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HAPPY 2017! May you each have a healthy and blessed New Year.

Mark your calendars for February 10, 2017. CPL will be hosting along with co-sponsor LA Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative a meeting at LSU Ag Center's Woodrow Dewitt Livestock Barn Facility in Alexandria, LA starting 8:00 am (registration) to 3:00 pm. It will feature the stories of four Louisiana cattle producers who have embraced the concepts of soil health and expanded forages, coupled with the results of an LSU grass fed beef research project. Dr. Allen Williams, consultant on grass fed beef and forages will be the facilitator. Registration fee is \$20.00 with lunch provided. More information will be coming in the near future. Tell your friends and neighbors about the meeting and bring them with you.

According to LDAF, cattle marketed through the seven LA auction markets in 2016 were down 7.5% (17,166) from 2015. This reduction was due in part to floods and sharply lower prices compared to 2015. Normally the months of January and February are not cattle marketing months in Louisiana, however, the first week of January showed some very positive numbers. Prices were stronger which is a good way to start the new year. If 2016 had one positive lesson it was to keep informed about the market. Between our website and toll free number, ext. 3, you should at least be current with prices along with keeping in touch with your marketing agent. Also one may have to be a little flexible this year with your marketing plan. Call if you need information and I will see you in Alexandria on the 10th of February.

Dave Foster, CEO

I DON'T BUY IT!

Reprint from High Plains Journal

Back in 2014, all the experts, referred to as specialists nowadays, were predicting fantastic cattle prices through 2018. Years of low cattle prices, extended drought and ranchers retiring or just giving up had reduced the cowherd to near 70-year lows.

Farm and ranch publications were packed with rosy predictions by everyone who thinks they are someone. Ranchers, farmers, young beginning couples, independent cattle feeders and, most importantly, bankers, all bought into this prosperity propaganda. Then, bang—three years ahead of schedule, markets plunge precipitously to unbelievable ranch and feedlot foreclosure levels. The experts now softly whisper mundane excuses, like cattle got too high, it's cyclical, heavier carcasses. Well, really preposterous—have any of these experts ever invested in the machinery, vehicles, technology, structure or real estate that comprise a modern day feedlot, farm or ranch? Whoever saw a cattle cycle go from cowherd lows to surplus in 12 months?

Heavier cattle, true. But if this extra beef are cause for this crash in prices, why does the United States remain the largest beef importing nation in the world? Why would USDA open the door to import up to 60,000 tons of fresh beef from Brazil? That's equal to over 1,300,000 head of 950-pound carcasses. Why did we eliminate COOL at home, while exporters use it to control enormous premiums on U.S. beef in world capitals, business and leisure centers of the wealthy?

I DON'T BUY IT!

I don't buy any of the flimsy reasons given for this total meltdown, equity consuming and independent feedlot bankrupting crash in 12 months timeframe. I believe this has been a carefully planned, deliberate and economic crash to vertically integrate and corporatize the cattle industry. From my vantage point of age, participation in and, yes, victim to the corporatizing of poultry, hogs and dairy, it's plain as day. Remember, we took our eggs and cream to town on Saturday night and used the proceeds to buy family necessities. Between Tyson and government regulations, the four competing product houses were reduced to one, and eggs were 13 cents per dozen. We quit! Remember the dairy buyout? This was concocted by USDA, Farm Bureau and those groups taking the dairy "check-off money" and ostensibly representing the dairymen. This eliminated thousands of dairy families and took the cattle market "Limit Down" day after day.

When that failed to get the desired corporate results, government stepped up the attack through sanitary rules and regulations. Suddenly, the milk this nation grew up on became no good, unless you spent a small fortune upgrading facilities and equipment. I quit! Most states, in an effort to protect family farms, had enacted anti-corporate farming laws. These laws came under massive direct attack in the 1980s by, guess who—yep, those organizations purportedly representing family farms and ranches.

Led by the Kansas Farm Bureau, the National Cattlemen's Beef Association state affiliates, Kansas Livestock Association and pork producers, all the commodity groups or others affiliated with agriculture joined the effort to open the doors to corporate takeover. The first open corporate doors opened to poultry, rabbits and ratites. No, I'm not kidding, rabbits and ratites! They painted visions of huge corporate rabbitrys, processing plants, jobs galore, i.e. economic development. The visions of center pivots of wheat being grazed by thousands of ostrich even drew gullible corporate investors. I later rented deer hunting to two of these Omaha, Nebraska, scammed investors. Corporate chickens drew little opposition since family poultry was already eliminated by economics.

