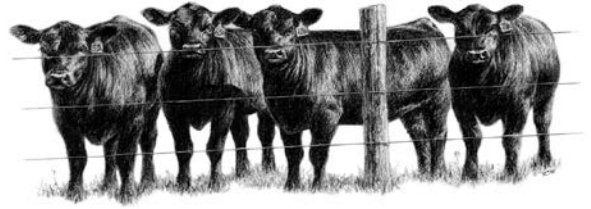


The Cattle Corner



BAXTER COUNTY U OF A COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE NEWSLETTER

February 2021

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From the County Agent's desk...

So far, winter has been fairly mild. As of the date that I'm writing this, many areas are hurting for some precipitation in some form. By the time it's published and in your mailbox, hopefully we've had abundant rainfall, and this sentence doesn't age well. I'll gladly take it. But, winter is far from over. As most know,

February and the first half of March have the potential to get bitterly cold and wet. Keep that in mind when feeding cattle. Energy needs go up tremendously when they're cold and wet.

If it stays dry throughout the winter, another thing on the horizon will possibly be winterkill of bermudagrass. Many cultivars are fairly cold hardy and will do okay in a typical winter, but some don't. The worst recipe for bermudagrass is a cold, dry winter. That's what will kill root reserves. We won't likely see the full effect of a potential winterkill until after bermudagrass has started to green up here in 10-12 weeks. It's worth scouting it out to see what kind of shape it's in, in case overseeding might need to happen. Some years it happens. Some it doesn't.

Let me know where I can help this spring!

Greenbrier Control

Brad Runsick, Baxter County Extension Agent

Greenbrier (a.k.a. sawbrier) is one of the toughest to control weeds out there. Frankly, there isn't much of a silver bullet to knock them out for good in a single season. But, there are a few things I've learned over the years about controlling them. Here's the list:

- "Early and Often" is a good motto for greenbrier control. Any application needs to be done before the leaves get big and waxy. And, plan on a minimum of two years to get them in check. Plan to get that application out there in late April. You need there to be some leaves emerged.
- Use surfactant and a lot of it. Most recommendations on pasture spraying is to use 0.25-0.50% concentration of non-ionic surfactant (NIS). For greenbrier, I'd up that to a full 1%. In a 200 gallon sprayer, that's 2 gallons of NIS per tank full.
- My experience in conducting spray demos has been similar in that just about any application that contains triclopyr (usually Remedy) provides decent control. I've also had luck with Weedmaster/Brash at 2 qts/ac. None of these option with 2 years of applications is going to be cheap, so be prepared to spend a little money on herbicide.
- If you use 2,4-D in the mix or if there's 2,4-D in the product (i.e. Crossbow contains 2,4-D and triclopyr), it seems that the leaves get burned off quickly, but it ultimately doesn't kill the plant.
- Best bet: 1.5 quarts of Remedy in late April/early May with 1% surfactant going out with at least 15 gallons per acre spray volume.

Spring Weed Control in Fescue-Cool Season Mixes and Dormant Bermudagrass

Brad Runsick, Baxter County Extension Agent

This article or something similar ran in past newsletters and/or newspaper articles, but it bears repeating nearly every single February because it is such a valuable tool in improving pasture and ultimately cow herd performance.

Dormant Bermudagrass Applications

It may be only mid-January, but now is the time to start thinking about spring weed control. Drag out that sprayer, and make sure everything is working as it should. Ensure that nozzles are in good shape and screens are clean. If it has been awhile since it was calibrated, get that done too. I can help calibrate. Just give me a call. Due to wind, rain, and soggy ground conditions, there are limited good days in February and early March. Don't spend those days on maintenance and repair.

One of the cheapest, easiest ways to clean up unwanted plant species out of a bermudagrass field is through a late season, dormant spray application of glyphosate. The early season cheat, ryegrass, and winter annuals will, of course, greenup long before the bermudagrass breaks

dormancy, and that's the time the hit them. Many folks get a little worried about applying glyphosate on bermudagrass, but it's a contact herbicide that really has limited soil activity as an herbicide. It'll affect what green plant material it touches. It's not very bioavailable once it's in the soil. In fact, you can spray a field with glyphosate one morning and seed it that evening without any concern for the soon to be germinating seed. Soil contact inactivates its herbicidal chemistry. Is it detectable in the soil after application? Yes. Will it affect plants that greenup later or those that have not yet germinated? No, not at the low rates needed for early season control.

