Volume 6, Issue 10

October 2009

# Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association

*Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association—Productivity and Quality*

**Upcoming events:**

- October—Bulls arrive at Hinds CC Bull Test, Raymond, MS
- October 24—Prairie Research Unit Field Day, Prairie, MS
- October 29-31—MSU Extension Service Artificial Insemination School, Mississippi State, MS
- October 31—Bulls arrive at South MS Gain-on-Forage Bull Test, Tylertown, MS
- **November 12—Mississippi BCIA Fall Bull Sale, Hinds Community College Bull Sale Facility, Raymond, MS**
- January 12, 14, 19, 21—Mississippi Master Cattle Producer Program Webinar Internet-based Certification and Live Chat
- January 20—Mississippi BCIA Spring Bull Sale nomination deadline
- March 4—Hinds CC Bull Test Sale and Mississippi BCIA Spring Bull Sale, Hinds Community College Bull Sale Facility, Raymond, MS

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## MBCIA 2009 Fall Bull Sale—Local, High Quality Genetics

### BCIA Fall Bull Sale Information

*Thursday, November 12, 2009*
*12:00 Noon*
*Hinds Community College Bull Sale Facility*
*Raymond, Mississippi*

*Interactive video bidding sites*
*Panola County Extension office, Batesville*
*North MS R&E Center, Verona*

*Live Internet Streaming of Sale*
*msucares.com/livestock/beef*

*Angus · Charolais*

The Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Association recognizes that quality bulls are essential to producing profitable calf crops. Time and time again Mississippi BCIA Fall Bull Sale buyers cite the breed leading genetics, environmental adaptability, freight, and customer service advantages of purchasing bulls raised in Mississippi. Our steadfast commitment to beef herd improvement continues with an outstanding bull offering this fall.

Mississippi BCIA is known for its 40+ year tradition of quality. All bulls are screened for structure, disposition, and performance and are guaranteed as breeders. These bulls have passed breeding soundness examinations and met minimum growth and scrotal circumference requirements.

Sale bulls will be available for viewing at the Hinds Community College Sales Facility in Raymond, MS starting on the afternoon of November 11. The sale will be broadcast live from the Raymond sale site over the Extension distance education system to interactive bidding sites in the Panola County Extension office in Batesville, MS and the North MS Research and Extension Center in Verona, MS.

For the first time ever, the sale will be streamed live over the Internet at http://msucares.com/livestock/beef/. Anyone with an Internet connection can view the sale live on this website.

Mississippi BCIA members, breeders, and Extension Service personnel will be glad to assist you in selecting herd sires that will work well for your operation. We look forward to seeing you at the sale on Thursday, November 12.

For more information or to request a catalog, contact Jane Parish at (662) 325-7466, jparish@ads.msstate.edu or go to *http://msucares.com/livestock/beef/mbcia/bcia_bullsale.html*. Catalogs will be available in mid-October.

### BCIA 2009 Fall Bull Sale Consignors

- ►Cain Cattle Company
- ►Ingram Cattle Company, Inc.
- ►Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station
- ►Monogram Farms

## Masters of Beef Advocacy (MBA) Program


The checkoff-funded MBA program helps prepare producers for speaking about the beef industry

The MBA program is an e-learning opportunity developed to assist producers across the country in becoming effective spokespersons for the industry.

We face a number of challenges in the beef industry. Among those is combating anti-animal agriculture activists with the truth about beef and beef production. Beef producers work hard every day to be good stewards of the land and their animals and to provide safe and nutritious beef for America's dinner tables. We need to be equally passionate and vocal in telling our story.

If you meet an anti-beef militant who insists that beef production is the major source of global methane emissions, what would you say? If a neighbor or a consumer you happened to talk to at the grocery store told you he or she doesn't eat much beef because of its fat content, could you share a few basic beef nutrition facts that could persuade this person otherwise?

The good news is – there are answers you can give these people if you yourself are armed with the facts and the beef checkoff is giving you those facts. That's what the checkoff-funded Masters of Beef Advocacy (MBA) program is about -- equipping beef producers across the country with the tools they need to tell the beef story.

The MBA program is a free, self-directed online training program designed to equip beef producers and industry allies with the information they need to be everyday advocates for the beef industry.

