



**ROGER MILLS COUNTY
EXTENSION**

Roger Mills Ag Newsletter

Safe Handling of Wildlife Carcasses

(Continued from page 5)

Wildlife often have ticks and fleas. These potential disease vectors will seek a new host as the wildlife carcass cools. Spraying yourself with insect repellent prior to handling the wildlife will help keep them off you, but be sure to examine your entire body immediately after handling the carcass and remove any ticks or fleas found.

When cooking wildlife, use a meat thermometer to ensure you are heating the meat to USDA recommended safe temperatures. Note that the safe temperature for wildlife may differ from recommendations for domestic animals. For example, while trichinosis has largely been eliminated from domestic pork, it may be present in feral hogs and bear. Therefore, cook the meat to 160°F to kill this disease.

Finally, if you develop symptoms that may indicate a zoonotic disease, be sure to tell your doctor that you have recently handled wildlife. Many diseases have similar symptoms such as fever, body aches, diarrhea, and nausea. Doctors may attribute your symptoms to a more common illness such as influenza since many zoonotic diseases are rarely encountered by the general public. It is critical to communicate with your healthcare provider to get proper care.



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Danny P. Cook



**OKLAHOMA COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION SERVICE**



**ROGER MILLS COUNTY
EXTENSION**

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Can I Afford to Expand?

Trent Milacek, Area Ag Economics Specialist
Producers often ask the question, "Can I buy a piece of land and pay for it running cattle or farming?" This is a simple question that is often met with a simple "no". The reason the answer is no is much more complicated.

The easiest and least expensive way to expand a farming operation is through leased/rented ground. These leases are either on a share-crop arrangement or cash rent. For simplicity, we will assume the added ground will be cash rent.

Valuing cash rent is never easy either. Multiple things come into play such as farm productivity, location and producer rivalries all influence the price a parcel can fetch on the open market. To assist producers with valuing cash rent, OSU publishes the *Oklahoma Cropland Rental Rate Survey CR-230*. This publication states that the average farmland rental rate in Oklahoma for 2018/19 is \$32.90/acre.

This creates another question that is very interesting and unpopular among producers, "Is that enough?" Can landlords afford to rent land for that much money? Another way of looking at it is this; would a farmer be indifferent between buying land to farm or renting it out for \$32.90/acre?

How much is land worth? OSU also publishes land value data. A short 10 years ago, the average Oklahoma cropland sales price average \$1,212/acre and pasture sold for \$1,437/acre. Compare that with today where, cropland averages \$1,838/acre and pasture sells for \$2,081/acre. These numbers might come as a shock where pasture is more valuable than cropland. However, our state is very diverse with a majority of the cropland in western arid regions of the state and more pasture in the wet eastern regions.

Here is an example, assume a farmer wants to expand his operation by 100 cropland acres. He can lease cropland for \$32.90/acre or buy land for \$1,838/acre. Which should he choose? Using a simple amortization calculator and ignoring

closing costs and commissions we can get close to determining the cost of the land. A 30 year mortgage at 5.5% interest with no down payment on \$183,800 will result in an annual payment of \$12,753.31. The total interest paid on the loan is \$198,799.

The farm will have to generate at least \$127.53/acre to cover the payment. That does not include the fact that the money used for the principal payment is not tax deductible and will have income tax due on it. To expand the farm by purchasing is \$127.53/acre compared to \$32.90/acre by leasing.

So why would a landlord lease ground for \$32.90/acre? As we can see, simple interest (or the opportunity cost of capital) on the farm is \$10,109/year at a 5.5% annual rate of return. That would be a conservative return on investment if the money was invested elsewhere. By that calculation the land rent would have to be \$101.09/acre to cover the opportunity cost of capital for owning the land.

There are a few obvious answers to why there is a discrepancy here. It is rare that land is not purchased solely for its farming profit. Land is also bought with money received by outside income sources like off farm jobs and energy income. Also, inherited land that is sold could result in substantial capital gains taxes making the sale prohibitive to some.

