

# OFF THE HOOF



University of Kentucky  
College of Agriculture,  
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Cooperative Extension Service

Cooperative Extension Service  
University of Kentucky

Beef IRM Team

***KENTUCKY BEEF CATTLE NEWSLETTER AUGUST 3, 2020***

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## Timely Tips

*Les Anderson, Extension Professor, University of Kentucky*

### Spring-Calving Cow Herd

- Fescue pastures don't generally produce much this month. If you are lucky and had some rain with this heat, you may have some forage going into the usually dry months. Keep rotating pastures to permit calves to continue gaining weight. Keep minerals available at all times.
- Bulls should have been removed from the cow herd by now! At the very latest, pull them by September 1. They should be pastured away from the cow herd with a good fence and allowed to regain lost weight and condition. It is a good time to evaluate physical condition, especially feet and legs. Bulls can be given medical attention and still have plenty of time to recover, e.g., corns, abscesses, split hooves, etc.
- Repair and improve corrals for fall working and weaning. Consider having an area to wean calves and retain ownership for postweaning feeding rather than selling “green”, lightweight calves. Plan to participate in CPH-45 feeder calf sales in your area.

### Fall-Calving Cow Herd

- Dry cows should be moved to better pastures as calving time approaches. Cows should start calving next month. Yearling heifers may begin “headstart” calving later this month. Plan to move cows to stockpiled fescue for the breeding season, so it will soon be time to apply nitrogen fertilizer.
- Prepare for the fall-calving season (usually September). Get ready, be sure you have the following:
  - record book

- ear tags for identification
- calf puller
- castration equipment

## **General**

- Provide shade and water! Cattle will need shade during the hot part of the day. Check water supply frequently – as much as 20 gallons may be required by high producing cows in very hot weather.
- Select pastures for stockpiling. Remove cattle and apply nitrogen when moisture conditions are favorable. Stockpiled fescue can be especially beneficial for fall-calving cows after calving. Reproductive rates are highest in fall-calving cows grazing stockpiled fescue.
- Avoid working cattle when temperatures are extremely high – especially those grazing high-endophyte fescue. If cattle must be handled, do so in the early morning.
- Do not give up on fly control in late summer, especially if fly numbers are greater than about 50 flies per animal. You can use a different “type” of spray or pour-on to kill any resistant flies at the end of fly season.
- Keep a good mineral mix available at all times. The UK Beef IRM Basic Cow-Calf mineral is a good choice.
- Cattle may also be more prone to eat poisonous plants during periods of extreme temperature stress. They will stay in “wooded” areas and browse on plants that they would not normally consume. Consider putting a roll of hay in these areas and/or spraying plants like purple (perilla) mint that can be toxic.
- Take soil samples to determine pasture fertility needs. Fertilize as needed, this fall.

## **I Bought a Farm.....Now What?**

*Les Anderson, Extension Professor, University of Kentucky*

- Episode 19 – Heifer Checks 6-23 – Anderson
- Episode 20 – Moving Heifers to Paddock 2 – Anderson
- Episode 21 – Heifer Check – Anderson
- Episode 22 – Spraying the Heifers For Flies – Anderson
- Episode 23 – Dr. Jimmy Talks Grass – Dr. Henning and Anderson

Lots of ground covered in these videos. Episode 23 with Dr. Henning is very good. To watch this docuseries, follow this link to the Department of Animal & Food Science YouTube page, subscribe, and click the notification bell. [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu4t18Zo2E\\_4\\_DBBELPjPMg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu4t18Zo2E_4_DBBELPjPMg)

## **New Video Series – Beef Minutes**

*Katie VanValin, Assistant Extension Professor, Beef Specialist, University of Kentucky*

Beef Minutes is a new video series that will be posted weekly (on Thursdays) to our social media sites. Each video will be 1-3 minutes long covering a variety of timely topics and/or tips, discussing an upcoming event or program, etc. We hope this video series will be helpful and will be a valuable tool. Beef Minutes will be published on our Facebook Page (facebook.com/KyBeefIRM) and on the Department of Animal & Food Science YouTube page ([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu4t18Zo2E\\_4\\_DBBELPjPMg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCu4t18Zo2E_4_DBBELPjPMg)).

In the first episode, Dr. VanValin discusses the impact of heat stress on cattle. This video was released last week.