The six courses, which average less than one hour per week, include such things as:

- Modern Beef Production – Sharing the many benefits of modern, efficient U.S. beef production
- Beef Safety – Communicating why producing safe food for consumers is a top priority
- Beef Nutrition – Explaining how great-tasting beef strengthens and sustains our bodies
- Environmental Stewardship – Sharing how we're protecting the environment for future generations

After completing the program, participants will be ready to become everyday beef advocates and to get out and meet consumers where they live. This may be as simple as talking to friends and neighbors, or going out to broader audiences such as schools, businesses and civic groups to tell the beef story, or the "virtual" world of the Internet and responding to blogs, online news articles and more. Contact Daren Williams at 303-850-3346 or dwilliams@beef.org.

## Brucellosis Testing Changes in Mississippi

The United States is free from bovine brucellosis (Bangs), with the exception of the Yellowstone National Park area. Periodically the states of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho lose their free status as a result of exposure to infected elk or bison that migrate out of the part.

As a result of this progress in the eradication program, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has stopped financially supporting the testing of brucellosis in states that have been free of brucellosis for longer than 5 years. Unfortunately, this loss of federal funding for Mississippi's 1st Point Testing Program coincided with the decline in the economy and a decrease in state revenues resulting in a budget cut for the Mississippi Board of Animal Health (MBAH).

*"…Private testing for brucellosis is now the responsibility of the cattle producer."*

As a result, MBAH discontinued 1st Point Testing in August 2009. Private testing for brucellosis is now the responsibility of the cattle producer.

The MBAH has an arrangement with the Alabama Diagnostic Laboratory to perform these tests for anyone wanting a herd certification or change of ownership test. Please contact the MBAH office for information about shipping samples to that laboratory. The MBAH will continue to support calfhood vaccination of in-state heifers.

Mississippi Board of Animal Health
P.O. Box 3889, Jackson, MS, 39207
601-359-1170 (phone)
www.mbah.state.ms.us (website)
JimW@mdac.state.ms.us (email)

## MAFES Research: Low-Stress Weaning Methods

Weaning can be a very stressful event in the life of a calf. A conventional practice in the United States is to wean calves by abruptly separating the calf from the cow. The calf may be moved to another location on the farm away from the cow or may be transported to another location off the farm. In addition to the stress of separation from the cow, stress can also result from the other events that often occur simultaneous to weaning such as transport. If calves are transported the loading on and off of trailers, road noise, vibration, crowding, and commingling are further sources of stress. The stress of weaning by abrupt separation can negatively alter the responsiveness of the immune system in a calf. Weaning stress can lead to greater susceptibility of calves to respiratory infections. Over 1 billion dollars is lost annually in the feeder calf industry due to bovine respiratory disease (BRD) which is considered the most costly disease in the beef cattle industry.

Weaning techniques that prevent calves from nursing for a period of time (usually 5 to 7 days) before physically separating them from the cow have been studied as an alternative to the traditional weaning practice of abrupt separation. These two-stage weaning techniques can be accomplished by the use of nose-clips (pictured here), or by fence-line weaning. With fence-line weaning the calves are physically separated from their dams and placed in an adjacent paddock so that they can still hear, see, and smell the cows but suckling is prevented. Fence-line weaning requires good fencing to prevent calves from returning to the pasture with the cows. Nose-clip weaning involves the placement of specially designed anti-suckling devices on the nose of the calf which serves two functions. First, the clip acts as a physical barrier that makes it hard for the calf to reach the teat and second, the small protrusions on the clip may irritate the cow enough that she moves away when the calf attempts to nurse. These nose-clips allow calves to remain in the same pasture with the cows, allowing them to gradually adjust to being weaned before they are separated.

Results between previous studies looking at these low-stress weaning methods have varied, and it has been suggested that this may be due to differences in the design of the nose-clips used in the various studies. Research is being conducted at the Prairie Research Unit to investigate multiple types of weaning methods.

In this study, 24 calves were either weaned , with an adjustable size nose-clip, a "one-size fits all" nose-clip, or weaned conventionally by abrupt separation. Preliminary results indicate that calves wearing nose-clips for 5 days prior to weaning spent less time walking and pacing along fence-lines than calves that were abruptly separated from the cows. Less time spent pacing and bawling can mean more time spent grazing as well as indicate that the calves felt less stressed. Average daily gain of nose-clip weaned calves was 1.4 lb whereas abruptly weaned calves gained 1.2 lb per day. Cortisol (a hormone that increases when animals are stressed) levels in the blood were numerically lower in calves that were nose-clip weaned compared to the calves that were abruptly separated from cows. Creatine kinase (an enzyme used to indicate tissue damage) was somewhat elevated in the blood of calves wearing the "one-size fits all" nose-clip. It is too early to tell if one type of nose-clip truly works better than another so the study is being repeated this fall with more animals which will help show if the preliminary results hold true and if these weaning methods can benefit producers.