Therefore, if you purchase land to farm and expect the farming enterprise to pay for it, interest rates will have to be low, the purchase price must be very attractive and standard farming enterprises should be expanded in order to be successful.

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Weaning Management to Reduce Stress

Britt Hicks, Ph.D., Area Extension Livestock Specialist

For spring-calving herds, weaning season is right around the corner. Weaning is one of the most stressful events in a calf's life. Minimizing weaning stress should improve calf health and weight gain. Beef calves are traditionally weaned by abrupt remote separation from their dams, kept in a lot and fed. Fence-line weaning has gained popularity in recent years over traditional methods because calves show less behavioral stress, vocalize less (bawling), spend more time eating and gain more weight following weaning. With fence-line weaning, calves are separated from their mothers but are allowed to see, hear, and smell their mothers. Depending on the fencing used, physical contact may also be possible (place in adjacent pastures).

University of Arkansas research from 2012 evaluated the effects of weaning method (fence-line vs. traditional) and time of day (morning vs. evening) on behavior and performance of fall-born calves. In this study, crossbred fall-born calves were allotted to the following weaning treatments: 1) fence-lined weaned in morning, 2) fence-lined weaned in evening, 3) traditional weaned in morning, and 4) traditional weaned in evening. The calves assigned to the morning weaning treatments were gathered at 7:30 am, separated from their dams, weighed, and either placed in 4-acre paddocks adjacent to their dams (fence-line weaning) or in 1-acre drylots away from their dams for 14 days (traditional weaning). The calves assigned to the evening weaning treatments were gathered at 5:30 pm and handled the same as the morning treatment groups. During the weaning period, all groups had ad libitum access

to water, trace mineral salt, and were offered 2 lb per head per day of dried distiller's grains. In addition, the traditional weaned groups were offered medium quality hay. Each treatment group was evaluated for vocalization and behavior (walking rapidly, running, standing, or lying down) at approximately 12, 24, 48, and 72 hours after weaning. After the 14-day weaning period, the calves were gathered and reweighed.

These researchers reported that the percentage of calves walking rapidly, standing, or lying down did not differ across treatments. However, the percentage of calves vocalizing were greater for morning weaning compared with evening weaning (67 vs. 42%) and for traditional weaning compared with fence-line weaning (62.5 vs. 46.5%). In addition, during the 14-day weaning period, evening weaned calves gained 86% faster than morning weaned calves (2.70 vs. 1.45 lb/day and fence-lined weaned calves gained 59% faster than traditional weaned calves (2.55 vs. 1.60 lb/day).

The results of this study suggest that weaning fall-born calves in the evening may reduce the number of calves vocalizing and may increase calf gains over the weaning period. These researchers suggested that this might benefit producers that sell calves to a cash market shortly after weaning. Fence-line weaning might also result in fewer calves vocalizing during the weaning period and improve performance compared with traditional weaning. Virginia (2008) and California (2003) research showed that fence-line contact between mother and calf for seven days after weaning resulted in less stress on calves than that associated with the

traditional abrupt separation of the calves from their mothers which minimized reductions in weight gain associated with weaning.

Fence-line weaning takes good, well maintained fences and adequate water supplies for both sides of the fence since a large number of cattle are going to be congregated in a small area for several days. Even though fence-line weaning is not always possible or feasible, minimizing stress is still important. Tips to minimize stress from weaning to shipping include.

