking on the side of the old tire. It should have the letters ST or other indication that it is for trailer use only. Never use passenger car or light truck tires on a trailer. Don't forget the spare. Spare tires should receive the same maintenance protocols.

Bearings and axles should be maintained and greased according to manufacturer recommendations. A jack capable of lifting not only the trailer but the load it carries, along with a block, should be kept accessible. One popular place to store the spare tire and jack is in the nose of a gooseneck trailer. However, if needed when the trailer is loaded, these necessary items would be very difficult and potentially dangerous to get to.

Trailer lights and wiring should be inspected to ensure that they are properly functioning prior to hauling cattle. Brakes should be in good working order. The floor of the trailer should be inspected and repaired or replaced as needed. The useful life of a wooden trailer floor is probably less than ten years. If the trailer is not cleaned out on a regular basis the life expectancy is potentially less. Any trailer used to haul livestock should have a non-slip floor. Options for flooring include wire cattle panels or rubber matting. If wire panels are used, make sure that the panels are securely held down. It is often helpful to bed aluminum trailer floors to help prevent slipping. Trailer floors should be cleaned routinely to assist with biosecurity and help prevent the spread of disease.

Trailers should not be overloaded. Check the truck's manual to ensure it

can handle the load to be pulled safely. Proper load densities should be used to ensure that there is adequate floor space per head to minimize stress, bruising, injury and possible death loss. Cattle should have sufficient room to stand with little risk of being forced down because of overcrowding. When the trailer is not full, safely partition cattle into smaller areas using the trailers dividing gates to provide stability for the cattle and the vehicle. Take care when opening and closing gates. If cattle are overloaded there can be a great deal of tension on the gates causing them to spring forward when unlatched. Much like when traveling by airplane and the stewardess warns before opening overheadbins, "contents may have shifted during transport", you must be cautious when opening gates on loaded trailers.

When loading cattle onto the trailer, care should be taken to move the cattle slowly and quietly. Low-stress handling techniques should always be utilized when moving, loading and unloading livestock. It is essential to handle cattle carefully when transporting to not jeopardize the quality of our products. There is an economic incentive to properly transporting animals. An estimated one-third of all bruises occur on the farm. The other two-thirds usually occur during transport and marketing. Bruised and injured cattle will sell for less and have a greater degree of trim loss. Making sure the stock trailer is in good working order before transporting cattle can help avoid a potential disaster or dangerous situation. Taking care to follow these recommended transportation practices can make your next cattle "drive" safe and profitable.

