

# Local Cattle Industry Influenced By Events A World Away

**LITTLE ROCK, ARK.**

**T**hreats to oil in the Persian Gulf and water temperatures in the Pacific seem far away, but those are among the conditions that affect the cattle industry in Arkansas, said Tom Troxel, associate head-Animal Science for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

“Along with global events, cattle producers must be aware of domestic supply and demand to manage price and input cost volatility,” he said. “At the cow-calf level, calf selling prices are experiencing all-time highs, but they must because input costs are also high.

“Cost for feed, fertilizer and fuel are very high and show no signs of decreasing, and some even predict costs may actually increase in 2012,” Troxel said. “The profitability of cow-calf producers will depend upon how well they can manage input cost. That’s been true for years and will continue to be true.”

Given the current situation of the cow-calf industry in Arkansas, Troxel offers his “things that I know, or what I think I know” list:

- It costs money selling calves one head at a time. Selling calves in groups of two to five head or in groups greater than five head receive a \$2.44 to \$5.44 per hundredweight, premium over calves sold one head at a time.
- Buyers discount bulls \$4.34 to \$6.31 per hundredweight compared to steers.
- Horned calves are discounted \$1.00 to \$8.03 per hundredweight compared to dehorned or polled cattle.
- Small-framed calves are discounted approx-

imately \$21 per hundredweight compared to large and medium framed calves.

- No. 1 muscled calves are desirable. Muscle scores range from 1 to 4 where No. 1 is moderately thick and full throughout and No. 4 have flat, thin muscling. No. 2 (-\$7.27), No. 3 (-\$23.84) and No. 4 (-\$39.71) muscle score calves are discounted when compared to No. 1.

- A short breeding season is the key to efficiency. “As a matter of fact, I believe a short breeding and calving season is the most cost-effective practice that can be implemented,” Troxel said. “Once a short calving season is in place, it opens the door to so many other cost-effective management practices.”

- It’s important to protect your herd against Trichomoniasis. Testing your bulls for Trichomoniasis is an important tool in protecting your herd. Trichomoniasis can reduce your calf crop percentage by 10 to 50 percent.

- It’s expensive to keep open cows. It takes the net return from two calves to pay for the expense of one open cow.

- You can graze cattle for 300 days. “At the 300 day grazing demonstration at the Livestock and Forestry Experiment Station at Batesville, we fed hay for 18, 54 and 39 days for the winter of 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11, respectively,” Troxel said.

- Records can help make management decisions. Records such as cow-herd performance records, forage test information, budgets, soil test information, etc. can assist you in making the right management decisions. △



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