Once both the cool season species and the bermudagrass are greened up together, in late March-April, there isn't much of a control option for that ryegrass and cheat. It is possible to have a first cutting that is not composed of 50% or more ryegrass, cheat, and henbit. Additionally, probably the biggest benefit is that you take off that ryegrass and cheat, giving the bermudagrass the light and water it desperately needs to get going. The cool season species are holding your bermuda back! This results in an earlier first cutting of hay that is actually bermudagrass hay and an earlier second cutting before we run out of rain in late June (on average).

Now, some will say, "But the cheat and ryegrass will make hay and pasture too and are of fairly good quality when they're small." That is true, but they're annuals. Their potential for regrowth is pretty low. They're holding your bermuda back...in more ways than one.

Are you trying to grow bermudagrass hay and market it as such? Perhaps the biggest concern with having hayfields that have mixed cool season and warm season species is the inability to use efficient, targeted fertility management. This isn't as big of a problem in pastures that already have good fertility where cattle are grazed and nutrients are cycled through the cow and back onto the pasture. However, in a hayfield, the most efficient timing for fertilizer applications is different for cool season vs. warm season plants. If you're fertilizing early in a bermudagrass field, then you're only feeding the species that you don't want and further inhibiting spring bermuda growth. Available nutrients and water is being utilized by those unwanted species. So, are you losing the soil nutrients that the unwanted species are using? No. However, those nutrients are tied up in the tissues of those unwanted species until they decompose down, making them unavailable to the desirable forages (i.e. bermudagrass) at the time when they need them most.

So, what to do? First of all, the bermuda cannot be breaking dormancy when making this application. Typically, any application prior to March 10-15 in northern Arkansas is safe, but every year is different. Bermudagrass needs about 3-4 days where night temperatures are above 60°F before it'll start to wake up. The best bet is to get down and look at the bermudagrass plant itself. The greenup will start near the soil surface, so look there. If you see very much green at all, you're probably too late. You may seem some green early, but that's likely some winter annuals that are trying to break out...not the bermudagrass. Conversely, you need to make sure that the plants you are trying to control have broken dormancy. Have a well calibrated boom sprayer, preferably.

Apply 1 qt./acre of 41 % active ingredient glyphosate. Throw in an additional 0.25 oz./acre of metsulfuron 60DF for additional control of harder to control weeds that glyphosate won't get. If using glyphosate only in a boomless sprayer, expect some streaking. Our recommendation is to use glyphosate in a boom sprayer only, but that's not always practical on these hills. A boomless, cluster type nozzle will still provide good results, assuming its spray pattern is uniform and well calibrated. Also, don't do this if you have any legumes (clovers and lespedezas) or fescue in the field that you wish to keep.

Fescue and Cool Season Mixed Grass Pastures

Between now and late March is an ideal time to get most of the winter annual weeds that becomes bigger problems later in the spring in fescue fields. Weed control is one of the cheapest, most beneficial practices that a livestock/pasture farmer can do, yet many don't. At present prices, a rate of 1 quart/acre of 2, 4-D amine will run you right around \$4 per acre. No other practice out there will give you more bang for your buck than a good spray program. Weed control allows for thicker stands of beneficial grasses, and it improves the overall quality of the forage's TDN and crude protein numbers. Not to mention the problems associated with toxic weeds, such as perilla mint.

For northern Arkansas, a treatment of 2, 4-D amine or Grazon P+D/Next at a rate of 1 quart per acre in late February-early March will clean up the majority of your winter annual weeds, including buttercup and thistles. 2, 4-D and Grazon, which contains 2, 4-D, are restricted use pesticides in Arkansas, and they requires a license to purchase. Bear in mind, you'll probably need to plan on spraying again in April-May to catch those late season winter annuals and warm season weeds.