Corporate dairy was a tougher sell, but eventually the vision of huge dairies, processing plants and jobs carried the day. Remember 1998? Hog prices plunged to \$9 per hundredweight and exposed as lies all the testimony presented by our farm, ranch and ag organizations in 1994, when they finally passed corporate hogs in Kansas. The thousands of family farms raising hogs, "mortgage lifters" are now gone. Beef is next! There's no precedent, no logical reason for calf prices to drop \$100 per hundredweight, for independent feedlots to lose up to \$800 per head, for young families investing in cows or bred heifers to find their income halved or two-thirds declined. In 12 months! All the while, beef prices in stores remained at record highs, while imports of beef and live cattle continue unabated. Unbelievable—no, planned and deliberate! Don't believe for a minute all the U.S. beef supply can't be outsourced just like our manufacturing. The years-ago prediction by the Poppers and the present dream of the Enviros, a Buffalo Commons, may be closer than we think. The Demopubs and Republicrats have put on a good show this election cycle, keeping the common man equally divided, but the insiders, the globalists of both parties are keeping us headed for one world government. Whoever controls the food controls the nation. Vertical integration of the cattle industry is just another step in corporate control of food.

Forget all this crap about U.S. farmers feeding a hungry world; it's propaganda for dummies. Aren't we awash in wheat, corn, beans, beef, pork and chicken; all priced below the cost of production? Yet, there's millions of starving or malnourished in the world! Why? It's all about money, control, greed, politically correct speech, globalism. Study history. When the independent feedlots are gone, competition ceases, auction markets disappear; then the rancher becomes a corporate captive just like the piggery, henhouse or milk barn. Thanks to the sellout by all our ag organizations.

BURKE TEICHERT: IS THAT NEW ADVANCEMENT IN TECH ACTUALLY MAKING YOUR RANCH BETTER?

Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should. Call me the devil's advocate, but I encourage you to think through these seven questions before deciding what technology is really useful for your operation.

By: Burke Teichert

Among my early childhood recollections are a time when our ranch did almost all of its work with horses, horse drawn equipment and people. We had one tractor and, in the summer, used it to mow hay. The rest of the haying was done with teams of horses and implements designed for them to pull and get the jobs done.

By the time I started to drive a team of horses pulling a dump rake to help in the hay field, we had two tractors; and over the next few years, horses were phased out and tractors or modified trucks (reversed) provided all of the horsepower for harvesting hay. In those days, the tractors, equipment and fuel were cheap. The technology and prices from then until now have changed in an almost astounding way.

As I sit at my computer today, I think back to the late 1970s and early 80s when I was first introduced to desktop and later laptop computers. I hated the things from the beginning, but I began to love what they would do for me—especially when I had an office manager or administrative assistant who would make them (the computers) work

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for me. We could, all of a sudden, do so many more things.

Now, after watching this unfold, I am asking myself how much of this technology should I be using or recommending to my clients? Just because we can do something doesn't mean we should. This thought applies across all of agriculture and our attempts to make our businesses fun and profitable.

I am not ready to tell a broad audience what technologies they should or should not adopt. Those decisions need to be made to fit the situation. Let me point to a few Ideas/questions that I think warrant some consideration. By the way, I have said before that it is much more important for good managers to know the right questions than to know the answers. If they know the right questions, they will find the answers. This is much better than answering wrong or unimportant questions.

With the increase in size and cost of haying equipment, should we still put up all the hay, put up less or not put up any? Could we use "new" techniques to provide grazing for a greater portion or even all of the year? Could we buy hay to meet our needs?

Has your workload diminished since you started using a PC or laptop? Is there really a payback for all the things you are asking it or your smart phone to do? How much time is wasted in frivolity or low-impact ideas, thinking and tasks?

How about AI, estrus synchronization and embryo transfer technology? Who should be using these and who should not? How much are we diminishing genetic diversity and what are the potential future problems and cost of that? Could genetic diversity be helpful in adapting our livestock to climate changes or to our management changes?

What about insecticides? Do we only kill the target organisms? No! How many beneficial ones do we kill? What have we done to the balance that nature tries to achieve? Do livestock still have the need to develop genetic resistance to the pests? Can livestock develop genetic resistance to pests? Which happens faster—do the pests develop resistance to the pesticides or do the manufacturers of pesticides develop new chemicals faster?

