

Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association

Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association—Productivity and Quality



Upcoming events:

- August 10—Cattlemen's Exchange Meeting: Marketing, EE Ranches Cafeteria, Winona, MS, 7:30 p.m.
- August 14—Cattlemen's Field and Hay Day, Brown Loam Branch Experiment Station, Raymond, MS
- August 17-18—Cattle Nutrition Short Course, Distance Education
- August 31—Marketing Your Way to Profitability Cattle Risk Management Workshop, Forrest County Extension Office, Hattiesburg, MS 9:00 a.m.
- September 1—BCIA Annual Fall Bull Sale Consignment Deadline
- September 10—Deadline for Farm to Feedlot Nominations
- September 13—Cattlemen's Exchange Meeting: Heifer and Bull Development, NMREC, Verona, MS
- October 16—Beef Cattle Field Day, South Mississippi Experiment Station, White Sand Unit, Poplarville, MS, 9:00 a.m.
- October 21-22—North Mississippi Grazing School, Prairie, MS
- October 22-24—Artificial Insemination School, Prairie, MS
- October 26—Hinds Community College Bull Test begins
- November 11—BCIA Fall Bull Sale, Hinds Community College Sales Facility, Raymond, MS, 12:00 p.m.

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Portable Scales Available Through Area Livestock Agents

The Mississippi State University Extension Service now has three new sets of portable platform scales that are available for producer use throughout Mississippi. The scales consist of loadbars attached to an aluminum platform weighing 60 pounds. The platform measures 86" long and 24" wide and can be easily transported in the bed of a pickup truck. The digital indicator for the scales runs off of a rechargeable battery, so having electricity at the weighing location is not a requirement for use. The scales can be placed in alleyways or chutes to weigh livestock or on any level surface to weigh round hay bales. Potential uses for the scales include weighing replacement heifers at weaning to determine rates of gain needed to reach target breeding weights and weighing hay bales to evaluate hay supply and develop winter supplementation plans. As livestock and forage production information is



Portable platform scales measure round bale weights to help evaluate hay production and plan winter feeding programs

collected using the platform scales, statewide averages for different production measures will be established. Many producers have already started using the Extension scales and are learning more about their operations by doing so. Contact your Extension area livestock/forages agent to schedule use of the platform scales.

Production Tips and Ideas from "Beef Innovators" Sought

How many times have you visited a neighbor's farm and seen something that you wanted to try on your own farm? It may have been an inexpensive feed bunk design, an easy method of weighing calves, a handy syringe holder, or a clever gate opener. Beef producers across Mississippi have developed and implemented some very original and effective production equipment and practices that improve profitability and/or make production easier. Many of these ideas can be shared with fellow beef producers to improve their operations. The Mississippi BCIA, Mississippi State University Extension Service, and Mississippi Cattlemen's Association are working together to gather innovative production tips and ideas from

Mississippi beef producers. These useful production ideas will be highlighted on a regular basis in MCA's *Cattle Business in Mississippi* magazine as well as in the MBCIA newsletter. If you have a "beef innovation" that you want to share, please send a photo or diagram along with a description of your idea to: *Beef Innovators*, Box 9815, Mississippi State, MS 39762 or e-mail it to jparish@ads.msstate.edu or bmckinley@ads.msstate.edu. Be sure to include your name and contact information. Published ideas will receive prizes, so let us know what works well on your operation.





The Hinds Bull Test Station can accommodate about 100 bulls.

Putting Bulls to the Test

Bull selection is a decision that routinely faces Mississippi beef producers. Strategic bull selection decisions can result in genetic improvements in the herd. Performance testing is a tool available to Mississippi cattle producers that provides valuable information that can be used in selection and marketing of superior breeding bulls.

Hinds Bull Test

In Raymond, Mississippi, Hinds Community College operates a Central Bull Test Station established in 1982. Purebred breeders from Mississippi and surrounding states consign bulls annually to the test. Performance information is gathered and reported on these bulls in a 112-day grain test based on Beef Improvement Federation Guidelines for Uniform Beef Improvement Programs. The bull test facility consists of eight pens, which can accommodate approximately 100 bulls. At the completion of the test each year, a public auction is held, and producers have the opportunity to purchase bulls backed with performance information.

