

# TIMELY TOPICS

OSU EXTENSION - NORTHEAST DISTRICT  
May 2023 – Volume 43 – Issue 5



## EXTENSION

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### Disaster Preparation

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*Barry Whitworth, DVM, Senior Extension Specialist, Dept. of Animal and Food Sciences, OSU*

Chances are that livestock producers at some time or another will be affected by a disaster such as a flood, tornado, drought, or wildfire just to name a few. Whatever the disaster, the challenge of any producer is to take care of their animals. Unlike small animals, farm animals tend to be large and require special needs in an emergency. For this reason, it is important to take the time to prepare a “Disaster Preparedness Plan.” The plan will hopefully create a step by step set of guidelines to follow during a chaotic situation that will keep both animals and humans safe. In any disaster situation, the most important thing for a producer is to ensure more than anything else that his/her family and life come first. A producer should never attempt to risk his/her life or a member of their family’s life to save the life of an animal.

The start of good disaster preparedness plan begins with evaluating what are the most likely disasters that a ranch or farm might face. For example, a ranch in the far eastern part of the state may not spend as much time with drought preparation as a ranch in the western part of the state. All producers should take the time to research history and look at weather patterns to understand what disasters they might face.

Next, the producer should evaluate their premises to determine the potential risk to the animals. For example, the producer may want to remove the animals from any area that falls in a flood plain during certain times of the year or have an evacuation plan ready in case of an emergency. One should also evaluate the structures on the property. Are the barns or sheds able to withstand high winds or not? The answer to that question will determine if the animals will be kept in a barn or turned out in a pasture during a storm. Stacks of lumber and/or tin should be tied down. This will prevent the material from being blown around and injuring an animal. Areas around a barn should be kept mowed and free of dead debris. This will help reduce risk where there is potential for a wildfire. These questions and more need addressed in preparing the plan.

A disaster preparedness plan should also include animal identification. All animals need some form of identification. Brands, microchips, and tattoos make excellent identifications since they are more permanent than other forms. Pictures will help identify animals. The producer should have records of ownership in case animals are lost or die in the disaster. This will be important if the producer is receiving insurance or indemnity payments.

It is important to remember that during a disaster power and utilities may be lost. A livestock owner that relies on electricity for his/her animals will need to have a backup source of power. A 7-to-10-day supply of feed and water should be kept on hand. Producers may want to prepare an emergency kit. Items that might be included in the kit are halters, ropes, feed buckets, medications, first aid supplies, cleaning supplies, flashlights, batteries, cell phone, radio, feed, hay, water, and generator. These are just a few things that a producer might need in an emergency.

An evacuation may need to be part of a producer’s disaster preparedness plan. Moving large herds of animals is probably not feasible. However, producers may wish to evacuate a small number of animals that have exceptional genetics. If evacuation is an option, producers will need to prearrange for an evacuation site. They will need to establish a route. The truck should be full of gas and the trailer hitched during unfavorable conditions. Producers need to leave early. A producer should keep in mind that traffic may be increased during a disaster. The last thing a livestock owner

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needs is to be caught in a disaster stuck on a highway. The producers will need to take feed and hay or prearrange for delivery to the evacuation site. If the animals are to remain on the farm, the producer will need to establish an area that he/she feels is safest depending on what the disaster is. For example, a pasture with no trees would be safer than a pasture with a few trees that animals would congregate under during a severe storm.

Once the crisis is over, the owner should be prepared to deal with injuries and dead animals. Producers need to have a carcass disposal plan ready in advance. Producers need to check with the local and state officials about the laws for disposing of animals. Producers need to realize that there is a chance that some animals will need to be euthanized. Owners need to be prepared to euthanize or contact a veterinarian to this job.

Planning how to deal with a disaster is like writing a will. Most of us think that we have plenty of time to get it done later. Unfortunately, later usually comes earlier than we like and we get caught in an emergency with no plan. If a producer would like more information about planning for a disaster, they should go to <https://extension.okstate.edu/programs/emergency-and-disaster-preparedness/> or contact their local county educator.