ON TARGET: FOCUS ON FUNCTION

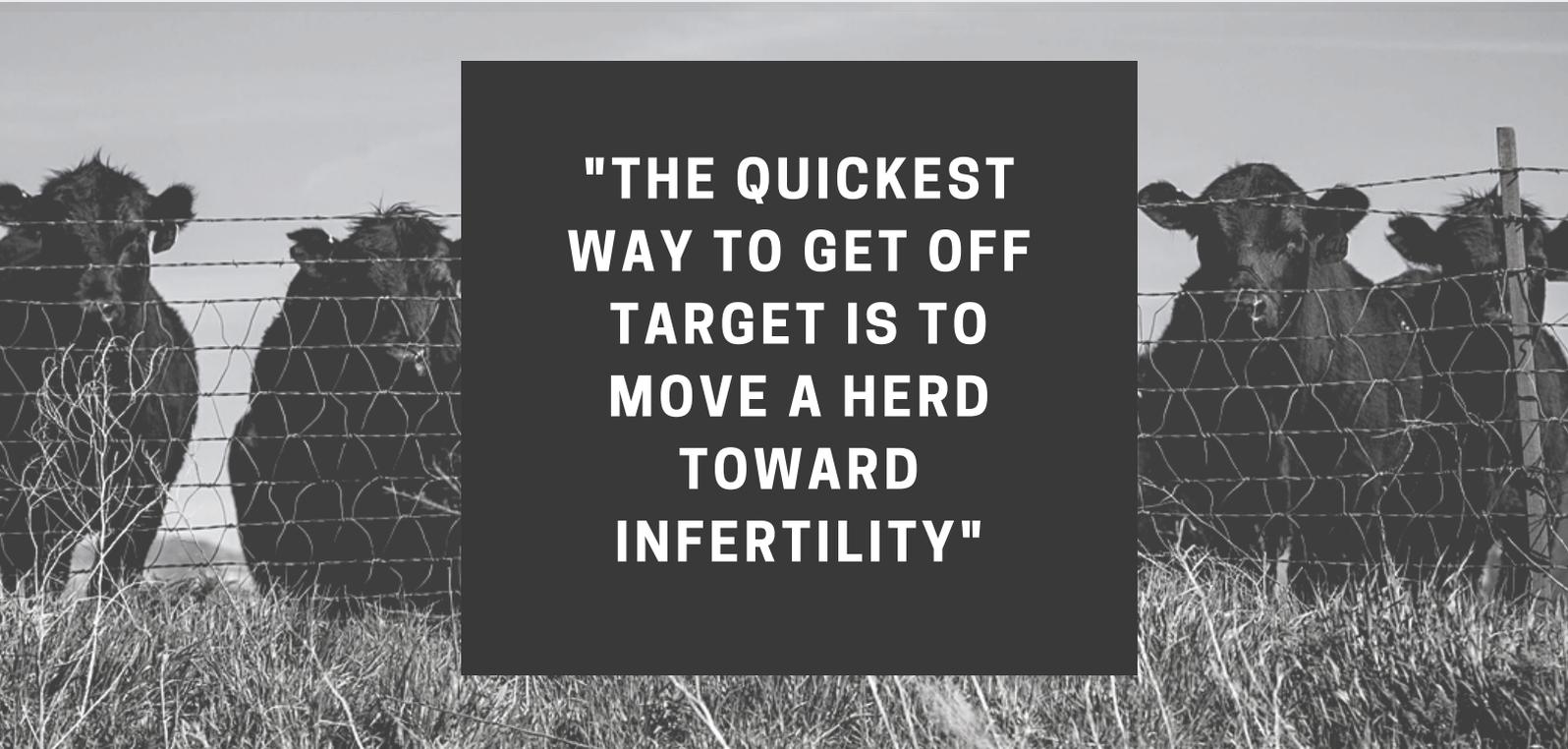
By Jason Duggin
UGA Beef Extension Specialist

"Wile E. Coyote", Super Genius, was always on target, or so he thought. I'm sure you recall the cartoon where he was always going just a little too fast before he realized he had run off the cliff. Beef production requires setting targets to achieve premiums and market high quality cattle. However, producers must be focused on achieving these goals without running off the metaphorical cliff. Producers that keep a focus on fertility, cow inputs, feet and legs along with other convenience traits will be stronger over the long term.

The quickest way to get off target is to move a herd toward infertility. Although no one intentionally does this, it can unfortunately happen. In discussions

with producers, fertility and longevity issues seem to be the biggest concern on cow calf operations. For those developing their own replacements, it is imperative to make deliberate moves to achieve a 90% or higher weaned calf crop. An operation that focuses on mature females and replacement heifers conceiving earlier in the breeding season is key. Even with good reproductive management though, the wrong genetic mating can limit progress on fertility.

A good EPD to use when retaining 20% of heifers as replacements is \$M or Maternal Weaned Calf Value. Specifically, for this discussion, \$M uses heifer pregnancy (HP), mature cow weight (MW), claw set and foot angle as a portion of the index. Focusing on these traits along with good reproductive management steps are essential for long term profitability. This does not mean that this is the only selection tool to use, but it may be a good place to start. Once producers familiarize themselves with \$M, they can also make more specific selections by looking at traits such as HP, for example, or if cow size or cow inputs



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need to be improved, producers have the ability to choose bulls that are within a certain range for \$EN or MW for their environment and management goals.