What about herbicides? Do we really need to kill every weed—especially in pastures? What about resistance issues? Are there other ways to reduce weed pressures—farming techniques, grazing methods? Do we know what they are and how to implement them? I have a good friend who is also a very good grazier. He recently told me he is becoming a very good weed farmer. He then pointed out that many of the weeds (I prefer to call them forbs) are eaten by his cattle. Many of the forbs have excellent feed values and are sometimes medicinal for cattle.

There are symposia, magazine articles and much talk about no-till farming and cover crops. What do we know about that? If we were to try it, what would we have to learn? What are the advantages, disadvantages and challenges? Does technology help us learn and implement better?

We hear more and more about various implementations of high-intensity, low-frequency grazing. How much do you really know about it? Have you looked for the successes or the failures in an attempt to support your preconceived idea? Do you understand the principles upon which time-controlled grazing is based?

Now for me, I am not ready to return to the 1950s' methods of haying; nor am I advocating that you or I throw away our computers and smart phones. I do not recommend the abandonment of AI or ET. I do not like poisons because they simplify the environment and reduce biodiversity. However, I continue to use them—just a lot less and with great caution. I know ranchers in nearly every area of the U.S. that have quit using wormers and other pesticides. They had to cull some animals that couldn't handle or resist the pests, but they now have good cattle health, performance and reproduction.

I think each of the mentioned technologies and many others have their place, but we should recognize that technologies are sold by salesmen; and, though well intended, they will almost always try to sell you more than you should buy or use.

I have a huge preference to move away from a high dependence on fossil fuel and equipment to a higher dependence on sunlight, rainfall, soil and our creative abilities to learn, observe and adopt and use nature as a model for more of what we do. For those reasons, I very much favor farming with the use of no-till and cover crops and grazing with what I like to call managed, time-controlled, adaptive grazing, which can take on a number of shapes depending on location and goals.

With these practices you learn to view nature as a partner instead of an enemy. Modern technology for fencing and stock water placement provides wonderful tools to facilitate good grazing. Other technologies for mapping, planning, planting, recording yields, etc. have made implementation of these techniques more practical and efficient. Then there is the technology of the mind which is simply a better understanding of the science surrounding soil health, range and crop production and animal health, production and well-being.

There is a world full of wonderful technology. We can't and shouldn't adopt it all. In fact, we must be careful to not be oversold. We must be economically selective and make sure that there is a good economic return for the technologies that we adopt. Some very good and useful technologies will not fit every operation.

WHAT IS YOUR IDEAL COW?

Source: Travis Meteer, University of Illinois Extension

One of the most popular questions I get asked is “What is your ideal cow?” This question always spurs quite the debate. Factors like breed, cow size, milking ability, and a long list of phenotypes are discussed. Comments like “We don’t want to go back to that kind of cattle” typically dominate the conversation. While I enjoy listening to the stance of different cattle breeders and cattle raisers on this topic, I tend to have a much more broad view of the question. My approach to answering the question simple and without much detail. Many times my response is met with a blank stare followed by a smile and a chuckle. So, when someone asks me, “What is your ideal cow?”, I answer with a short reply... one that makes money and doesn’t try to kill you.

The great thing about the cattle business is that depending on your market, different types of cattle can make money. A cattleman that raises and finishes his cattle to be sold on a grid may put more emphasis on cows that can raise calves that grow and grade. Breed may be an important factor in ideal cow criteria if it impacts the ability to qualify for branded beef programs.

A commercial producer that sells calves at the local auction market may desire a lower input cow that is middle of the road for frame and milk. This allows the ability to run more cows per acre and reap the benefits of more calves per acre, while still producing a product that the cattle buyer likes.

If you are a producer selling cattle into a niche market such as show cattle, then a bigger, stouter cow that has a demanding phenotype may be ideal, despite additional feed costs. Another niche market like grass-fed beef may require a totally different breed make-up and phenotype. This type of production environment may require small framed, lower milking cows that have been selected for grass/forage only diets.

The ideal cow is not the same for every farm. The reality is that the market will dictate ideals. If your market is different than your neighbor, your ideal cow will be too. An easy way to tell if you are selecting the right cows is cow age. If your cows continue to breed, calve, and raise a valuable calf year-after-year, you have the right kind of cow. Bottomline, the ideal cow is the one that can make you the most money year-after-year in your market... and won’t try to kill you.

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