*For more information about this MAFES research project, contact Holly Boland at 662-369-4426 or holly.boland@msstate.edu. (Mention of products does not constitute an official endorsement.)*

*"...Decreasing stress at weaning can help prevent illness in calves."*

## Reminder: Prairie Research Unit Field Day, October 24

There will be a Beef Cattle and Forages Field Day on October 24, 2009 at Prairie Research Unit, Prairie, MS. Registration begins at 8:00 AM. Current research at the station will be presented. Lunch will be provided and door prizes will be given away. See the MSUcares website and calendar for details: http://msucares.com/nmrec/events/prairie-flyer.pdf

Several styles of weaning nose-clips are commercially available.

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Mississippi Beef Cattle Improvement Assn.
Box 9815
Mississippi State, MS 39762

Phones: 662-325-7466, 662-325-7465
Fax: 662-325-8873
Email: jparish@ads.msstate.edu
jrhinehart@ads.msstate.edu

Send questions or comments to Jane Parish or Justin Rhinehart, Extension Beef Specialists, Mississippi State University Extension Service



***Visit MBCIA online at http://msucares.com/livestock/beef/mbcia/***

## MBCIA Membership Application

Name:_____

Address:_____

City:_____

County:_____ State:_____ Zip:_____

Phone:_____ Email:_____

(Check one) Seedstock:____ Commercial:____

Cattle breed(s):_____

*Completed applications and $5 annual dues or $100 lifetime dues payable to Mississippi BCIA should be mailed to:*

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

# BCIA Genetic Profit Tips — October 2009

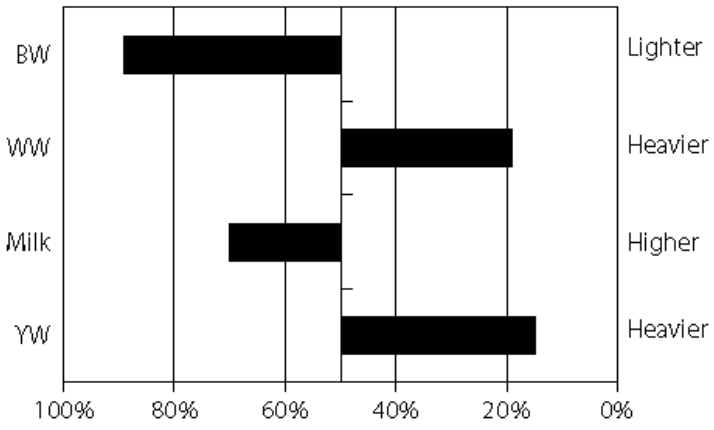
## Percentile Ranks

Breed associations provide percentile ranks for their animals. These charts are a way to see how a specific animal compares with others in the breed. Similar to the way national test scores are reported on children in schools, these percentile ranks indicate what proportion of animals have an EPD that is better than a given value. Breed average EPD are always the 50th percentile.

Because they are based on how many animals perform better than a specific EPD value, those animals with the highest rankings do not always have the largest numerical EPD values. For instance, for birth weight, animals with a lighter birth weight are thought to be more desirable. Therefore, the animals ranked in the top percentages will have negative EPD. However, higher values are thought to be more desirable for other weight traits, such as weaning and yearling weight, which means that the animals listed at the top percentages have the highest EPD for those traits.

In addition to the percentile tables, the American Hereford Association provides producers with an added tool to compare animals with the rest of the breed. They provide a graph for each animal that shows how that animal compares to the rest of the breed for all traits evaluated. A similar, abbreviated, graph is shown in the figure above right.

On the left-hand side of the graph are listed the traits that are being evaluated, and the right-hand side shows which direction is the favorable direction for each EPD (i.e., lighter birth weights are better, while heavier weaning weights are better). Each bar shows where the animal in question places among the rest of the breed. Bars that reach to the left indicate below average, and bars that reach to the right indicate above average. The longer the bar, the farther from breed average, whether that be better or worse.




**Percentile Ranking of a Hypothetical Bull**

The figure above shows that the animal depicted is above average for weaning and yearling weight and below average for birth weight and milk. Approximately 90% of the animals in the breed have birth weight EPD that are better (lighter) than the animal depicted in this graph. Furthermore, only about 19% have better (heavier) weaning weights, about 70% have higher milk EPD values (production scenario determines if this is better or worse), and about 17% have better (heavier) yearling weight EPD.

*Source: National Beef Cattle Evaluation Consortium. 2006. Beef Sire Selection Manual.*