

*There are several programs going on that primarily target larger producers. Zoetis has a portfolio program that gives rebates if you hit targets with products from multiple categories, like udder health products and reproductive products. Merck has a spring bonus program that runs from March to April that focuses on Dry cow products and a beef program including vaccines, implants and dewormers. BI has a program with 3% to 7% rebates if you purchase \$2000 to \$8000 worth of their products in March and April. If you have an interest in these programs call the office and we can get you more information or get you in touch with a specific representative from the companies.

Genomics, another benefit:

Recently researchers identified two genes that cause congestive heart failure in beef cows. Identifying these genes isn't going to have any impact on the national debt, but it will have a positive impact on the rancher that might buy a bull with these genes and introduce them into an entire year's heifer crop. When genomics first started researchers noticed that certain genes were never inherited from both the male and female. That's because homozygous for those genes, or one from mom and dad meant the calf always died. Once discovered, these genes were removed from the gene pool by not using carrier bulls. In the big picture this is a small gain unless you had a bunch of cows with the gene and you unknowingly picked a carrier bull to breed your cows.

- Earlier this winter Dr. Cass brought in speakers from a business that specializes in transition planning. Where will your farm be in 5 or 10 years? Who will own it and who will manage it? What really impressed me were the stories the speakers shared about how they start transition planning. They isolate each family member or stakeholder and get individual views and goals. When other stakeholders were asked what they assumed the rest of the family had for a goal, there was a wide difference. It highlighted a lack of communication between each stakeholder, especially between each generation. The best story was from a young professional woman working and living in the city after moving away from a high net worth family farm. Her parents were trying to figure how to pass the farm down to the kids working the farm. When the daughter was isolated and asked what she expected or wanted to inherit, her response was the ceramic angel that mom put on the mantel every Christmas. She never even wanted any part of the farm or its profits. It dawned on me that values and expectations are personal and need discussion within the family frequently because they can change over time.



New Fecal Test Available in WVS Lab: We are now performing a new fecal test called a Mini-Flotac which does fecal egg counts. It requires a little more time for Kari to perform, but it is very accurate. It does require a minimum of 5 grams of fecal material. It provides a way to count fecal egg counts, similar to our old McMasters test, but is more accurate.

Editorial on dairy strategic planning and industry change:

Research published in multiple articles on dairy cow profitability focuses more and more on the following points:

A raised heifer is an expense. If the heifer cost \$2000 to raise, and a cull cow returns \$500, the heifer must return \$1500 to pay for itself. If you replace every cow over 3 years, then you can figure it costs \$500 per year per cow in replacement costs. If you replace every cow in 2 years, the cost is \$750 per cow per year. But over 5 years the cost is only \$300. So, cow longevity is critical for profit.

Work recently published in the journal of dairy science in which the voluntary waiting period was compared between 40 days in milk, 120 days in milk, and 180 days in milk showed where the industry leaders are going. At 120 and 180 days in milk conception rates were 40% higher than 40 days in milk. Udder health was the same, but milk curve persistency was higher in the 120 and 180 day waiting period cows. There was no difference in dry cow body condition between 40 and 120 day waiting, but the 180 days cows were heavier.

As an industry we now know how to get cows bred, but we still live in the old days where we must start early to get enough cows pregnant.

As an industry we know how to keep heifers alive and grow them, but we grow too many and every heifer is an expense.

As an industry, we are trapped in assumption of breeding too early because we were always short of animals and we thus throw away the middle of the lactation curve which is the most profitable.

Assuming on average, every year's heifer crop is slightly better than the prior year. If a producer sells a healthy cow to make room for a heifer, the producer should have planned better and kept that cow an extra year, saved the 2000 dollars it cost to raise the heifer, and put a better heifer in that cows stall a year later.

If we plan on not breeding cows, we'll find the cow makes money a lot longer than a pregnant cow because pregnancy depresses milk production. Remember that calving is often an expense and the dry period is also an expense. The calves from half of every herd have very little value even when bred to beef.

The Corona virus epidemic has certainly brought contagious human diseases to the attention of the media. But the animal health industry is constantly at risk. When visiting with your insulated friends and relatives that live in the big city and have opinions formed by Facebook posts and CNN talking heads you might want to point out these issues:

- This country hasn't faced a major cattle disease outbreak in decades because of the vigilance of government agencies and concerned cattlemen. The cost to the industry and the consumer would be huge with a major outbreak. Probably so huge that we would choose to live with the disease rather than eliminate it. That equates to a permanent increase in the cost of meat.
- Every major cattle disease still exists in the world, many of them in South America and some in Mexico. China just lost 40% of their hogs to African Swine Fever and is only a plane trip away from the USA.
- One major disease, Brucellosis still exists in elk and buffalo in the greater Yellowstone basin and there are constantly court fights to prevent the spread. The naturalists who don't care about your livelihoods just want more elk and buffalo regardless of the consequences and the courts oblige.
- Food is incredibly cheap in this country, especially beef, poultry and pork. Half the people in the United States earn under \$34,000 per year, so if the person you are arguing makes twice that, has a great pension, and government or company provided health care, they really don't have a clue why people shop at Walmart and buy chicken on sale. Marie Antoinette is quoted as saying "let them eat cake" when there was no bread. That is the mindset you are dealing with.