The purpose of the Hinds Bull Test program is to 1) record differences in the ability of bulls to gain weight in a uniform environment, 2) provide breeders with a sound, scientific basis for selecting bulls with the ability to gain weight rapidly and make such bulls available to cattlemen, and 3) serve as an educational demonstration for Hinds Community College students and demonstrate the value of performance to the cattle industry.

Interpreting Bull Test Reports

Bull test reports contain lots of useful information for purebred breeders and prospective buyers. At first glance, a bull test report is filled with line upon line of numbers and abbreviations such as ADG and WDA. A second look reveals that these numbers and abbreviations tell a story about the performance history of the bulls they represent. Knowing a few basics before trying to decipher a test report makes it easy to sort bulls based on performance.

Weight per day of age is often abbreviated as WDA and is basically the weight of the bull divided by the age of the bull in number of days. The Hinds Bull Test reports an on-

test WDA along with a test WDA based on the weight and age of the bull at the end of the test. Weight per day of age gives an indication of bull growth performance and should meet or exceed certain standards. Many bull tests and sales require that bulls have a WDA of at least 2 lbs. at 205 days in order to qualify for participation. This is a minimum standard, and many groups have more progressive requirements. The annual Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association (BCIA) Fall Bull Sale has minimum WDA requirements at sale processing for bulls to be eligible for sale.

Average daily gain is a growth performance measure that can serve as a point of friendly competition among bull test consignors. Average daily gain is commonly listed in test reports and sale catalogs as ADG and refers to the average number of pounds gained each day over a specific period of time. Bull tests provide ADG results at regular intervals throughout the test so that bull growth progress can be gauged. At the conclusion of the test, Hinds reports a test ADG for the entire 112-day test period.

Adjusted weaning and yearling weights are other familiar performance measures in bull test reports that help describe growth performance. Weaning and yearling weights are adjusted to account for differences in the age of a bull and the age of his dam. Weaning weights are usually adjusted to 205 days of age, and yearling weights on grain-based bull development programs are typically adjusted to 365 days of age. Breed associations have programs to calculate these adjusted weights and can be consulted for specifics on how they are calculated.

Bull tests evaluate the postweaning performance of beef bulls under uniform conditions. A contemporary group is a group of animals of similar age, sex, and breed composition that are managed under uniform conditions. Ratios are often seen in performance test reports and can be used to rank bulls within their contemporary groups for certain performance measures such as WDA, ADG, and adjusted yearling weight. For example, ADG ratio can be calculated as:

ADG ratio = (ADG of bull ÷ average ADG of entire contemporary group) x 100.

“Performance testing provides valuable information that can be used in selection and marketing of superior breeding bulls.”

Bull Test (Cont.)

A ratio of 100 is equal to the average of the group. Therefore, if a bull has an ADG ratio of 107, then his ADG is 7% higher than the average of his contemporaries.

Bull test reports contain information on growth performance and many other traits. Ultrasound scan results, scrotal circumference, frame score, and pelvic area measurements are examples of some of the other information included in performance test reports. Ultrasound scanning for body composition traits (e.g., ribeye area, marbling, and backfat thickness) has evolved as a useful tool for obtaining valuable carcass information from live cattle, and ultrasound scans on yearling bulls on test can provide a good indication of how sibling steer and heifer mates will perform on the rail.

Evaluation of bulls for performance traits is part of a complete bull evaluation to match the needs of the cow herd with the right herd sires. Bull test data combined with breed association record programs provides prospective bull buyers with good indications of genetic merit for traits measured. Breeding soundness evaluation results, health, expected progeny differences (EPD's), pedigree

information, conformation, and structural soundness are other factors to consider that can impact the value of a bull as a prospective breeder. The challenge is to decide what bull selection information is important given the production resources and marketing strategy and to use that information to select the right bull for the breeding program.

Information Resources

For more information on the Hinds Community College Bull Test, contact Kenny Baner at 601-857-3351. Your local Extension office can also provide information on performance testing bulls and related topics. If you are considering purchasing a bull this fall, be sure to check out the Annual Fall Mississippi BCIA Bull Sale on November 11, 2004 at 12:00 noon at the Hinds Community College Sales Facility. Sale catalogs for the BCIA Bull Sale will be available in October. The BCIA website <http://msucare.com/livestock/beef/mbcia/> also contains information on both the BCIA Bull Sale program and the Hinds Bull Test.

