

BEEF BUSINESS 'BULL'ETIN

Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants - W. Mark Hilton, DVM Vol 20, Issue 1 February 2022

Seen or Unseen

I recently had the opportunity to make a herd visit at a producer's farm that contacted an MBCC team member with some questions. This is a very good herd where the herd owners have the mindset that they can do better each year. This is my favorite type of producer!

The owners were buying very high-quality Angus bulls and their calves looked fabulous. Their feed supplier had recently seen the calves and commented that they were as good as any he had seen this year. So why did they mention to the MBCC team member that they thought they could be doing even better yet? Their last two bulls only lasted 1 and 2 breeding seasons respectively before they had to be sold to slaughter. Not good! They had also purchased some bred heifers from this MBCC member and those cows were now some of the best in their herd. Very good! They wondered if they needed to add hybrid vigor to their herd via some Gelbvieh and/or Simmental genetics.

Many advantages of hybrid vigor are unseen. It is difficult to see the 1.2 extra years a crossbred cow is productive unless you have detailed records on when cows are culled. Those 1.2 years = 600# more weaning weight produced by the crossbred cow. "Prime of life" for a beef cow is from 5 to 10 years of age. For every cow in your herd that does not make it to 10 years of age – has a calf every year, right on schedule from 2-10 years – that is a financial loss for you. If a cow is culled before 10 years, she is likely replaced by a heifer. Heifers have more calving issues, wean lighter calves, and rebreed at a rate less than your 5–10 year-old cows. In most herds, heifers are part of the business, but having *fewer* heifers and *more* mature cows = improved profit.

An ag economist looked at hundreds of cow records and saw a direct correlation between percent of the herd that was first calf heifers and profit. As percent heifers went up, profit went down. The number one way to improve herd longevity and decrease the percentage of heifers in the herd is to add hybrid vigor through crossbreeding.

Over the last 10 years I have purchased 5 bulls from MBCC. If you want calving ease, calf vigor, milking ability and feed conversion, these are the bulls for you. What Mark says about the bulls will prove out. Just take his word to the "bank".

*Mick Johnston,
Dillsboro, IN*



(con't from page 1)

I listened to a webinar some time ago and the audience was able to answer questions on their computer when the speaker posed them. The speaker was discussing the advantages of heterosis and asked if a herd had a certain "line" of a breed and bought a bull of the same breed that was a total outcross, "Would you get heterosis?" Much to his dismay, 52% percent of the respondents answered "yes". The correct answer is "no". You must use a different breed to get the advantages of heterosis.

What are some other potentially "unseen" advantages to hybrid vigor? Calves jump up and nurse more quickly so they intake more colostrum more quickly. There is nothing more important than a belly full of colostrum to get a calf started well. More and faster ingestion of colostrum = improved resistance to disease and much needed energy and protein to help the calf generate heat if born in a cold environment. The number one comment we receive from buyers of our bulls is "I didn't realize that my (nearly purebred) calves lacked vigor at birth. I am amazed how quickly my calves out of your bulls are up and nursing."

Seeing 40# of extra weaning weight is easily seen if you weigh your calves at weaning. If you don't, those 40# can be hard to see. Now, if you sell your calves at the same time as in years before, you should see these extra pounds. These 40 free pounds are because calves that grow faster and stay healthier due to hybrid vigor weigh more at weaning.

In a well-managed herd, a 95% pregnancy rate is seen as about as good as you can do. If this 95% pregnancy rate is in a herd that has evolved into a nearly straightbred herd, this number could be 97 or 98%. Two to three extra bred cows in a 100-cow herd = about \$1800- \$2700 in today's market. Heterosis will give you that 2-3% bump, especially if you have high fertility breeds like Gelbvieh, Angus and/or Simmental in the mix.

We think that a 5% death loss from birth to weaning is a goal for many herds. Studies show that hybrid vigor will improve this number by about 2%. What are 2 extra calves/100 cows worth to you? The great news is that these 2 extra calves come at no extra charge. With 500# calves at \$170/cwt, 2 extra calves = \$1700.

The bottom line is that a herd with a tremendous set of calves can still improve. If the genetics have evolved into a high percentage of a single breed, adding breeds that complement their current genetics will keep that tremendous set of calves **and** add some \$\$ in numerous unseen areas.

Come and join us **Saturday, March 12** at 10am EST to **see** for yourself!



Balancer bull calf sired by MBCC Reward 4F at Lubben White Oak Farm in Iowa. Lydia Lubben Grant said she did not have to look at the records to find the 4F calves. Born unassisted with extra vigor and muscle.