On top of this, producers must continue to be cattle savvy when evaluating potential replacements. Although genomic EPDs are essential, visual appraisal will continue to be necessary. The foot scoring poster provided online by the Angus Association is a tool that every producer can learn and use on their operation. Search online for "Angus Foot Score Guidelines" to locate the poster. Producers can use the score of 5 as ideal for claw set and

foot angle. Combining visual appraisal of replacements with the use of the claw set and foot angle EPDs in bull selection can help improve foot quality and soundness in the cow herd. When comparing claw set and foot angle EPDs between bulls, the lower number is preferred.

The phrase "slow is fast" applies when making improvements in functional traits while maintaining economically important traits. It will take time, but it will pay dividends in the future. Functional traits such as fertility, foot soundness, and cow size will always be focused targets for cow-calf producers.

THE SHOW GOES ON

Although things looked a little different this year, the pandemic didn't stop the 2021 Georgia Junior National Livestock Show.

A total of 372 4-H and FFA members gathered in Perry last month to exhibit their beef projects. Over 400 heifers and more than 150 market beef entered the ring over the three day event.

For those unable to attend, sponsor contributions allowed for the entire event to be live-streamed to www.waltonwebcasting.com

Next year's state livestock show is scheduled for February 23-26, 2022





**"NITROGEN IS
TYPICALLY THE
MOST LIMITING
NUTRIENT FOR
PLANT GROWTH"**

I HAVE CLOVER, DO I NEED NITROGEN?

By Shanna Reynolds
Oglethorpe County Extension

Adding clovers or other legumes to an existing perennial grass pasture is becoming commonplace amongst cattle producers. Legumes have many benefits. They contribute free nitrogen to the forage stand and dilute toxic effects of tall fescue. They can improve pasture quality and increase animal performance. Increased gains per acre and increased conception rates have been well documented due to the quality of clovers compared to grasses alone.

Nitrogen is typically the most limiting nutrient for plant growth. Approximately 79% of the air around us is nitrogen gas, but it is not in a useable form for grass forages. Although the clover usually gets the

credit for capturing this nitrogen and sending it back into the soil, it is actually *Rhizobium* bacteria that do the work. These bacteria, living in nodules on the plant roots, take nitrogen gas from the air and convert it to forms that can be used by the plant. The legume's nitrogen is then spread to other plants in the pasture by decomposition of the nodules or by passing through animal waste.

After they are well establishment, clovers should not need nitrogen fertilizer themselves and will hopefully provide enough nitrogen for their grass counterparts in the field. But how do you know if they are doing their job adequately? The answer to whether you need additional nitrogen or not depends primarily on the amount of clover that you have. Estimate the percentage of clover in your pasture compared to all other grasses and weeds. Be cautious if your pasture mainly consists of small common white or Dutch clover, because it's easy to overestimate. (West Virginia University Extension has a helpful guide "Visual Reference Guide for Estimating Legume Content in Pastures") Ideally,

you want 30-40% of your total forage to be clover. If legumes make up over 30% of your total stand, then you will most likely not need any additional Nitrogen. It's important to note that a grazing system should never comprise more than 50% clover. Animals need the additional fiber from grasses to improve digestion and avoid bloating.

Another way to monitor nitrogen fixation is to dig up a couple of plants and inspect the nodules. Use a shovel to carefully cut around the plant and dig it up. Brush or rinse the roots with water to remove the soil and cut into the nodule so that you can see what color is inside. Nodules with a pink or red color are working to convert nitrogen, while nodules with a white or

light green color are free-loading in your soil. During the middle of a growing season, you should find predominately pink or red nodules on your legumes.

If your legumes aren't doing their fair share of work in your pasture mix, you have a few options to improve the productivity of the stand. You can follow fertilization guidelines to meet the pasture grass's requirements. You can re-seed the clover stand with seed that has been inoculated with the *Rhizobium* bacteria. If a drought year, irrigation may also get your clovers back in gear. Soil test your pastures every 2-3 years and add lime, phosphorus, and potassium based on the results. Legumes require a higher pH and fertility than most grasses to maintain productivity. Phosphorus is critical for nitrogen fixation and potassium is required for stand longevity. Contact your local Extension agent for more information and a customized plan for your farm.



