COW HERD APPRAISAL PERFORMANCE SOFTWARE

CHAPS 2000

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SmartCows™ pilot program participation tops projections

Official Notice

North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association Annual Meeting

As a member of the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, you are invited to attend the annual meeting to be held at the North Central Research Extension Center, 5400 S Hwy 83, Minot, ND.

The Directors Meeting will begin at 3:00 p.m. (CST) followed by dinner at 5:00 p.m. (CST) at the Royal Fork, Minot, courtesy of the NDBCIA. Tickets must be presented for meal.

The annual meeting will be held at the Research Extension Center beginning at 7:00 p.m. (CST).

Guest speakers for the evening will be Dan Dorn, Supply Development for Decatur County Feed Yard, Inc., and Paul Berg, NDSU, Animal and Range Sciences Associate Professor in meats. This is your official notice as prescribed in the by-laws of the NDBCIA.

The agenda for the meeting is on page 2.

Kris A. Ringwall, Ph. D.
Executive Secretary ■

By JAMES ODERMANN
Editorial Consultant

An alliance between the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, the NDSU Extension Service and beef producers in North Dakota through the SmartCows™ program has been a positive experience in the pilot year of the program, according to Dr. Kris Ringwall, NDBCIA executive secretary and Extension Beef Specialist. Nearly 1,500 calves were pre-conditioned.

SmartCows™ was established by the NDBCIA and NDSU to give producers a 12-month systems management approach to beef production, specifically forage, data collection, source verification and health. This systems approach also provided equipment and labor for live cattle processing. The SmartCows™ team included four to six Beef Quality Assurance certified technicians.

ìThis was a positive experience for our team working with producers throughout the western two-thirds of the state; preparing calves for weaning and consulting on beef production issues,î Ringwall said. ìI would say the pilot year was well received. The board (NDBCIA) will continue to discuss the program and see how it can be expanded to assist more producers.î

A total of 1,448 calves from seven beef operations were worked through the corral, chute and tub on wheels, which logged over 2,000 miles as part of the pilot project. Six of the producers had calves at more than one location so the SmartCows™ team moved the physical set up to the calves in the pastures where they were located.

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This is the moving corral, tub and alley way used to work calves in the SmartCows™ program. Participation exceeded projections in the pilot year. This stop was in Billings County. ***James Odermann Photo***

2002 SmartCows™ Pilot Year Summary

Date Worked	Mileage	# Calves	# Sites
September 16, 2002	160	126	1
September 24, 2002	120	350	3
September 30, 2002	500	298	3
October 1, 2002	100	110	2
October 14, 2002	380	135	2
October 28, 2002	600	218	2
November 12, 2002	450	211	2
	2310	1448	15

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ì We exceeded our goal of 1,000 calves worked,î Ringwall said. ìThe next step is to use the data collected during this pilot year as the benchmark from which we can improve and, if the board so desires, expand the program.î

The concept behind SmartCows™ was to give producers a systems management strategy from conception through weaning. SmartCows™ offered a seamless link, if producers desire, to retained ownership to any and all stops along the beef protein harvest chain. Additionally, it provided equipment and labor to complete the tasks.

Calves in the pasture are mixed back with their mothers immediately following the preconditioning. The calves were weighed and given shots (left). Records are processed through CHAPS.
James Odermann Photos

Adam Ottmar was a member of the SmartCows™ team. He spoke of the opportunity to dialogue with producers about production issues, while at the same time providing a valuable service.

Ottmar said the team ìconfessed to enjoying the trips and producersî. He called the pilot year ìquite successful and with positive results more producers are expected to join the program. The future of beef production is changing and SmartCows™ is just the tool to help producers stay ahead in the game.î

The only minor problem was inaccurate head counts but Ringwall said improved communication will solve that problem.

SmartCows™ team members did everything from start to finish. All the producer had to do was supply the cattle and the vaccines. The cost was $1 per head if the calves were sorted off or $2 per head if the team had to sort the calves from the cows.

When the SmartCows™ team pulled in, their equipment included a corral on wheels which measured 36 feet long and eight feet wide when in transport mode. The corral was able to be moved at about 50-55 miles per hour. Once expanded on site, the corral could hold up to 120 head of approximately 850 pound animals.

ì We were quite satisfied with the convenience and durability of these corrals and received many compliments from producers,î Ottmar said.