For the past three years we have sold replacement quality females at our annual bull sale. Your feedback on these females making a positive impact on your herd is welcome news to us.

In addition to about 25 commercial females, we are selling a few registered, Balancer heifers. One of these heifers is the number one WW and number one YW EPD Balancer female in the entire breed (out of over 30,000 total females registered).

Call Mark for details of this unique opportunity.

Email updates

Please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. If there is a blue dot on your mailing label, that means I do NOT have your email address. If I have your email address, you will get 2-4 updates/year. Those with a blue dot will NOT receive any emailed updates.

Update examples include producers that are looking for feeder calves; producers needing a mature bull ASAP; notice of producers that are selling their herd; updates on the bulls we have for sale; timely tips that will make you \$\$, upcoming webinars, etc.

This is also a great way to forward our newsletters and these updates to your friends that are in the beef business. They may need our bulls or females and may benefit from one of our articles.

You will continue to receive the newsletter via USPS mail unless you ask me to only send via email.

Please call/text Mark at 765-714-1092 and give me your email address. You can also email me at wmarkhilton@gmail.com

Thank you.

Where to \$pend \$\$

If you have received our newsletter for some time, you know that I “preach” being frugal as a key to making money with beef cows. Graze as much as you can, minimize feeding hay, don’t have too much “iron”, make the cows work for you, etc. Well, it is also possible to carry the frugality too far.

I recently read a study from Kansas and it listed the best return on investment, e.g. where you should **spend** \$\$?

The best ROI was on pasture improvement which perfectly fits the “have the cows graze more and feed less hay” mentality.

Do you have a forage/pasture expert that you can call to do a herd visit this spring/summer? This could be the most profitable day of your year!

Some basics are:

- Soil test pastures every 3 years and lime/fertilize as per forage expert’s recommendations
- Practice Management-intensive (rotational) grazing
- If you can frost seed red clover, that is a tremendous boost to pasture productivity

Selling Feeder Calves?

We have worked for many years stacking genetics that make tremendous cows and excellent feedlot cattle. Please do not just haul your MBCC calves to the feeder auction. You will likely NOT receive their true value.

In descending order of profit potential, here are our recommendations of what to do with your weaned calves:

Steers:

1. Feed out and sell as freezer beef – add \$600-\$1000 per head to your bottom line.
2. Feed out and sell on the grid (carcass premiums!) or feed out at a custom feedlot (we can help you find one)
3. Sell as fully preconditioned (weaned 45 days or more and fully vaccinated) calves to one of our feedlot owners wanting MBCC sired calves

Heifers:

1. Keep as replacement females
2. Feed out and sell as freezer beef
3. Sell to one of our producers that develops replacement females to sell to others as bred females
4. Sell as fully preconditioned calves to one of our feedlot owners wanting MBCC sired calves

If option #3 for steers and #4 or heifers is your plan, **PLEASE call me before you sell.**

I talked to a veterinarian earlier this winter and one of her clients wanted desperately to find some fully preconditioned calves and could not find any.

Genetic testing

I get many questions on the cost-effectiveness of doing DNA testing on commercial replacement females. When this technology was first available, I did not feel the companies had enough data to justify the price. Two factors have convinced me to change my mind. First, they now have multiple years of data and have proven that females that scored higher on their index made more profit. The big money makers include selection for females that: calve easy, wean heavier calves and stay in the herd longer. Second, the price is lower than when first introduced.

Now is the time to test your spring born yearling heifers to see which ones will likely be your future “stars” and more importantly, which ones will likely be the “duds”. Learn more about this technology at <https://www.neogen.com/igenity-beef/> and call me before you order any tests/supplies. I can help to make sure you order the correct test and I will also help interpret the results.

All of the females in our March 12 sale will already be DNA tested and any “duds” will not be in the sale.

Webinar on EPDs - Please RSVP

It seems that every few months we have a new Expected Progeny Difference (EPD) to interpret. EPDs can be very confusing so I am hosting a webinar on interpreting EPDs on March 3.

Please email, call or text me by March 1 to get an invitation sent to you. The webinar will be on **Thursday, March 3 at 7:30 – 8:30pm EDT**. You can join via your computer or you can phone in to listen. I will be using my screen to walk through a bull’s EPD’s, so joining by computer or smart phone will be ideal. If you do not have this option, I will email you the pedigree and EPDs of the example we will use.