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Grazing Schools to Begin this Fall

This Fall the Mississippi State University Extension Service will host a two day grazing school at the Prairie Research Station on October 21-22. This school will cover practical solutions to winter forage and grazing management in North Mississippi, including the use of stockpiled forage to reduce stored feed requirements. This grazing school represents the start of annual Spring and

Fall grazing schools that will be held throughout North and South Mississippi. Each grazing school will be designed to deal with the specific forage management issues in each region. Intensive, hands-on forage management activities are planned for participants. Registration for the fall grazing school will be advertised through county Extension offices soon.

Artificial Insemination School Set for October

The Mississippi State University Extension Service will conduct a Artificial Insemination School for beef and dairy producers on October 22-24 at the Prairie Research Station. This Artificial Insemination Short Course will include classroom time for discussion of facilities, nutrition, genetics, reproduction, and estrus synchronization topics as they relate

to artificial insemination programs. Participants will have the opportunity to practice semen handling and artificial insemination techniques. For more information on the upcoming artificial insemination school, contact Extension Area Livestock/Forages Agent, Mike Howell, at mhowell@ext.msstate.edu or 662-566-2201.



The Artificial Insemination School will cover AI management and techniques.

*Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement
Association—Productivity and Quality*

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Send questions or comments about this
newsletter to Jane Parish, Extension Beef
Specialist, Mississippi State University
Extension Service



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[http://msucares.com/
livestock/beef/mbcia/](http://msucares.com/livestock/beef/mbcia/)**

MBCIA Membership Application

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

County: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

(Check one) Seedstock: Commercial:

Cattle breed(s): _____

*Completed applications and \$5 annual dues payable to
Mississippi BCIA should be mailed to:*

*Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association
c/o Jane Parish, Extension Beef Specialist
Box 9815, Mississippi State, MS 39762*

BCIA Management Calendar—August 2004

GENERAL

Start planning winter grazing and supplementation programs, evaluating cool-season pasture options and by-product commodity alternatives. Keep proper free-choice minerals, adequate shade, and clean water available for cattle at all times, and check mineral and water supplies often. Remove fly tags as they become ineffective, and implement additional fly control methods as needed. Maintain a complete herd health program in consultation with a veterinarian including internal and external parasite control and vaccinations. Rotationally graze summer pastures, clipping overgrown pastures or harvesting excess for hay. Avoid grazing heavily nitrogen fertilized sudangrass, sorghum-sudan hybrid, or pearl millet pastures during drought or cool, cloudy weather. If cattle are grazed on these pastures, they should be observed carefully for signs of nitrate poisoning. Continue harvesting hay at 4-5 week intervals when possible for optimum forage maturity and quality. Fertilize hay fields between cuttings or on a regular interval to replace soil nutrients removed by hay production and improve hay yield and quality. Continue recording hay yields and forage testing each cutting. Store hay to minimize storage losses and allow matching of forage test results with individual lots of hay for use in hay feeding and supplementation decisions. Continue good production and financial record keeping.

SPRING CALVING—January, February, March

Plan for fall cattle working by determining vaccination, deworming, and implant needs and acquiring supplies ahead of time. Wean calves based on market and pasture conditions using weaning strategies that minimize calf stress. Monitor herd performance and nutritional status by recording weights and cow body condition scores at weaning. Assess weaning percentage (calves weaned/cows exposed to breeding) and cow efficiency (calf weight/cow weight). Put a heifer development program in action to reach target breeding weights by the start of the next breeding season. Keep an eye on declining forage quality. Implement calf preconditioning, marketing, or retained ownership plans as appropriate considering seasonal price risks and breakevens on calves. Pregnancy check females and use effective culling criteria for less productive or problem cattle. Establish permanent identification (tattoos or brands) for bred heifers that will remain in the herd.

FALL CALVING—October, November, December

Start preparing for the upcoming fall calving season. Cows need to be in moderately good condition prior to calving. Purchase or assemble calving supplies including calf identification tags and obstetric equipment. Move fall-calving heifers and cows close to handling facilities and observe cattle frequently.