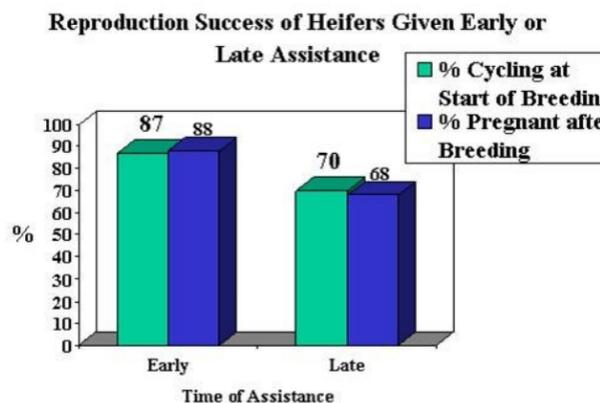
- Provide calves access to the weaning area (pen, trap, or pasture) a few weeks prior to weaning so calves do not undergo the stress of an environment change at weaning.
- Allow fence-line contact between calf and dam for four to seven days following weaning. Fences should be sturdy and allow nose to nose contact while preventing nursing.
- If fence-line contact is not practical, move cows far enough away that they cannot hear the calves bawling.
- Move the cows to a new location when cows and calves are separated at weaning. Do not move the calves.
- If weaning in a drylot or corral, place feed bunks, hay, or water troughs along the fence to minimize perimeter walking. Do not castrate, dehorn, or brand calves at weaning. These practices should be completed at least three weeks before weaning and preferably prior to three months of age.

Prolonged labor affects post-calving re-breeding

Glenn Selk, Oklahoma State University Emeritus Extension Animal Scientist

Calving difficulty is one of the greatest causes of baby calf mortality. Consequently, the rationale for providing timely assistance to cows or first calf heifers generally concentrates on the survival and health of the calf. However, calving difficulty resulting in prolonged labor can have adverse effects on the cow as well. Although calving difficulty impacts a small percentage of the herd each year, the hidden costs that result from prolonged labor can adversely affect profitability.

Cattle suffering from calving difficulty have been reported (Brinks, et al. 1973) to have pregnancy rates decreased by 14% and those that did become pregnant to calve 13 days later at the next calving. Results from a Montana study (Doornbos, et al., 1984) showed that heifers receiving assistance in early stage 2 of parturition returned to heat earlier in the post-calving period and had higher pregnancy rates than heifers receiving traditionally accepted obstetric assistance. In this study, heifers were either assisted when the fetal membranes (water bag) appeared (EARLY) or were allowed to progress normally and assisted only if calving was not completed within two hours of the appearance of the water bag (LATE).



Heifers that were allowed to endure a prolonged labor had a 17% lower rate of cycling at the start of the next breeding season. In addition, the rebreeding percentage was 20% lower than the counterparts that were given assistance in the first hour of labor. First calf heifers should deliver the calf in about one hour. The starting time is the first appearance of the water bag and ends with complete delivery of the calf. Mature cows, that have calved previously, should proceed much faster and should deliver the calf in about a half hour. **Prolonged deliveries of baby calves (in excess of 2 hours) often result in weakened calves and reduced rebreeding performance in young cows!**

Fenceline Weaning

Brian Freking

Every year I try something different it seems to minimize stress at weaning hopefully for the livestock and myself. This past weekend I've weaned my calves on an electric fence with cows on one side and hopefully calves that stay on the other. Planning increases for this event but hopefully not stress levels.

Fenceline weaning is something I believe is low stress as cows can see the calves across the fence and acclimate to having the calves adjust to their new environment. In the past I've usually had two locations with some distance (miles) between them. Out of sight out of mind for the cows. In that scenario I would pull the calves off the cows and move them to the home lot.

This time about a month prior to weaning cows and calves both were moved to the home place that will be the calves semi-permanent home for preconditioning. Once the cows have acclimated to weaning they will be the ones that get loaded up and moved back to the lease property. Experts have suggested that this is the least stressful on the calves. Calves tend to rest more and eat more knowing the mother is near.

I've been amazed how quickly these calves have acclimated to this system. It's hard to measure stress but if fenceline bawling is any indication then this was a huge success this year.

Tip: Always try to find better ways and learn from previous experience to see if fenceline weaning will work for you.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYk1ImNj_6E



Follow Label-Directed Withdrawal Times when Selling Treated Cattle

Don Stotts, Agricultural Communications Services

Health checks are a part of doing business in a cattle operation, but there are drug-residue rules every producer must follow.