Market update

The 10–12-year cattle cycle is in full swing and the next 3-4 years look to be excellent! Supply is down and demand is up. This is the best time to invest in superior herd bulls. Maybe you have a 5 year-old that has done a decent job, but his growth and marbling EPDs are both below average. Prices are very good for slaughter bulls and the difference in \$\$ to trade up is quite attractive. A bull purchased in the spring of 2022 will have his first calves going to market in spring/summer 2024, and 2024 – 2026 are projected to be the **top of the cattle market**. Selling 3 calf crops of slaughter cattle or 4 crops of feeder calves at/near the top of the price cycle will be financially rewarding for you. Wouldn’t it be advantageous to have top quality genetics to match the market? Quality pays and especially when cattle are in short supply as they are expected to be in 2024 -2026.

The unweaned, unvaccinated calves that he purchased from the feeder auction had significant health issues and he does not want to go through that again.

I did a preconditioning research project when I was at Purdue and we gathered 11 years of data on a herd that preconditioned. The owner made over **\$80/head** by preconditioning his calves for an average of 63 days AND the buyers of his calves (one buyer purchased them every year the last 6 years) made \$\$ because he was not spending \$\$ on medicine, veterinary bills and dead calves. This is a win-win.

New Features

We are starting two new features in our newsletter. One is the "Feed Bunk" (page 5) written by Chris Muegge, MS nutritionist and the other is a Producer Spotlight to feature one of our bull buyers.

Producer Spotlight

John and Karen Kestler own Kestler Farms, a generational farm started by John's parents in 1940 where beef cows have been a staple. Karen was a "city girl" with a business degree. John introduced her to farm life and she noticed things from a different perspective that could help their ag business.

Karen got the operation more organized by keeping better records. By doing that John started noticing things that he hadn't noticed before. Karen loves marketing and thought they could sell freezer beef to more than just their friends. Karen says, "Before we increased sales, we needed to figure out what made our beef different than other freezer beef. We needed to know how to fix the problems we were noticing in our cattle. So, our big questions were: Why would someone buy our beef over someone else's beef? And how do we fix the things in the cows that John had begun noticing?"

John had run his own cow/calf operation for 45 years with good success, but they knew they could do better.

"While trying to research our questions we found out about the Integrated Resource Management (IRM) program through Purdue University that was being run by Dr. Hilton and his team. We immediately became members. By joining IRM, we learned tons about cattle, and Mark gained our loyalty and trust as a person and a teacher. When John needed advice on his cattle, he would call Mark and our herd health veterinarian (who did her internship with Mark in Iowa) to get as much information as he could on the cattle. So, it was a no brainer when we needed a bull to call Mark for advice. Through the years the MBCC team has taught us the importance of genetics, and it all starts with the bull. Without a good bull that fits the type of operation that you are running you won't be able to produce the type of calf that can increase your income and the quality of cattle that you raise to make your life easier," according to Karen.

John says, "We have a herd of about 85 cows split between spring and fall calvers. Prior to purchasing bulls from MBCC, we had a good beef herd, or so we thought."

According to John and Karen, there were several things that were inconsistent in their herd prior to working with the IRM team and purchasing bulls from MBCC. Cows were too big, disposition needed improvement and every year some heifers had trouble calving.

"By using MBCC bulls we have decreased our cow size (while increasing weaning weights) and improved the cattle dispositions. We are improving the longevity of our cows by adding Gelbvieh genetics to our herd and we rarely assist a heifer at calving time."

"By working with the MBCC team, they can help you find the best bull based upon what you need for your operation instead of just purchasing a bull somewhere and hoping that the calves produce the way you want. And if you purchase a bull from MBCC, you also are getting a free education! Trust me it's worth it. By working with MBCC you not only purchase bulls with good genetics but you also have available a superb nutritionist and DVM at your fingertips."

"By purchasing bulls through the MBCC for several years now they have been able to help us to sell bred females and pairs to other producers. The reason why people want our females is due to knowing the genetics of the cow and the calf that will be produced."

"We never actually planned on selling bred females. By using the MBCC bulls we have noticed the quality of the calves and cows kept back have been excellent. The MBCC team has noticed that as well and that is why they recommend our females to other producers."

Freezer Beef

"The quality of our beef has improved dramatically since using MBCC bulls. Our freezer beef sales have increased greatly over the past 15 years. Instead of selling most of the cattle to the stockyard we now sell the majority as freezer beef and that really adds to our bottom line."