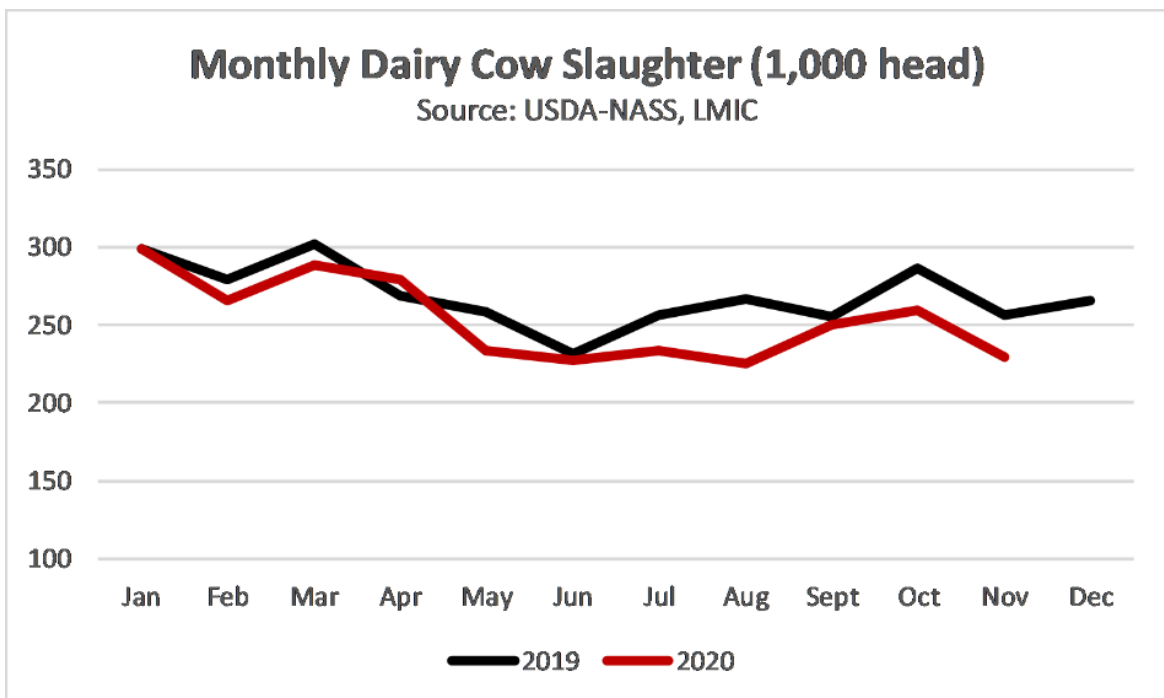
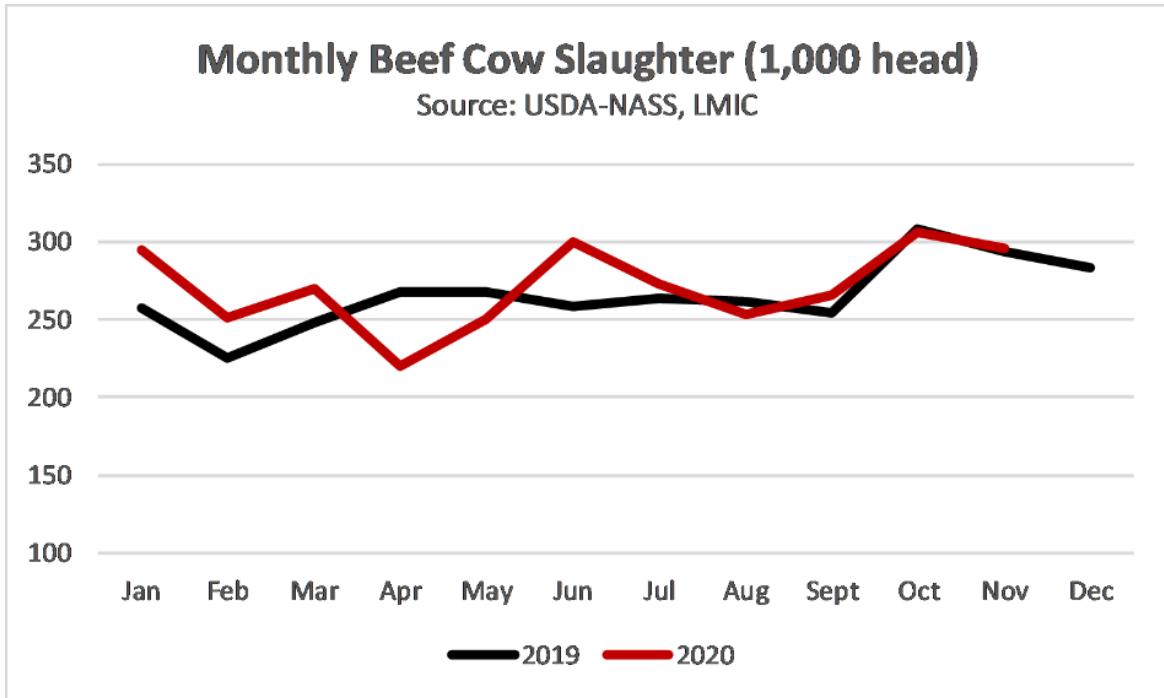
In addition to the correct weed identification and herbicide selection, timing is equally important. These dates are rough estimates, but let your own eye be your guide. Soil temperatures and moisture play a big role in the germination of weed seeds. Late February and early March may sound too early. You look out there in the field as you drive by and say, "I don't see any weeds. Spraying can wait." However, get out there and look close under that dormant grass and you'll usually find small, green, actively growing buttercups and thistle rosettes. Most winter annuals are readily controlled when the plants are at 2-4". Thistles are best controlled in the rosette stage when they are lying flat on the ground. Wait until they get too tall and you're looking a buying a more expensive herbicide or not controlling them at all. Keep in mind, these are fairly general recommendations. If you have questions about a specific weed problem or if you want me to come out and take a look, feel free to give me a call at 870-425-2335.