In addition, a nine-foot portable tub, 16-foot adjustable alley way and chute with scale made the trip to each location. Calves were weighed and given pre-conditioning shots with records being analyzed through the Cow Herd Appraisal Performance System (CHAPS). The equipment provided safety for the animals and those working the animals. ìThe alley has a walk-by back stop which is quiet and will not injure the animals and the porta-tub also has a walk way from front to back to provide safe and easy working conditions,î Ottmar said.

Another major component of the SmartCows™ program is the consultation service available through the Dickinson Research Extension Center. Range and forage scientists are available to assist producers with management decisions that evaluate tame, native and annual forages to optimize performance.

Dr. Lee Manske, DREC range scientist and consultant with the SmartCows™ program, noted new research on a 12-month forage program could potentially double carrying capacity and increase weaning weights. His most recent data set concludes a potential net return of $21.54 per acre with 11.7 acres required for a cow-calf pair. He noted forage-feed costs of $171.00 per year, production of calf weaning weight cost $0.28 per pound, and net returns after pasture-forage costs were $251.53 per cow-calf pair.

The net impact of SmartCows™ could be a multimillion dollar boost to beef producers and the economy of the state.

The SmartCows™ program will be discussed at the annual meeting in Minot on January 24, 2003. Individuals needing more information can contact the NDBCIA Office 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601; phone: 701-483-2045; email: chaps@ndsuext.nodak.edu. ■

Annual Meeting Agenda NDBCIA

Friday, January 24, 2003--7:00 p.m. CST
North Central Research Extension Center
5400 S Hwy 83, Minot ND

A. Call to Order. . . . . .Jon Dekrey
President

Reading of minutes of the 2002 Annual meeting and acting thereon. (The reading of the minutes can be dispensed with, at the discretion of the president, if printed copies are available.)

B. Presidentís Address . . . . . Jon Dekrey

C. Executive Secretaryís . . Kris Ringwall
Address

D. Treasurerís Report . . . Ron Bowman

E. Reports of the Committees
1. Research Committee
2. Education and Public Relations Committee
3. Finance Committee
4. Membership Committee
5. Nominating Committee

F. Unfinished Business

G. New Business

H. Guest Speakers: Dan Dorn, Paul Berg

I. Announcements

Additions to the agenda can be made by contacting the NDBCIA office prior to the meeting or at the annual meeting. ■

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Fischers named NDBCIA top Producer of the Year

The 2001 North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association Producer of the Year has two goals: better the performance on his cattle and establish an agricultural enterprise that will pay for the next generation to take over.

Eugene Fischer began in the beef cattle business over 40 years ago. Together he and his wife Marilyn have put together a herd of high performance beef cattle. The Fischers have performance tested the last 10 calf crops they have produced on the 3,000 plus acres of deeded and leased land, seven miles north of Rhame in Slope County.

They currently run 150 cow-calf pairs but ìexpansion is in the windî, according to Fischer. He said that they (he, his wife Marilyn and their daughter and son-in-law, Jonathan and Deanna Jeffers) look to expand up to 170. ìOur numbers are down now because we sold off a bunch of cows because of the drought.î

Marilyn and Eugene Fischer

Fischer started his herd with a F1 cross--Hereford and Angus--and bred them Simmental. ìIn the last 10 years, we have been going back to Angus but we have some Simmental in the background.î They artificially inseminate all the heifers, which they synchronize for breeding, and the cows for 15 days to Angus bulls and clean up with bulls they raise, ìbulls with some Simmental influence. We also keep all our own replacement heifers.î He noted the spring of 2002 was the first year he has ever purchased bulls.

Record keeping is a major component of the management strategy. ìAll our cattle are performance tested through the CHAPS program,î Fischer said, noting they used to sell their calves off the cow ìuntil we bought shares in the Gascoyne Plant (Dakota Prairie Beef Cooperative). Now we background the calves for 45-60 days and then send them to Dakota Prairie Beef.î

Eugene feeds high quality forage to cow herd

Fischer admits the last two years in the feedlot have not been as profitable as he had hoped. ìWe hit two of the worst years, but this year we might make some money feeding them,î he added.

The Fischer enterprise includes minimal tillage. ìWe are getting more land back into grass. We presently farm about 250 acres for feed grain or hay,î he said.