"In fact, other producers have purchased our calves to sell to their customers when they needed freezer beef and didn't have any beef available. We received an awesome compliment from one of the other producers', butcher. He said, 'I have been a butcher for 40 years and have never seen beef of this quality'. Trust me that is the best compliment that a beef farmer could hear."

"The most important reason we see for working with the MBCC team is the bull genetics, and the knowledge, skills, and support of the individuals you work with."

Kestler's sell freezer beef to many consumers throughout central and southern Indiana. You can learn more about them at <http://kestlerfarms.com/>

Thank you, John and Karen. Working with outstanding beef producers like you is why we do what we do.

Our MBCC genetics business is built on the win-win-win philosophy. It must be good for your cattle, good for you, and good for our team.



The Feed Bunk - Chris Muegge, MS, MBCC Nutritionist

Preparing for the Changing Seasons

It's hard to believe but we are halfway through winter and quickly approaching calving season, spring grazing, and bull turnout. With these changes, also come changes in the nutrition of your herd. How we address these changes will play a huge role in the success of your breeding season and future calf crop.

Feeding the Lactating Cow

As cattle producers, the closest thing we have to a report card is the Body Condition Score or BCS. If you are close to calving, consider this "finals week." The ideal BCS for a cow at calving is 6.0 (heifers at 7). Research has shown that cows in proper BCS have more vigorous calves, higher quality colostrum and a shorter anestrous period. This results in improved calf health, heavier weaning weights, and earlier breed back. While it is possible to improve BCS during lactation, it is a much harder task. If you are not familiar with assessing your cow's BCS, watch this video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrcMiCeqp70>. Your veterinarian or feed specialist should also be able to assist in assessing the BCS of your herd.

During the first 60 days of lactation a cow will produce 70% of her total milk, increasing energy needs by 30% and protein demand 50%. If ration is not matched to these requirements, she will go into a negative energy balance, losing weight, reducing milk yield, and reducing her chances to breed back early. Testing hay early and developing a feeding plan will help to prevent these issues.

In table 1 you can see that average quality fescue hay will exceed a 1300 lb. cow's energy requirements during late gestation. However, once this cow calves, even with a higher intake, she will fall short of her protein and energy requirements and will lose weight. Supplementing 2 lbs. of DDGs (30% CP, 86% TDN) or similar feed will meet the cow's needs.

Remember, as a cow's mature size and milk production increase, so do her requirements.

	Intake (Dry Lbs)	CP Required (LBS) Provided	TDN Required (LBS) Provided
1300 LB Cow 3rd Trimester	26	2.0	12.0
		2.6	13.0
1300 LB Cow Early Lactation (25 LBS of Milk)	13	3.4	18.0
		3.0	16.5

Don't Forget the Bull

Bulls are relatively easy keepers through the winter, but if you don't provide adequate nutrition you will have a problem come breeding season. Table 2 provides the nutrient demands of a mature bull maintaining weight vs a young bull still growing. In this example, our average quality hay meets the demands of the mature bull but fails to meet the energy requirements of the young, growing bull. Providing 1.4 lbs. of DDGs will meet the energy needs of the young bull keeping him on a positive energy plane.

While providing adequate nutrition to the bull battery is a relatively easy task in comparison to the lactating cow, testicles serve as the "low-hanging fruit" for frostbite. Be sure to provide wind protection, dry loafing areas, and bedding during times of cold stress to avoid a disappointing Breeding Soundness Exam (BSE). Make sure to keep a mineral supplement in front of your bulls also. Trace minerals and vitamins are key to sperm production and libido. As always, work with your veterinarian to perform a BSE early in the spring.

	Intake (Dry Lbs)	CP Required (LBS) Provided	TDN Required (LBS) Provided
1250 lb Growing Bull 2.0 lb ADG	28	2.2	16.5
		2.8	15.4
1800 lb Mature Bull 0.5 lb ADG	35	2.6	18.5
		3.5	19.3

Choosing a Mineral

Mineral often gets labeled as the most expensive product on the farm but mineral intake must be considered. Most minerals are consumed at 0.25 lbs/hd/day. This means a \$30.00 bag of mineral will cost a producer \$54.75/cow year ($\$30.00/50 = \$0.60 * 0.25 \text{ lbs/day} = \$0.15/\text{day} * 365 \text{ days} = \54.75). High quality mineral and adequate mineral consumption are key to colostrum quality, calf health, and breed back in cows.