(Photo by Todd Johnson, OSU Agricultural Communications Services)

Beef producers should be careful to ensure recommended withdrawal times for animal-related medication are followed before selling treated cattle.

“The need to treat infectious ailments such as eye infections or foot rot is not uncommon in the summertime, with treatments often involving the use of antibiotics,” said Bob LeValley, Oklahoma Beef Quality Assurance coordinator with the [Oklahoma Beef Council](#) and OSU’s [Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources](#).

Violations of drug residue regulations can result in expensive fines for the rancher, creating not only a hardship for the individual producer but a black eye for the entire beef industry.

To help prevent such occurrences, LeValley said it is important for cattle producers to develop and maintain a close working relationship with a large animal veterinarian in their area.

“If a cow to be culled has an infection or disease that must be treated, the animal’s owner should closely follow the veterinarian’s directions, as well as read and follow label directions for the product used,” he said. “Most of these medications will require a producer to keep the treated animal for the label-directed withdrawal time.”

For example, if a medication with a 14-day withdrawal period was last given on Aug. 1, the withdrawal would be

completed on Aug. 15 and that would be the earliest the animal could be harvested for human consumption.

All federally approved drugs will include the required withdrawal time for that drug on the product label or package insert. Withdrawal times can range from zero to as many as 60 days or more.

“It’s the producer’s responsibility to be aware of withdrawal times of any drugs used in their operation,” said Dr. Barry Whitworth, [OSU Extension](#) veterinarian and food animal quality and health specialist. “Unacceptable levels of drug residues detected in edible tissues collected at harvest may result in trace-back, quarantine and potential fines.”

OSU recommendations are for producers to follow three rules:

- Only use medications approved for cattle and use them exactly as the label directs or as prescribed by the attending veterinarian.
- Do not market animals for food until the withdrawal time listed on the label or until the time prescribed by the attending veterinarian has elapsed.
- Keep well-organized, detailed records of pharmaceutical products given to individually identified animals. Include the date of administration, route of administration, dosage given, lot or serial number of the product given, person delivering the product and the label or prescription listing of withdrawal dates. Records should be kept on file for at least three years after sale of the animal.

Example producer-use records are available [online](#) through the national Beef Quality Assurance Manual website.

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Fall Gardening

Tips for Bringing Plants Indoors

David Hillock

Because of our warm humid weather during summer, many indoor, tropical plants are often grown outdoors. They love the hot, humid conditions of our summers and will often grow leaps and bounds. However, cooler weather will soon be arriving and these tropical plants will need to be moved indoors.

Now is the time to begin acclimating plants. Do not move plants immediately from outside to inside. Plant stress may occur when plants are exposed to sudden changes in temperature, light and humidity.

Light levels inside the home are much lower compared to the bright sunlight outside. To help your plants adjust to the lower light levels before moving them inside, gradually reduce the light levels to which they are exposed by placing them in shaded areas for a few weeks. Then move the plants indoors for 1 to 2 days a week. Gradually leave plants indoors longer. This will allow the plants to acclimate to the new environmental conditions.

Frequently check plants for insects while moving them from locations. You do not want to infest healthy plants with insects. Remove infested and dead plant material. If insects are seen, treat them with a labeled insecticide outdoors.

Now is the Time to Plan for Spring Flowering Bulbs

It won’t be long and you will be receiving catalogs in the mail, emails from bulb suppliers or see spring flowering bulbs show up in the garden centers. Why? Because fall is the best time to plant them. In Oklahoma late-September through mid-November is the ideal time to start planting depending on where you live in the state.

To get the best quality bulbs, order early or visit your garden center soon for the best pickings. The larger bulb usually means a healthy, vigorous plant. I enjoy browsing through the selections available from the many bulb suppliers because they have a larger variety of cultivars and species to choose from and I get to dream of cooler weather and bright colors in my

garden. After months of a drabby winter, there’s nothing like an explosion of color to let you know that spring really is finally here.

For best results follow these do and don’t tips.