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### Home Grown – Horticulture Tips for May

*Laura Payne, Horticulture Educator, Payne County*

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I don't have to tell you how welcome this rain is for our landscapes. A nice slow, soaking rain has been needed for some time now.

Well, it's almost May, so here are your Horticulture tips to keep you busy in the garden.

- The best time to prune most spring flowering shrubs is right after they have dropped their blooms. These plants flower from buds set last year, so pruning now (as needed to control growth or improve shape) ensure that the plant has plenty of time to re-grow and set buds fully for the following year. The forsythia is a great example of this principal. These landscape standbys can tend to get large and unruly late in the summer and we tend to want to prune them back at that time. The plant tolerates this just fine, but it will not bloom the following spring.
- Early to mid May should be the last time your tall fescue or other cool season lawn is fertilized until fall. Summer fertilization will only exacerbate disease and heat stress issues these grasses will soon face. On the other hand, now is the perfect time to make your first fertilizer application on your warm season turfgrasses such as bermuda and zoysia.
- As we talk about often, guessing at what nutrients your landscape might need or making an application just because that's what I've always done can be a waste of money as well as being environmentally irresponsible. We would encourage you to use this as an incentive to have your soil tested if you have not done so in a few years. Contact us in the Payne County Extension office for more information on this service.
- Bagworms are a common pest that typically affects our landscape plants beginning in late May. As early as other insects have appeared this season, I would suggest scouting for these insects soon. Look for small worms near the bags or on the tips of leaves. Control is much more effective if you begin treatments now while the insects are small. You can find more information on OSU Fact Sheet EPP-7306 concerning scouting and control strategies for this pest. Remember that seeing only a few of a particular pest does not mean chemical control is warranted.

For more information on this or any other horticultural topic, you can contact your local OSU Extension Educator.

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## The Business of Bulls

*Scott Clawson, Area Agricultural Economics Specialist*

Bulls have or soon will be turned out for the 2024 spring calving season. Having bulls around is not cheap but an obvious necessity in the business. Selecting the right sire for your operation is immensely important. Being able to build a cost framework for the purchase can help determine what is an appropriate bull expense.

### Key Components

**Purchase price** - This is the cost of the bull. We will use \$3,400 for our example.

**Expected salvage value** - This is more of a guess. But we will use \$1,600 as an average sale barn price for when we are ready to retire the bull

Purchase Price: Investment	\$	3,400
Salvage Value	\$	1,600
<b>Total Depreciation</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>1,800</b>
Years in Service		3
<b>Annual Depreciation Expense</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>600</b>
Estimated Avg Value Over Investment	\$	2,500
Estimated Death loss (%)		3%
<b>Annual Death Loss Cost</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>75</b>
Cows Exposed		30
Weaning %		90%
<b>Calves at weaning</b>		<b>27</b>
Annual Depreciation Expense	\$	600
Annual Death Loss Cost	\$	75
<b>Total Annual Ownership Cost</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>675</b>
<b>Annual Ownership Cost/Calf</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>25</b>

**How many years will he be in use?** – This uses some projection here again. We will plan to use him for 3 years in this example. However, a one bull operation may have to rotate faster if daughters are retained.

**Number of calves to sire** - For this example we will assume that this bull is responsible for 30 cows. However, we need to adjust for weaning percentages as calf revenue is our primary form of revenue. For easy math, we will assume a 90% weaned calf crop leaving us with 27 calves to market annually.

**Death loss** - This is not a cash cost that we will cut a check to. Still, it is an important consideration. We will use 3% as an estimate of his estimated average annual value of \$2,500.

This example gives us an annual ownership cost at \$25/calf. Are these the only costs associated with the bull? No, we still have not added in feed, breeding soundness exams, etc. Yet, these are costs that will not vary with amount of the investment. We are assuming that these costs will be constant every year regardless of the sire so they will not alter the decision here.