Cow Slaughter and Inventory Expectations

Kenny Burdine, University of Kentucky

Adapted from *Cattle Market Notes Weekly*, a collaborative e-newsletter from Univ. of Arkansas, Mississippi St. Univ., and the Univ. of Kentucky; Visit here to subscribe:

<https://tinyurl.com/y6at2wkl>



Cattle slaughter got a lot of attention in 2020 as the sector raced to deal with labor challenges in the spring that greatly impacted processing volumes. At its lowest point, federally inspected cattle slaughter was down by more than one-third from 2019. But, the processing industry showed a lot of resiliency through summer as slaughter levels picked back up, despite the challenges the pandemic created.

While cattle slaughter is often considered as a whole, I wanted to focus our discussion this week on cow slaughter for three reasons. First, cow slaughter was not impacted the same as steer and heifer slaughter during the pandemic. Secondly, cull cow prices were relatively strong last year, which created additional incentive for culling. And third, 2020 cow slaughter volumes impact beef cow numbers in 2021. This final point should be reflected in USDA's cattle inventory estimates that will be released later this month.

The beef cow slaughter chart that I am sharing this month compares beef cow slaughter in 2019 and 2020. The sharp drop in slaughter levels from March to April is clear in the chart. However, cow slaughter was not impacted as drastically during this time as steer and heifer slaughter. Some have pointed out that cow slaughter plants tend to be smaller in scale, which is generally true. I would make two other points that are likely part of the reason for this. First, processing of cull cows is a less complicated process in the sense that fewer cuts are likely being made. This probably allowed for easier spacing out of workers than at traditional steer / heifers processing plants. Secondly, and perhaps most significantly, cow plants tend to be less regionally concentrated. Since the pandemic impacted different regions at different times, the labor impacts on cow slaughter facilities were more spaced out. The beef cow slaughter chart includes 2020 slaughter data through November. Some may find it surprising that beef cow slaughter was actually 2.5% higher during the first eleven months of 2020, than it was in 2019.

I also wanted to share the dairy cow slaughter chart for comparative reference. Dairy cow slaughter can be an under-appreciated aspect of the beef production system. Despite the fact that there are way fewer dairy cows than beef cows in the US, the higher culling rates in the dairy sector actually lead to very similar total slaughter volumes. The same factors that impacted beef cow slaughter (labor constraints, demand for ground beef, farm level profitability challenges, etc.) also impacted dairy cow slaughter last year.