1) DO plant generously. It is better to plant tulip bulbs in groups of 20 or more, spaced about a foot apart, than to place them in tight clumps or scatter them all over an area. You’ll get more bang for your buck. Daffodils provide a fantastic display when organized in swaths, sort of like a lazy river.

Controlling Winter Annual Weeds

If winter annual weeds, such as henbit and annual bluegrass, have been a problem in the past then you will for sure want to apply a preemergence herbicide as soon as possible. Many of our winter annual weeds germinate in the fall or early winter and survive as very young plants until late winter or early spring when conditions are more favorable for growth. Waiting until you notice them is too late.

The key to effective control is timing. Preemergence herbicides must be applied well in advance of the expected germination time of the weeds to be controlled, for winter annual weeds this is by September 15. In addition, the products must be watered in to activate them. At least ½ inch of water either through rainfall or irrigation if no precipitation is expected within a couple days after application is recommended. In some cases the product needs to be incorporated into the upper surface of soil.

There are several products available in the garden centers that will effectively control germination of most winter annual weeds. Some are labeled just for turf areas and some are labeled for both turf and ornamental areas. Examples of products labeled for use in lawn and ornamental areas include some containing benefin + oryzalin or those containing bensulide. Another product available that contains trifluralin can be used in ornamental and vegetable beds. Again there are several to choose from; choose one that is labeled for your particular site/situation and labeled to control the weeds you are targeting. Be sure to read and follow the label directions for best results and to avoid damaging any desirable plants.



<http://agriculture.okstate.edu/cowboy-journal/issues>

Fighting the Spoilage Battle with Proper Bale Storage

Dana Zook, Extension Area Livestock Specialist

Depending on who you ask, the term “forage production” will have a different meaning. For some livestock producers, forage production is defined as growing forage for grazing. Other producers consider forage production as growing forage that will be harvested for hay in a round baler. Most producers utilize both sources as feed sources for their livestock. As one would guess, since the invention of the round baler in the 1950’s, the US has seen a significant increase in hay production. More specifically, the Livestock Marketing Information Center reported Oklahoma produces 285% more tons of hay (non-alfalfa) today than in 1974. Yes, some of that production goes to other animals but the bulk of it is used for cattle production. For livestock producers, round bales are extremely convenient. Convenience in this case comes at a cost. Harvested hay will always be more expensive than grazed forage and deficiencies are present in storage, transport and feeding. Today, I wanted to take some time and address losses that can occur during round bale storage.

Since the creation of the first-round bale decades ago, livestock producers have been fighting the battle of spoilage. Even when put up right with low moisture and proper density, spoilage can occur. So how do we fight this spoilage battle? Bale storage has a lot to do with the amount of spoilage that can occur. Keeping rain and snow away from the bales is a big factor and bales that are in a barn or are protected from the elements have very low spoilage loss (2-10%). But not every producer has the luxury of a hay barn and other things can be done to help preserve quality. For most producers, outside storage is the most used method.

There are two keys to making and storing quality

bales. Baling smart is the first key. Creating a dense bale with a tight core will keep the bale from squatting. This will reduce the amount of hay exposed to the ground. Bale at the correct moisture to preserve leaves and wrap with net wrap. Storing smart is the second key. Store the bales on a well-drained, gradual slope. The bales should be butted together tightly in rows in a North-South direction. Air circulation is important and so keep each row of bales 3-4 feet apart. Do not stack the bales or put them in an area with shade. Sun exposure and air circulation will ensure drying after wet weather events.

As you can see, getting rid of water is the key to all this. Another tip to help shed rain is creating a good “thatch” on the bale. “Thatch” is described as a layer on the outside of the bale formed from leaves on either grass hay or alfalfa. A good thatch layer will allow rain and moisture to be shed from the bale and ensure drying. There are also benefits to net wrap rather than twine in the ability of the bales to shed water. Twine wrapped bales will not have a good thatch because leaves are knocked off the exterior of the bale as the twine is wrapped in the baler. Net wrap only requires the bale be turned a few times within the baler leaving less damage to the bale’s exterior. The addition of net wrap to a well thatched bale will greatly improve the quality of the stored hay, even when exposed to the elements.