## **Beef Bash 2020 Goes Virtual!**

*Dr. Darrh Bullock, Extension Professor, Dr. Katie VanValin, Assistant Extension Professor, and Ben Crites, IRM Coordinator, University of Kentucky*

In the last issue of *Off the Hoof*, Dr. Anderson had an article titled, “*Adapt and Change*” and discussed some challenges we are being faced with. Change is inevitable; we must adapt to continue to move forward. COVID-19 has certainly created change and how we go about our daily lives. It has changed how we do business, how we socialize, and how we learn. Restrictions are in place that limit social interactions and inhibit the in-person events we are used to. This certainly is the case for Extension programs. But we adapt. The Beef IRM team created weekly webinars (*Reaching out While Locked In*), attendance to those grew, and we continue to provide educational material and programs to producers in the state.

Due to current restrictions in place for COVID-19 and uncertainty of regulations to come, we have made the decision to change the format of this year’s Beef Bash event. Rather than totally cancel the program, we have decided to host Beef Bash as a virtual field day. Beef Bash is a favorite event of many cattle producers in the state and the largest event hosted annually by the UK Beef Extension team.

In this virtual field day of Beef Bash, Beef Extension Specialists and researchers from the University of Kentucky will share their current research projects and “how-to” demonstrations from the field. We will take a virtual tour of the University of Kentucky Research and Education Center in Princeton, KY. After each virtual session, each speaker will be available for a Q/A discussion.

Unfortunately, moving to a virtual field day, we will not be able to host the tradeshow this year. But we are fortunate to have several industry supporters that will join us in the Virtual Field Day and will share information about their products and services. We realize that a large part of Beef Bash is the socialization aspect with other beef producers, industry members, KCA Leadership, UK Administration, and UK Extension Specialists and researchers. We know these social interactions will be difficult to replicate as a Virtual Field Day. But we must adapt and change the way the program is offered and how the educational material is presented.

The program schedule for the Virtual Field Day is being finalized and will be released soon. Registration will be free of charge and more details on how to register for the program will be released in the near future. We hope you make plans to join us (from the comfort of your homes) for the first ever Beef Bash as a Virtual Field Day, on October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 at 9 AM EST.

For questions, please contact any of the 2020 Beef Bash committee members; Dr. Darrh Bullock ([dbullock@uky.edu](mailto:dbullock@uky.edu)), Dr. Katie VanValin ([katie.vanvalin@uky.edu](mailto:katie.vanvalin@uky.edu)) or Ben Crites ([benjamin.crites@uky.edu](mailto:benjamin.crites@uky.edu)).

## **Pasture-Finished Beef Production Online Workshops August 11-13, 7-9PM**

*Dr. Greg Halich, Associate Extension Professor, Livestock/Forages and Grain Crops Management, University of Kentucky*

There has been a quickly growing consumer demand for Pasture-finished beef and the corona virus has added to this demand. Opportunities to direct market a higher value product is appealing to many producers. However, getting adequate growth to reach a “finished” state and addressing market issues can be major challenges. The workshops are led by Greg Halich at the University of Kentucky, and Ed Rayburn at West Virginia University. Both are extension specialists and long-time producers of pasture-finished

beef. A producer panel on the last night will offer insights from the full-time producers' perspective. Participants will receive a pasture-finished beef production manual and copies of all presentation materials. Hard copies of materials will be mailed to participants in VA, WV, and KY, and if available to other states. Electronic versions of the materials will be made available to everyone.

No Cost but need to REGISTER at:  
<https://vaforages.org/event/pasture-finished-beef/>

Workshop Details:

Three concurrent sessions, 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Eastern Time each day:

August 11:

Pasture-finished beef production overview	Greg Halich, University of Kentucky
Forages and grazing management	John Fike, Virginia Tech
Marketing and processing	

August 12:

Cattle selection and winter management	Ed Rayburn, West Virginia University
Marketing and processing	Kenny Burdine and Greg Halich, Univ. KY

August 13:

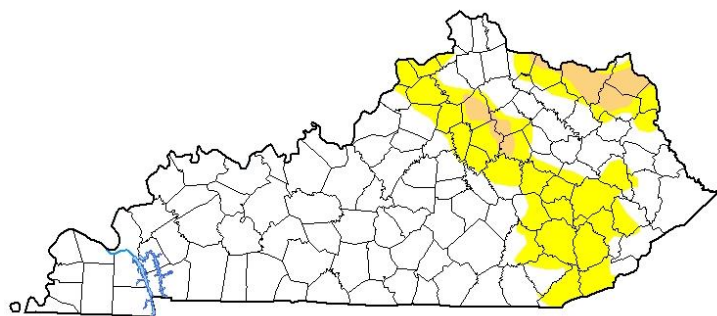
Producer panel	
Putting it all together – Systems Approach	Greg Halich and Ed Rayburn

**Give me a “D”, “R”, “O”**

*Jeff Lehmkuhler, PhD, PAS Associate Extension Professor, University of Kentucky*

We all know how it has been HOT! July has brought us several days of high temperatures and little to no rain. I have been watching the drought monitor page weekly to see when Kentucky would finally trip the model and show we entered drought conditions. We have arrived as you can see in the figure below from the drought monitor site. As I write this, rain has started to fall and I hope you get some of it.