USDA will release their January 1 cattle inventory estimates on the afternoon of January 29th. Profitability challenges at the cow-calf level certainly have impacted beef cow numbers in the US during the last year. And, continued weather challenges in the Western half of the country have had major impacts as well. But, I would also point to 2020 cow slaughter as another indicator. We culled the herd pretty hard during 2019 and actually saw cow slaughter increase from 2019 to 2020. This was the case despite the fact that the beef cow herd was a bit smaller last year, and we had to deal with significant labor challenges in the spring. I find this very telling and another sign that we will see another drop in beef cow number in the January report. While it often takes time, this is a necessary step in building stronger calf prices.

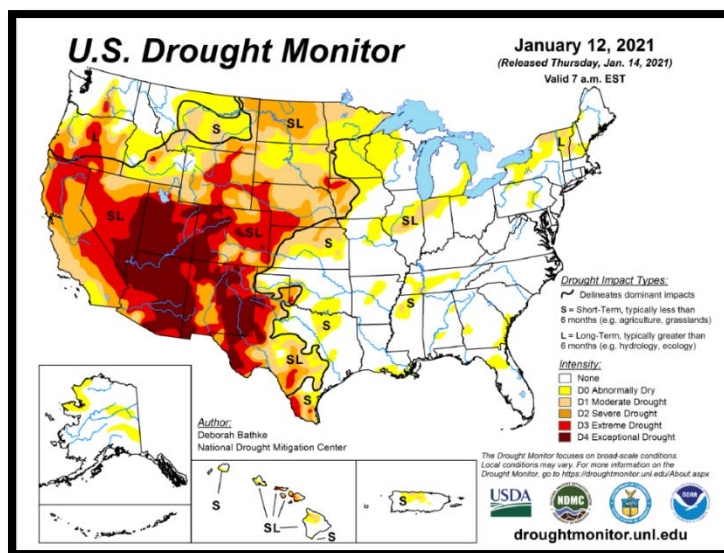
The Markets

This week is when USDA begins reporting feeder cattle prices for the new year. In general, feeder cattle markets are starting the year below 2020. This comes as grain prices are higher than a year ago.

Cattle Market Report Prices \$/cwt. Sources: USDA, LMIC, and CME		For Weeks Ending On			% Chg Prev. Week	% Chg Prev. Year	Chg Prev. Week
		1/17/21	1/10/21	1/19/20			
500-600 lb. Feeder Steers	Mississippi M/L #1-2	\$132.18	\$127.65	\$143.87	4%	-8%	\$4.52
	Arkansas M/L #1	N/A	\$149.01	\$150.49	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Kentucky M/L #1-2	N/A	\$142.46	\$147.63	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Oklahoma City M/L #1-2	\$154.07	\$149.47	\$163.17	3%	-6%	\$4.60
	Alabama M/L #1	\$136.49	\$138.36	\$151.16	-1%	-10%	(\$1.86)
	Tennessee M/L #1-2	N/A	\$136.83	\$140.12	N/A	N/A	N/A
700-800 lb. Feeder Steers	Mississippi M/L #1-2	\$113.09	\$106.80	\$125.84	6%	-10%	\$6.29
	Arkansas M/L #1	N/A	\$128.24	\$134.27	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Kentucky M/L #1-2	N/A	\$126.95	\$131.12	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Oklahoma City M/L #1-2	\$129.50	\$127.42	\$139.55	2%	-7%	\$2.08
	Alabama M/L #1	\$116.25	\$117.45	\$133.47	-1%	-13%	(\$1.20)
	Tennessee M/L #1-2	N/A	\$116.96	\$125.12	N/A	N/A	N/A
Negotiated Fed Steers	Live Price	\$109.52	\$111.27	\$124.03	-2%	-12%	(\$1.75)
	Dressed Price	\$173.06	\$175.79	\$199.04	-2%	-13%	(\$2.73)
Boxed Beef Cutout	Choice Value, 600-900 lb.	\$210.82	\$206.73	\$212.58	2%	-1%	\$4.09
	Select Value, 600-900 lb.	\$199.41	\$196.48	\$210.48	1%	-5%	\$2.93

Futures Prices		1/15/21	1/8/21
Live Cattle	February	\$112.78	\$114.47
	April	\$118.20	\$119.30
	June	\$116.28	\$115.28
Feeder Cattle	January	\$134.57	\$135.82
	March	\$135.82	\$136.82
	April	\$138.30	\$139.07
Corn	March	\$5.32	\$4.96
	May	\$5.35	\$4.97

Source: CME Group



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