Nova Scotia Cattle Producers

November 2011 Newsletter

Message From The Chair

By: John Tilley

Dollars have returned to the market place. Since the spring strong pricing has helped to nurse the turn around the industry needs. Producers have a little more money in their pockets – to begin the long, slow, and difficult process of rebuilding cow herds decimated by years of low prices and challenging margins.

Optimism is one thing, however, and recovery quite another. Who will be "left standing" as a decade of weak pricing comes to a close? Is better pricing the answer to the challenges facing producers and the industry? Do $1.30 calves solve all problems? Has the market place finally provided a long-term solution? I think not.

Out West, producers talk about "the 60/60 program". The price for cull cows reaches 60 cents per pound, a producer reaches 60 years of age and it's time to sell out. We are witnessing far too much 60/60 in Nova Scotia. Herds continue to disappear as individuals struggle to recapture a lifetime of equity that essentially disappeared in the last 10 years.

Perhaps there's also a "50/50 program", something special for younger farmers. Producers find themselves reduced to selling 50 % of their cows to meet 50% of their debt. There's far too much 50/50 in Nova Scotia. Herds disappear as individuals are forced to pay down debt with equity – giving away the equity the 60/60 crowd is chasing.

We have something to learn here from our shipbuilding crowd. They invested a decade of time, money, and leadership in a strange version of "buy local". First and foremost, the future of their industry relied on the simple proposition that cheaper boats built offshore do not create the value of those built at home.

In cattle terms that means cheaper meat from away does not create the value of meat grown at home. In other words, if we wait for the international cattle market place to solve the problems of the Nova Scotian industry, we will surely experience "the 20/10 program". Twenty Nova Scotia farms will produce the 10% of local beef that the multi-national commodity beef system allows.

If we want success, we need to redefine the beef in Atlantic Beef. We need to work with government, not against government. We need to discover industry solutions, not individual solutions. Let's not waste our time and energy "beefing about" every imagined fault and failure. Let's work as hard as we can to sell more and better beef. After all, it has to be about the food and not the whine.

Mark Your Calendars!!

The NSCP Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday March 10, 2012 at the Best Western Glengarry in Truro starting at 10:00 am. Annual Zone Meetings have been tentatively booked as described below. Additional information will be posted on the website as soon as it is available.

Zone	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Date	January 23	January 24	January 25	February 8	February 7	February 6
Location	Skye Glen	Sutherlands River	Nappan	Stewiacke	Aylesford	Bridgewater

Enhancing More Than Genetics

By: William Cox

The current Genetic Enhancement Program has been in the hands of industry for about six months and there has been considerable reaction to the program- some positive and some negative. One of the areas of the program that is commented on the most is the requirement for genetic evaluations on our cattle. This is a key part to know whether we are moving in the right directions. Sure, some of the steps are difficult if you do not have scales or handling facilities but the process is very doable for most producers. On our farm, we have had to make a few changes in tagging but nothing drastic.

We have almost completed all of the requirements for the first year of the program and have been, of the most part, very happy. We have been most satisfied with the folks at BIO. So far, they have been incredible to work with; they are always able and willing to help with any questions we have asked. They have also helped us with our tagging system and provided assistance with inputting data on our animals.

The bioTrack program provides a lot more than just analyzing animal genetic information; it is a complete herd management program. The financial incentives for participating in the program are good but the information and decision making capabilities we now have at our fingertips is a far greater reward. We encourage all producers to have a good look over the Genetic Enhancement Program, there is surely at least a part of it that will improve your operations. And I you have any questions; call the NSCP Office, your ARC or AgraPoint.

Early Feeder Sale Prices Above Last Year

Data from Atlantic Stockyards Ltd.

Fall is feeder sale season in the Maritimes. Many producers were wondering if the strong prices in the spring would continue as they sold calves into the fall. So far, they have with average price at the September and October sales at $1.14 and $1.22 respectively. Below is a summary of each of the sales, for the sale sheet please visit www.atlanticstockyards.com/marketreports.html or www.nscattle.ca/market-price-reports.

September Recap

The September sale included 747 head, weighing on average 682 lbs. and average price of $1.14 for a gross return of $778.84 per head. 367 steers averaging 703 lbs. averaged $118.56, while 347 heifers averaging 657 lbs. averaged $110.61 and 33 bulls and stags averaging 720 lbs. brought $105.17. Vaccinated cattle continue to average higher than unvaccinated cattle at feeder sales. September saw 468 vaccinated cattle averaging 683 lbs. bring $1.189 while 279 unvaccinated cattle averaging 681 brought $1.066

William Dick sold the top individual, an unvaccinated black steer weighing 640 lbs. to Kevin Simmons for $1.56. Donald MacLellan sold the top group- a group of 5 Charolaise steers weighing 3,800 lbs. to Balamore Farms for $1.425.

October Recap

The October sale included 422 head, weighing on average 598 lbs. and average price of $1.22 for a gross return of $731.34 per head. 204 steers averaging 634 lbs. averaged $125.42, while 185 heifers averaging 577 lbs. averaged $118.50 and 33 bulls and stags averaging 488 lbs. brought $1123.30. Vaccinated cattle continue to average higher than unvaccinated cattle at feeder sales. October saw 177 vaccinated cattle averaging 616 lbs. bring $1.253 while 245 unvaccinated cattle averaging 584 lbs. brought $1.201

Jane Morrigan sold the top individual, a Charolaise steer weighing 545 lbs. to Brent Drake for $1.55. Ian Tuttle sold the top group- a group of 7 Charolaise steers with a 634 lbs. average to Brent Drake for $1.50.