Source: <https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/CurrentMap/StateDroughtMonitor.aspx?KY>



Early this spring when Dr. Anderson started his video series “I bought a farm now what?”, I cautioned him on his stocking rate. The plan was to try to keep the heifers into around October and see what the market conditions were like. If they were soft, the heifers would be carried and bred to market as bred heifers. Considering the goals, having grazed stockers on these soil types with Dr. Halich, I knew how quickly the soil moisture

can get depleted, so I suggested to go on the lighter end and not push the stocking rate. In my opinion, the worst thing that can happen in a stocker system is being forced to market cattle due to pasture shortage. It is better to control your marketing window than be forced to market due to a grass shortage. We can't always control the weather; we can control our stocking rates.

I appreciate the view that it is hard to see grass getting mature and even you may not like your pastures looking “shaggy” or ugly with tall forage. However, think of it as summer stockpiling. The standing forage will be a standing reserve when it gets hot and dry. This forage reserve just may get you through that time you need for precipitation to fall and forages to grow.

Don't wait too long though before offering supplemental forage or feed. Grazing them into the ground will slow the regrowth following rain and potentially even kill some of the plants. Additionally, heat stress will reduce grazing activity and combined with short pastures, decrease dry matter intake limiting performance. Providing a round bale of hay will allow cattle the opportunity to increase dry matter intake. Consider hay is 10-14% water versus pasture that may be 75-80%. For each bite taken, they will get more dry matter consumed with hay than pasture. When heat stress is reducing grazing time, providing some hay will fill the intake gap. Grain and coproduct supplements can also be an effective means of filling this dry matter intake gap while increasing the nutritional plane, especially for lactating and growing cattle, allowing cattle to maintain performance.

In summary, I encourage to go watch the latest video of “I bought a farm, now what?” as there are some great forage insights from Dr. Henning. Lastly, don't set your stocking rates for June grass, set them for late July/August when our cool-season forages go dormant or growth slows dramatically due to the heat and low soil moisture content. Hoping you get rain and cooler temps soon.

## **Enroll Now for the PVAP-PRECONDITION Program**

*Kevin Laurent, Beef Extension Specialist, University of Kentucky*

The Post Weaning Valued Added Program - Precondition (**PVAP-PRECONDITION**) is in its second year. This program is being offered through support of a grant from the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund and is administered by the University of Kentucky and the Kentucky Beef Network. There are adequate funds available this year for approximately 20 producers. This program is aimed at Kentucky cow-calf producers who have never marketed weaned calves. The objective of **PVAP-PRECONDITION** is to encourage cow-calf producers to retain ownership and capture added value from their investment in beef cattle genetics, facilities, and improved management through diversified marketing strategies.

Following is a checklist of procedures and expectations for producers interested in participating in **PVAP-PRECONDITION**:

### **Eligibility**

- Producers who have never weaned and preconditioned calves on the farm.
- Home raised weaned calves retained on the farm for 45-120 days prior to marketing.

### **Procedures**

- A site visit by the UK ANR Agent or KBN Facilitator and UK Specialist to inspect facilities to determine the suitability of a weaning pen, on farm feed storage, etc. will be conducted. This visit will include planning the weaning process and designing a proper feeding program.
- Work, weigh and wean the calves using CPH-45 or similar approved protocol. Begin the feeding program. Calves will be graded and valued at this time using current KDA market information.
- Market calves at a recognized preconditioned sale or outlet such as CPH-45, Red Tag, Yellow Tag, Farmers' Elite, etc.
- Complete required paperwork detailing beginning weights, feed and vet costs, and sales receipts. Producers must submit completed paperwork to receive a PVAP-incentive payment.
- Payment will be \$30/head (maximum \$1,000) for producers completing the program.
- Producers will receive a closeout report detailing the costs and returns of the project.

## How to enroll

- Contact your local county ANR Agent or KBN Facilitator to obtain an enrollment form.
- Upon returning the enrollment form, a farm visit will be scheduled.

## Traceability

*Dr. Michelle Arnold, UK Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory*

In September 2019, the article, “Goodbye Metal Tags, Hello RFID” appeared in the monthly edition of Off the Hoof. Shortly afterwards, on Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>, USDA’s Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announced it had suspended its plan to phase-in the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) electronic ID tags for cattle and bison. APHIS said in a statement the policy shift was in response to executive orders that highlighted the need for transparency and communication of issues “before placing any new requirements on American farmers and ranchers.”