When we look at mineral nutrition in beef cows, specifically trace mineral nutrition (zinc, copper, manganese, and cobalt), there are two main sources: inorganic vs organic. Skipping a year of organic chemistry, inorganic minerals are attached to clay; cheap with limited absorption and prone to antagonists. Organic minerals are attached to an amino acid increasing absorption and placental transfer to the calf with an increased cost. Research has consistently shown improved calf health, quicker breed back, and earlier fertile heats in heifer offspring from cows supplemented with chelated minerals during late gestation and early lactation.

Moral of the story is to feed a mineral that is at least partially chelated starting 45 days prior to calving and 60 days into lactation. You can identify these minerals by scanning the ingredient list on your feed tag. If "amino acid chelate" or "amino acid complex" is listed on the tag, then a portion of the trace minerals are coming from an organic source. If you are grazing your cows on a cover crop this spring, be sure to use a mineral that is at least 6% magnesium to prevent grass tetany. If you are incorporating a fly control product into your mineral as part of your parasite program, be sure to have it in the mineral by mid-April in Indiana. Also, most feed manufacturers offer a mineral booking program in the late winter, be sure to take advantage of these savings.

Having your cows in adequate BCS, managing your bulls, and having a sound mineral program should set your herd up for a successful calving and breeding season this year. As always for the best results, have a consulting veterinarian and nutritionist as part of your team.

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our cattle program

Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants

W. Mark Hilton, DVM
5497 Shootingstar Lane
West Lafayette, IN
47906

765-714-1092
www.mwbeefcattle.com
wmarkhilton@gmail.com

Watch the segment about MBCC on NCBA's Cattlemen to Cattlemen. Type "**Cattlemen to Cattlemen profitability**" into your search engine and it should come right up!

Midwest Beef Cattle Consultants — Superior Genetics for Profit-minded Beef Producers

2022 Bull and Female Sale Saturday, March 12, 2022 Open House 10am - Sale 1pm EST

We have 44 yearling bulls on test and everyone that has seen them says they are the most uniform set we have ever had. We sold a few sons of MBCC Reward 4F (top 1% calving ease) in the 2021 sale and we will have 8 for sale at our March 12, 2022 sale. Reports from across the Midwest are the same – tremendous calving ease and amazing vigor at birth on the 4F calves. Our MBCC No Risk 8F bulls were some of the highest sellers in the 2021 spring sale and we have 5 that are all going to be near the top of the test in growth. Docility is excellent on both bulls' calves. All the MBCC members used Ginger Ertel's bull "Civil War" and these calves are stout. They will be some of the top growth calves in the group and we have 11 of these bulls that will sell.

Besides our Balancer bulls, we have SimAngus, Simmental –Angus –Gelbvieh and a Black baldy 4-way composite that is Gelbvieh – Simmental –Angus—Hereford. Our bulls will add hybrid vigor, docility, calving ease, growth and carcass merit to your cattle. Many bulls will be 5 stars for making moderate-framed, easy-fleshing, docile and fertile replacement females.

All the EPDs and genetics are on the website www.mwbeefcattle.com If you need bulls in 2022, call Mark or any of the MBCC team members to describe your ideal herd sire. Is your new herd sire for heifers, cows, or both? Nineteen of the bulls are 5 star calving ease for use on heifers! Do you keep back replacement females (producing 'cowmaker' bulls is one of our specialties!)? Do you sell freezer beef? We can help you select the bulls that best fit your goals. We think buying a herd sire is a BIG deal and we want you to get ones that put a smile on your face and money in the bank.

All bulls and all females will have genomic testing (DNA tests) done to give you much more confidence in the producing ability of these bulls and females. This technology has come a long way and personally, I would never purchase another animal without this information. Wouldn't it be tremendous to buy a yearling bull that becomes the calving ease superstar that we predict he will be? How cool will it be to have 15 heifers calve and you never touch a calf (or even get out of bed to check them!) How valuable would it be for you to purchase a yearling heifer that in 2033 has her 10th calf for you vs. purchasing a heifer with no known history except "she looks pretty good"? MBCC genetics are an investment in the future of your herd. Come and appraise the 25 open heifers and 2 bred females in the sale. We will be excited to have you join us for the open house (starts 10am), lunch and sale (starts at 1pm).

Directions to Muegge farm—3824 S Binford Rd, Carthage, IN 46115

From intersection of SR 9 and Hwy 40, Greenfield: Go south on SR 9 for 3 miles to 300 S. Turn left and go 5.1 miles to Binford Rd (angles SE). (At 600E you jog south for about 10 feet. Immediately jog back east to stay on 300S. GPS may mess you up here!) Angle right on Binford and go 1.3 miles to farm on left. It is just past the stop sign.