Birth weights are not taken and Fischer admits that ìis one thing that I could improve in my CHAPS records. We keep birth dates. Everything is individually ear tagged. Each calf is weighed in the fall and the weight when they go into the feedlot is calculated into that.î

Fischers raise their own clean up bulls. Calves compete with AI sired calves.

Marcus Fischer Photos

The data is important to the Fischers when it comes to selecting replacement heifers. ìWe keep a lot of our top performing heifers out of our top performing cows. We rely on the MPPA (most probable production ability),î he said. Disposition, muscling and stature are also important.

The Fischer breeding program is quite stringent. ìWe only leave bulls in for 40-45 days which results in more open cows than normal . . . ,î he said. ìWe try to keep a lot of AI calves for replacement heifers but, according to the CHAPS records, the AI calves havenít been a lot better than the heifers out of our cleanup bulls.î Calves he keeps must be out of a cow that has never been open.

Calving begins the last weekend of February for the heifers and the cows 17 days days later. ìThe first go-round of heifers is out of the way before cows start to calf,î he said. ìThe last three years, we have used ultrasound on heifers. It is quite a help to know which ones to keep in when it gets cold.î He said he is quite pleased with the accuracy of ultra sound.

Fischer keeps his herd size steady by culling. He sells cows and cull bulls through the livestock auction in Bowman. ìCalves go to the Gascoyne lot,î he said.

Forage management is important to the Fischer operation, which is ì50-50 native and tame grass. For the most part, we use the twice-over grazing system. The cows are usually on the first go round of the twice-over system when we are breeding the cows because by the 15th of July you need to clip that grass,î Fischer said. ìMy grassland rotation has been a real good thing.î

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The Fischer cow herd has a heavy Angus influence.

In addition to pasture rotation, high quality water is also a big asset. Fischer said all but one pasture has water pipelines fed from wells. ìI despise those dugouts when they (cows and calves) have to go into their bellies to drink clean, fresh water,î he said.

He does some crop residue grazing and feeds from December through April. The forage fed depends on the period of gestation. ìBy December the cows are on full feed. We supplement with some grain between calving and breeding,î he added.

In addition to high protein second cut alfalfa hay, Fischer feeds home raised barley and oats.

Fischer credits a high quality immunization program ìas an asset to our operation . . . We give preconditioning shots and booster them when we wean them. . . Most generally we give calves the first preconditioning shot when we weigh them; usually in early September.î

Fischer has maintained an active role in his community serving as a director for the Cenex Elevator, a member of Parish Council, St. Melís Catholic Church in Rhame, a director-member of the Bowman/Slope Area Resource Council and a member of the Dakota Resource Council.

But for Fischer and his wife Marilyn, the litmus test of success is getting performance to sustain the enterprise so the next generation can take over and their 12 grandchildren can enjoy or become familiar with the agricultural way of life. ■

CHAPS training session scheduled for January 24

A special Cow Herd Appraisal Performance Software (CHAPS) training session will be held Friday, January 24, 2003, at the North Central Research Extension Center, in Minot, ND. CHAPS Record Processing Supervisor Doni Tibor will conduct the session.

ìThis is an open invitation to any CHAPS user to attend,î Tibor said. ìThere will be two sessions and producers can attend one or both of the sessions.î There is no cost to attend the training sessions.

The morning session will begin at 10:00 a.m. (CST) covering the basics of CHAPS, entering data, printing reports and saving data, according to Tibor. The afternoon session will begin at 1:00 p.m. and will focus on more detailed features of the program such as editing data, creating your own reports, using the query features, and e-mailing herd data into the CHAPS office for backup.

Tibor urged producers ìto feel free to bring any questions you may have concerning the program.î

If you are planning to attend one or more of our CHAPS training sessions, pre-register with the CHAPS Office at 701-483-2045. Preregistration is not required but is appreciated.

Tibor has conducted CHAPS workshops at various locations within the state. Individuals wanting to host a workshop should contact the CHAPS Office.

The CHAPS training session is being held as part of the NDBCIA Annual Meeting in Minot. Also taking place in Minot at the same time is the KMOT Ag Expo, which runs January 22-25.

NDBCIA Executive Secretary Kris Ringwall asked members to be active. ìThis is your organization and you can be a strong voice in the future of beef cattle production within the state,î he said. ■

Important Beef Cattle Industry News Especially For

North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association
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