Hairy vetch nodules. Legume nodules like those pictured above are pink or red in color when N fixation is occurring (Lisa Baxter, UGA)

Situation	Average Daily Gain (lb)	Gain/Acre (lb)
Infected tall fescue	1.06	374
Infected tall fescue + clover	1.53	582

Beef steer performance as affected by white clover (Hoveland et al., 1981)

Legume Species	Annual Pounds N/Acre	N Value at \$0.60/lb
Alfalfa	200-300	\$120-180
Red Clover	100-200	\$60-120
White Clover	100-150	\$60-90
Annual Clovers (arrowleaf, crimson, etc)	100-200	\$30-90

Approximate pounds of nitrogen annually fixed per acre by various legumes. (Don Ball, Auburn University)



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So.... You Want to Buy Meat Directly From a Farmer?

A 101 EXTENSION FACT-SHEET ON BUYING MEAT LOCALLY

*Lucy Ray & Jay Moon, Morgan County Extension, ANR Program
Hailey Robinson, Lamar/Upson County ANR Agent
Alexander Stelzleni, UGA Meat Science Specialist*

IS IT LEGAL TO BUY MEAT DIRECTLY FROM A FARMER?

- All meat, sold by the cut, must be inspected by the USDA or State (Georgia Department of Agriculture).
- Individuals can buy an animal “on the hoof” and have it processed for personal use as Custom Exempt, by a Georgia Department of Agriculture licensed facility. Typically, in this case, the purchaser is responsible for the cost of processing the animal.
- An animal can be owned/shared by more than one person.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PROCESSING?

- Goats and lambs are generally ready for harvest between 5-8 months of age depending on body condition and breed.
- Hogs are generally finished and ready for harvest at around 6 months.
- Cattle finish at 1000-1400 pounds which can take 18-22 months.
- Grass or grain finished beef, lamb, and goats are all raised on grass and most are supplemented with grain during the final or “finishing” portion of their lives.
- Grain-finished animals produce more marbling, while 100% grass finished animals often tend to have a more yellowed colored fat, caused by carotenoids from green forage.
- The choice between grass or grain-finished is personal preference.
- Before processing, let your processor know your preferences, such as....
 - Keeping variety meats
 - Thickness of steaks
 - Weight of roasts
 - Packaging quantities

Be sure to contact your local Extension office or the Georgia Department of Agriculture for updated regulation information.

DID THE BUTCHER STEAL MY MEAT?

- Carcasses are broken down into primal cuts, and then broken down further, into sub primal & retail cuts.
- Remember that a fattier carcass yields less meat.
- Heavier muscled animals yield more meat.
- Other factors that affect the amount of meat you receive from your animal include bone-in cuts that yield more weight than boneless cuts, how much fat is discarded, and aging time. This all affects the amount of meat you receive after processing.
- There are many different options for how carcasses can be cut or processed. Be sure to educate yourself on these options. Remember, that buying a 500-pound steer does not mean that you will receive 500 pounds of ribeye steak.
- Typically, when processing an animal, you are charged by pounds of Hot Carcass Weight (HCW). Remember that number is of the total hanging weight; including lean, fat, and bone directly after harvest. Some of that weight will be discarded as undesirable trim, fat, and bone.
- Aging processes for meat adds a tenderizing and palatable effect on the meat. However, there is shrink related to water loss. Carcasses are typically aged for 7-14 days. (Consult with your processor on ideal aging time for your carcass)
- Dressing percentages are as follows:
 - Hogs ~70% live weight
 - Cattle ~60% live weight
 - Sheep/Goats ~50% live weight

STORAGE & OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Frozen meat can last for up to a year.
- Remember you must have adequate freezer space for meat storage. Rule of thumb is 1 cubic foot of freezer space for every 35-40 pounds of packaged meat.
- Options for packaging include shrink-wrapping, butcher paper, and clear film. Processors may ask your preference.
- Edible by-products can include the tongue, liver, heart, sweetbreads, etc.
- Communicate with your processor of choice on payment and pickup.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

03/03/21	Tifton Bull Test Sale
04/20/21	Tifton HERD Program Sale
05/26/21	Georgia Forages Conference via GCA Facebook page
06/02/21	Calhoun HERD Program Sale

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