This is a reminder that the next Feeder Sale is set for Saturday November 12, 2011 at Atlantic Stockyards; sale time is 10:00 am.

NSCP 2011-12 Policy Initiatives

Over the past few years, the Nova Scotia Cattle Producers have come away from away from their annual meeting with objectives set forth by members. Over the summer, the NSCP has worked hard to develop these objectives into its annual Policy Paper. The document is designed to guide the efforts of the Board as well as staff resources provided by ACMA throughout the year. Below is a summary of the paper, the full version can be obtained by visiting www.nscattle.ca/communications.

Policy #1 Genetic Improvement
It is the policy of NSCP to work with government to continue to improve the Genetic Enhancement Program and continue to encourage producers to improve herd genetics. It is also the policy of NSCP to work with the Maritime Beef Test Station and the NSDA to work on long term sustainability of the Station.

Policy #2 Regulatory Compliance
It is the policy objective of NSCP to increase regulatory compliance by all participants in the cattle industry. It is also the policy objective of NSCP to encourage cross-compliance for cattle producers with NSDA programs.

Policy #3 Seizing Market opportunities
It is the policy of NSCP to explore the new production and marketing paradigms that are consistent with the new realities of global agriculture and growing public demand for sustainable production systems. It is also the policy of NSCP to support the ideological shift towards the benefits of local food.

Policy #4 Member Communications
It is the policy of the NSCP to provide relevant, current information for producers, stakeholders and consumers relating to the industry in Nova Scotia and across the country. NSCP will adopt a communications strategy which will deliver information in multiple media.

Policy #5 Industry Programs
It is the policy of NSCP to continue to work with all levels of government to develop and deliver programs which will benefit the industry, now and in the future.

Policy #6 Land Improvement
It is the policy of the NSCP to encourage government to continue to fund Nutrient Management Plans and transportation subsidies for soil amendments.

Policy #7 Industry Research
It is the policy of NSCP to work with all levels of government to ensure the long term viability of the Nappan Experimental Farm. It is the policy of the NSCP to work with all levels of government to increase fundamental and practical research related cattle production in Nova Scotia and across the region.

From The Office

By: ACMA

It has been one year since ACMA has been working closely with the Nova Scotia Cattle Producers to provide professional services. A lot has happened in the past year and we are hoping to continue to make changes as we move forward. This partnership has allowed the Board of the NSCP to work on policy and moving the industry forward rather than daily administrative tasks of the organization.

We have worked very hard with NSCP to improve member communications, this Newsletter is one example. NSCP has also put additional resources into improving their website. This process has been complete and we are very happy with the site and it will continue to update on an ongoing basis. NSCP is also participating in the CCA project which has a scrolling message board installed at Atlantic Stockyards- messages will be updated weekly.

ACMA has taken over the administration of the Advance Payments Program for beef in Nova Scotia from Pork Nova Scotia, if you have any questions about the Program; please call Beate at 902-893-7455.

Nappan Experimental Farm Field Day

Submitted by: Jonathan Wort

Over 60 Beef and Sheep producers attended the Field Day at the Nappan Experimental Farm on October 22nd. The workshop featured presentations by Bill Thomas of AgraPoint and Less Halliday Beef Specialist from PEI, speaking on forage production and how important forages are in the diet of both sheep and beef cattle. Bill emphasized the importance of selecting the right forage species for different production purposes, like grazing vs. stored forage production. Less highlighted the value of soil testing and maximizing the fertility of your land to produce the best possible forage for your livestock. The soil feeds the grasses and legumes that you produce to feed your livestock and in return these forages are used to feed your livestock. If your forage is produced on healthy soils your yields and livestock performance should be better.

These presentations were followed by Dr. Glover and Dr. Barrett of the NSAC who reviewed the results of the research they are conducting in cooperation with the Sheep Producers Association of Nova Scotia and the Nappan Experimental Farm. Dr. Glover is looking at the Omega 3 and 6 fatty acid and CLA levels in lambs pastured on red clover or tall fescue. The project is also comparing the effect of feeding various diets containing various oils like fish oil and soya oil and its impact on the meats composition. Dr. Glover believes this project may provide producers with the information they need to produce lambs with enhanced fatty acid profiles allowing the production of meat that is healthier and more nutritious. This would provide producers with the opportunity to develop marketing opportunities for these meats.

Dr. Barrett is using the same lambs and feeding treatments to look at the effect on the growth and sexual development of the lambs. His interest is largely triggered by producer concerns related to feeding sheep on high content red clover pastures and poor reproductive performance that has sometimes been associated with pasturing red clover. The initial results are indicating that the red clover lambs are growing faster and there doesn't appear to be any negative impact on reproductive performance.

This project is a two year project with ongoing data collection and analysis. More information will be available in the coming months and this will be shared with producers as it is available.

These presentations were followed by an excellent beef and lamb on a bun lunch supplied by the Cumberland County 4H.

Following lunch John Duynisveld of AAFC reviewed the recent and ongoing research at Nappan Experimental Farm; including the current grazing project that is being conducted with funding from the CCA. This project is looking at grazing different forages mixtures to identify the most productive mixtures for pastures in the region. This is part of a larger project that is also being conducted in Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba.

Following the presentation the groups toured the farm looking at the sheep and the beef grazing projects and the plots that are being used for the various trail.

The ongoing projects at Nappan are good examples of research that has a practical application for producers that could improve their farm's profitability. For more information contact Jonathan Wort Livestock Specialist at AgraPoint phone 902-896-0277 or email j.wort@agrapoint.ca