



# Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association Newsletter

## February 2004

### Profitable Pastures Seminars

Two Profitable Pastures seminars will be offered this spring for Mississippi livestock producers. Three of the top forage experts in the country will conduct these one-day seminars, which promise to be both educational and entertaining. Featured speakers will be Dr. Don Ball from Auburn University, Dr. Garry Lacefield from the University of Kentucky, and Dr. Carl Hoveland from the University of Georgia.

Topics will include forage fertility, forage quality, warm-season grasses, legumes, winter annuals, grazing management, fencing, fescue endophyte management, and minimizing stored feed requirements. The first seminar will be held Friday, March 12 at the Bost Extension Center at Mississippi State University, and the same program will be offered again on Saturday, March 13 at the Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center in Raymond. The programs run from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and include lunch. Participants will receive a complementary copy of Southern Forages, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

Please make checks payable to *Profitable Pastures* and send along with the registration form below to: **Profitable Pastures, c/o Jane Parish, Box 9815, Miss. State, MS 39762.** Registration information is also online at [http://msucares.com/livestock/beef/beef\\_calendar.html](http://msucares.com/livestock/beef/beef_calendar.html) or by contacting your local Extension office or Richard Watson at 662-325-5463. The early registration deadline is March 1, 2004. On-site registration will be available for \$30.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ # attending: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Location (circle one):

Bost Extension Center, Mississippi State University campus  
 Central MS Research and Extension Center, Raymond, MS

Registration fee enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(\$20 per person, spouses attend free)

### Mississippi Beef Breeders Directory

Mississippi beef cattle producers can take advantage of the Mississippi Beef Breeders Directory to list and browse cattle available for sale. The website address for the directory is <http://msucares.com/livestock/beef/breeders/>. Producers can fill out an online form or complete the form below and mail it to: Mike Howell, Area Livestock Agent, P.O. Box 1690, Verona, MS 38879. For more information about the Beef Breeders Directory, contact Mike at [mhowell@ext.msstate.edu](mailto:mhowell@ext.msstate.edu) or 662-566-2201.

Farm Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Purebred Breed(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Commercial Heifers:

(Example: Charolais/Angus cross) \_\_\_\_\_

In what year(s) are bulls for sale?

(Example: 2004) \_\_\_\_\_

# of yearlings \_\_\_\_\_ # of 2 year olds \_\_\_\_\_

# of bulls over 2 years old \_\_\_\_\_

Are EPDs available on bulls? Yes No

Ultrasound scan data on bulls? Yes No

Replacements heifers for sale?

Purebred? Yes No Crossbred? Yes No

Embryos for sale? Yes No

## Contemporary Grouping

Effective contemporary grouping is an important part of collecting performance information in beef herds. Cattle must be compared on a level playing field to make meaningful comparisons that can be used in animal selection and culling decisions. A contemporary group is a group of animals that have had an equal opportunity to perform. It usually consists of a group of cattle that are of the same breed composition and sex, are similar in age, and have been raised under the same management conditions.

Genetics are only part of the equation when it comes to evaluating cattle performance for a particular trait. Environmental and management factors can influence performance as well. As an example, a calf's superiority or inferiority for yearling weight depends not only on its genetic potential for growth, but also on environmental factors including dam's milk yield, feed and forage access and nutrient value, climatic conditions, health, etc. Directly comparing yearling weights for a calf that has been creep fed with another calf in the same herd that has not had access to creep feed would not give a true comparison of the genetic potential for growth between the two calves.

Performance ratios are calculated within contemporary groups and are often used to compare cattle. The average ratio for a particular performance measure within any contemporary group is 100. A bull calf with a weaning weight ratio of 105 weighed 5% more ( $105 - 100 = 5$ ) than the average of his contemporary group at weaning, for instance. Similarly, a calf with a weaning weight ratio of 91 weighed 9% less ( $91 - 100 = -9$ ) than the average of its contemporary group at weaning. Without proper contemporary grouping, within herd performance ratios will not be accurate.

Contemporary group assignments should be as simple as possible and yet still account for major differences in management. They should include as many cattle as can be accurately compared. Once a contemporary group is formed and the calving season is over, it should never increase in size. A contemporary group can decrease in size, however due to injury, illness, culling, death, and assignment of calves to different groups with different management schemes within the original contemporary group. In addition, some calves, such as embryo transfer calves and cattle fitted for show away

from the rest of the herd, will have no other contemporaries in their groups.

It is important to be aware of the breed association requirements for creating contemporary groups when collecting performance information. There is usually a specifically defined window of calf ages for collecting weaning weights, yearling weights, and ultrasound scan data that will be acceptable for use in a breed's national cattle evaluation program. Plan ahead and contact the breed association to find out these requirements before the need arises to split calves off into different management groups.

When done properly, contemporary grouping can be a valuable part of a herd genetic improvement program. Effective contemporary grouping is important for producing unbiased performance information from which animal selection decisions can be based. For more information on contemporary grouping, contact your local Extension office.

## Mississippi BCIA Membership Application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

(Check one) Seedstock: \_\_\_\_\_ Commercial: \_\_\_\_\_

Cattle breed(s): \_\_\_\_\_

*Completed applications and \$5 annual dues payable to Mississippi BCIA should be mailed to:*

*Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association  
c/o Jane Parish, Extension Beef Specialist  
Box 9815, Mississippi State, MS 39762*



**Jane Parish, Ph.D.  
Extension Beef Specialist**

Mississippi State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or group affiliation, age, disability, or veteran status.