My thoughts on this topic came from a recent presentation about round bale storage by Dr. Kevin Shinnors who is an Ag Engineer at the University of Wisconsin – Madison. If you are interested in this excellent webinar go to <http://beef.okstate.edu/> and look for the webinar titled, *The Way You Stack Round Bales Matters*. For more interesting webinars related to beef, sign up for **OSU Extensions Beef Webinar Series titled Ranchers Thursday Lunchtime Series**.

Safe Handling of Wildlife Carcasses

It is once again hunting season in Oklahoma. As hunters find success in the field and harvest wildlife, it is important to consider how to safely handle the carcasses to stay safe. Wildlife can be infected with various zoonotic diseases that are transmissible to humans. Additionally, wildlife often harbors ticks and fleas which are disease vectors and can transmit diseases. Some of the diseases that may be encountered in Oklahoma and can infect hunters include ehrlichioses, leptospirosis, Lyme disease, tularemia, trichinosis, rabies, Rocky Mountain spotted tick fever, salmonella, and swine brucellosis. Hunters often become wary when they observe odd behavior in wildlife or notice injury or signs of disease on animal carcasses. However, the absence of these obvious signs should not cause complacency in the safe handling of harvested animals. Any animal should be treated as a potential source of infection.

There are several ways to protect yourself when handling wildlife carcasses. First, avoid direct contact with any body fluids such as blood, lymph fluid, urine, feces, and saliva. When handling carcasses, always wear disposable gloves that provide a barrier between you and the animal. Two layers of gloves are a good idea to provide an extra layer of protection in case a tear develops in a glove. Also, wear some type of eye protection to keep body fluids from splashing into your eyes. A face shield will provide better protection by also covering your mouth and nose which could be points of entry. Take your time when cleaning harvested animals and make sure you have adequate lighting which will help prevent cutting yourself with a knife or being injured by broken bones on the carcass. When removing gloves, look for any injury on your hands that might indicate a glove was pierced. If you see any cuts, immediately treat them with antiseptic. Wash your hands, arms, and face immediately after handling the carcass. Also wear gloves and face protection when packaging meat for storage.

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You can also access the episodes on spotlight

<http://spotlight.okstate.edu/experience/>.

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Farm Management Resources Found on Your Smartphone

Dr. Rodney Jones, Ag Finance and Management Professor
Brent Ladd, Assistant Extension Specialist

Producers can access digital farm financial management, production, marketing, and risk management topics online by visiting the e-Farm Management website. This site catalogs videos, decision tools, and publications for farmers and ranchers to strengthen their farm management skills.

In the Tillage Series – Types of Tillage video, viewers learn about the two main types of tillage. The video discusses the main purposes of primary and secondary tillage. Lastly, they see examples of the various types of tillage.

To view this video and find additional information on grain production, visit: <http://agecon.okstate.edu/efarmmanagement/grain.asp>.

More information on this and other farm management topics may be found: 1) by contacting your nearest Extension Educator (<https://extension.okstate.edu/county/index.html>) 2) on the e-farm management website (<http://agecon.okstate.edu/efarmmanagement/index.asp>) or 3) on the OSU Agricultural Economics YouTube Channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/OkStateAgEcon>).

Extension Experience – Insights into Oklahoma Agriculture

The Northwest Area Extension Staff would like to announce the creation of our new podcast *Extension Experience*. The *Extension Experience* podcast is brought to you by Josh Bushong, Trent Milacek, and Dana Zook. Each week we provide perspective on Agriculture topics and offer insight from our experience working with Extension Educators and Producers across Oklahoma.

The *Extension Experience* podcast is available on Spotify, Google Podcasts, and Apple Podcast platforms. You can also access the episodes on spotlight <http://spotlight.okstate.edu/experience/>.

We hope you consider listening to *Extension Experience*.

Extension Experience

INSIGHTS INTO OKLAHOMA AGRICULTURE