Are you considering making a bigger investment in your next bull or is the market forcing you to do so to keep the same level of quality? It will add approximately \$13 in cost per calf for every additional \$1,000 spent on the bull. Put in that context it seems inexpensive. Yet, will that additional purchase price yield a return to cover that additional expense? The value of calves sold at weaning and or the more difficult to quantify value of retained heifers in the herd needs to change accordingly.

Purchase Price: Investment	\$	3,400	\$	4,000	\$	5,000	\$	6,000	\$	7,000	\$	8,000
Total Annual Ownership Cost	\$	675	\$	884	\$	1,232	\$	1,581	\$	1,929	\$	2,277
<b>Annual Ownership Cost/Calf</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>84</b>

Lastly, look for options to minimize this expense. Ownership costs (largely depreciation) is commonly decreased in one of three ways: lowering the purchase price, increasing the salvage value, or increasing usable life. Depreciation often gets put aside as a noncash expense. But any additional money, over the \$1,600 salvage value, that is required to buy the new bull is the cash recovery of that depreciation. Could a greater number of 18 month old bulls be turned out for a

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season then put some condition back on and sold as 2 year old for the same money? Additionally, partnering with another producer with a noncompeting breeding season can lower bull investments. Artificial insemination on a portion of the herd can yield access to new genetics, reduce bull needs, let bulls stay on hand longer as the genetics are more diverse, and even be more than competitive on a per head price basis. Leasing bulls can be viable as well.

At the end of the day, there is no cookie cutter answer that will fit everyone. Each operation should analyze all their options annually to decide what fits their place the best. The total cost including ownership, feed, forage, etc. can reach well over \$40 per calf sold even on the most frugal operations. This is one area we can dig in to find us another \$10, \$15, maybe \$20 per head savings as our other direct and indirect costs continue to rise.

		<b>Value of Gain Calculation</b>					
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<i>OK Weighted Average Report 4/28/23</i>							
Weight	\$/lb	Value/hd	Added lb.	Added \$	\$/lb Added		
324	\$ 2.8814	\$ 933.57					
376	\$ 2.8128	\$ 1,057.61	52	\$ 124.04	\$ 2.39		
424	\$ 2.7149	\$ 1,151.12	48	\$ 93.50	\$ 1.95		
470	\$ 2.6527	\$ 1,246.77	46	\$ 95.65	\$ 2.08		
516	\$ 2.5017	\$ 1,290.88	46	\$ 44.11	\$ 0.96		
576	\$ 2.3547	\$ 1,356.31	60	\$ 65.43	\$ 1.09		
623	\$ 2.3150	\$ 1,442.25	47	\$ 85.94	\$ 1.83		
674	\$ 2.2154	\$ 1,493.18	51	\$ 50.93	\$ 1.00		
719	\$ 2.1087	\$ 1,516.16	45	\$ 22.98	\$ 0.51		
777	\$ 2.0261	\$ 1,574.28	58	\$ 58.12	\$ 1.00		
823	\$ 1.9635	\$ 1,615.96	46	\$ 41.68	\$ 0.91		
871	\$ 1.9151	\$ 1,668.05	48	\$ 52.09	\$ 1.09		
917	\$ 1.8678	\$ 1,712.77	46	\$ 44.72	\$ 0.97		
<b>Long Stocker Run</b>		<b>Short Stocker Run</b>		<b>Heavy Stocker Run</b>			
<i>Starting</i>		<i>Starting</i>		<i>Starting</i>			
324	\$ 933.57	324	\$ 933.57	623	\$ 1,442.25		
<i>Ending</i>		<i>Ending</i>		<i>Ending</i>			
917	\$ 1,712.77	516	\$ 1,290.88	917	\$ 1,712.77		
<i>Total Gain Δ Value</i>		<i>Total Gain Δ Value</i>		<i>Total Gain Δ Value</i>			
593	\$ 779.20	192	\$ 357.30	294	\$ 270.53		
<i>VOG</i>		<i>VOG</i>		<i>VOG</i>			
\$ 1.31		\$ 1.86		\$ 0.92			

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