Although 2019 was not very long ago, it seems like decades amid a pandemic. With the public’s heightened awareness of health issues such as rapid virus transmission and “contact tracing” to locate individuals possibly exposed to Covid-19, there is a new appreciation among beef producers for what traceability is and how it could benefit the cattle industry.

APHIS is currently seeking public comments on a proposal to make RFID the only official ear tag for use when moving cattle interstate, the first step in making lifetime cattle traceability a reality. The following is the APHIS announcement:

“The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is seeking public comment on a proposal where APHIS would only approve Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) as the official ear-tag for use in interstate movement of cattle that are required to be identified by the traceability regulations.

An official ear-tag is defined as an identification tag approved by APHIS that bears an official identification number for individual animals. Regulations allow APHIS to approve tags that can be used as official identification, and both metal and RFID tags are current options.

A transition to RFID tags would support APHIS’ ongoing efforts to increase animal disease traceability by more accurately and rapidly allowing animal health officials to know where affected and at-risk animals are located. While this would not prevent disease outbreaks, it would allow animal health officials to more quickly contain outbreaks early before they can do substantial damage to the U.S. cattle industry.

Public comments will be accepted through October 5, 2020 at the following site: <https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2020-14463>. After reviewing all comments, APHIS will publish a follow up Federal Register notice. This notice will respond to any such comments, announce the decision whether to only approve RFID tags as the only official identification devices for cattle, and, if so, provide the timeline for such a transition.”

When you click on the link provided above to the federal register, there is a summary of the proposal and why RFID is important to increase the speed and accuracy of tracing disease movement, whether it is a fast-moving virus such as Foot and Mouth or a slow, progressive disease such as bovine tuberculosis. After this explanation, APHIS addresses the need to establish a timeline for these changes to take place. From the Federal Register:



“We recognize that, in addition to whether to transition to RFID identification devices, the timeline for such a transition is also important. Accordingly, we also request specific public comment on the following timeline, if, based on the comments received, USDA were to engage in such a transition:

- Beginning January 1, 2022, USDA would no longer approve vendors to use the official USDA shield in production of metal ear tags or other ear tags that do not have RFID components.
- On January 1, 2023, RFID tags would become the only identification devices approved as an official ear tag for cattle and bison pursuant to § 86.4(a)(1)(i).
- For cattle and bison that have official USDA metal clip tags in place before January 1, 2023, APHIS would recognize the metal tag as an official identification device for the life of the animal.”

The RFID tag technology can be either low (LF) or ultrahigh frequency (UHF) - whichever the State, producer or industry sector prefers. Tags must be approved by USDA and meet standards for quality and performance, be tamper proof, contain a unique ID, and display the U.S. official ear tag shield (Figure 3). RFID identification devices using UHF technology appear to be faster at reading tags and can perform at longer distances which will be necessary to read official ID numbers at the speed of commerce. In situations where cattle are handled in chutes or in close confinement, UHF has no advantage over LF. The question of which frequency to use will become more important as the industry moves toward electronic ID implementation since the equipment to read the tags differs depending on the frequency.

### **Which cattle are required to have “official identification” when moving interstate?**

As a reminder, animals that move interstate **and** fall into specific categories need official, individual ear tags. If this proposal is approved, beginning January 1, 2023, the ear tags will have to be RFID ear tags. **The requirement for individual identification does not include feeder cattle,** nor any cattle or bison moving directly to slaughter.

Beef Cattle (and Bison) that currently require official ID:

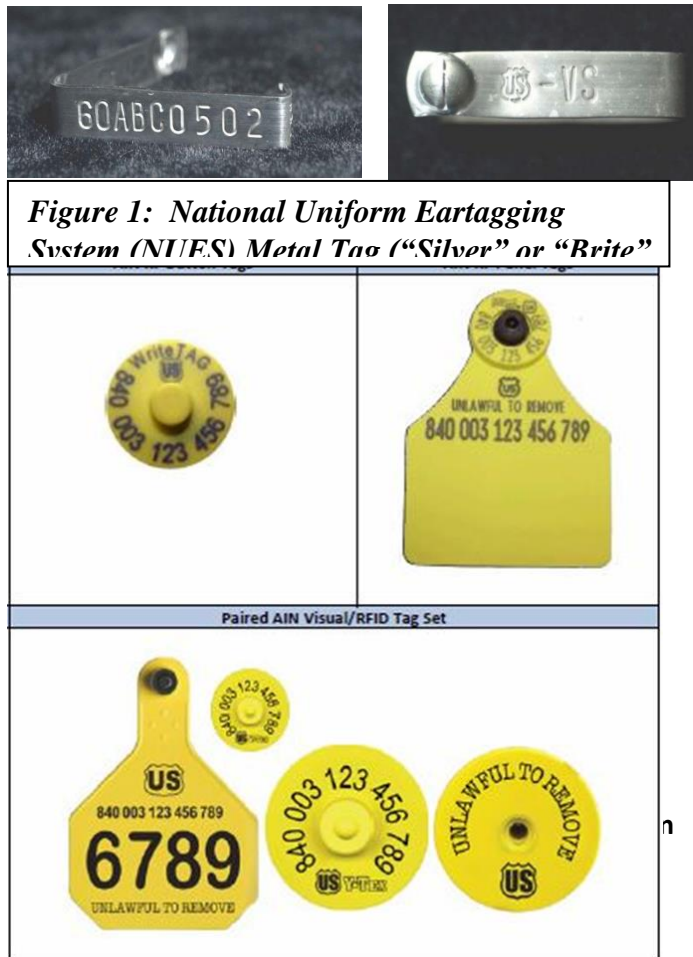
- All sexually intact beef cattle and bison 18 months of age or over
- Cattle and bison of any age used for rodeo or recreational events
- Cattle and bison of any age used for shows or exhibitions.

Dairy Cattle that currently require official ID: **All female dairy cattle of any age and all dairy males born after March 11, 2013;** Specifically, dairy cattle are defined as all cattle, regardless of age or sex or current use, that are of a breed(s) used to produce milk or other dairy products for human consumption, including, but not limited to, Ayrshire, Brown Swiss, Holstein, Jersey, Guernsey, Milking Shorthorn, and Red and Whites.



Picture of one of our better mature cows at the C. Oren Little Research facility in Woodford County KY. This dam combines moderate frame and excellent feet and legs into a superior phenotypic package. Our goal is a 1200 to 1350-pound mature females, structurally sound and weaning a calf at least 45% of her body weight

## What types of ear tags are now considered “official identification”?



**Figure 1: National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) Metal Tag (“Silver” or “Brite”)**

Official, individual tags have historically been the metal NUES tags (Figure 1), commonly referred to as “silver” or “brite” tags, used for disease testing, interstate movement, and change of ownership by veterinarians and also distributed to producers through State and Tribal authorities. Another acceptable form of official identification is the Brucellosis Vaccination metal tag, an orange metal tag that indicates the animal was calfhood vaccinated for Brucellosis (Bangs Disease). The orange Brucellosis metal tags are only available to federally accredited veterinarians. If the proposal is passed, as of January 1, 2023 RFID ear tags (Figure 2) will be required for beef and dairy cattle and bison moving interstate that are included in the specific categories of cattle required to have individual identification. For animals previously tagged with official metal ear tags, APHIS would recognize the metal tag as an official identification device for the life of the animal. Buyer beware: Tags containing numbers with the prefix “USA” or a numeric manufacturer code are not considered official identification but these tags are still available for purchase and, in many cases, cannot be returned or exchanged for the correct tags. APHIS only recognizes tags beginning with numeric country

codes (“840” for the United States) as official. Bear in mind that there are 840 visual panel tags available that do not contain RFID technology that will not be accepted after 1/1/2023.

## What must be on an official ear tag?

USDA Official Ear tags (Figure 3) are designed for one-time use (tamper evident) and imprinted with:

- A unique animal identification number or “AIN” which is a 15-digit number starting with 840
- Official Ear tag Shield
- The words “Unlawful to Remove”
- Manufacturer’s Logo or Trademark (printed or impression of)
- Tags with RFID technology (referred to as AIN RF tags) must have all 15 digits of the AIN printed on the tag pieces that contain the transponder. The Official Ear tag Shield and text, “Unlawful to Remove” must be printed on the other piece.
- *AIN RF tags, when applied, are to be attached to the animal’s left ear according to the manufacturer’s instructions.*



**Figure 3: Example of an Official Tag**



In summary, take the time to comment in the Federal Register if you feel strongly about the need for RFID tags to become the only official tag recognized by APHIS. When traceability issues are discussed, there are always questions that arise such as “who will pay for the new tags” and “how will the information be managed” that have not been answered yet. However, if the proposal is passed, these questions will be the next hurdle to address on the long road to traceability.

**Additional Information:**

Animal Disease Traceability-General Standards (July 2019-Version 2.8):

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/adt-standards.pdf>

Animal Disease Traceability USDA Website:

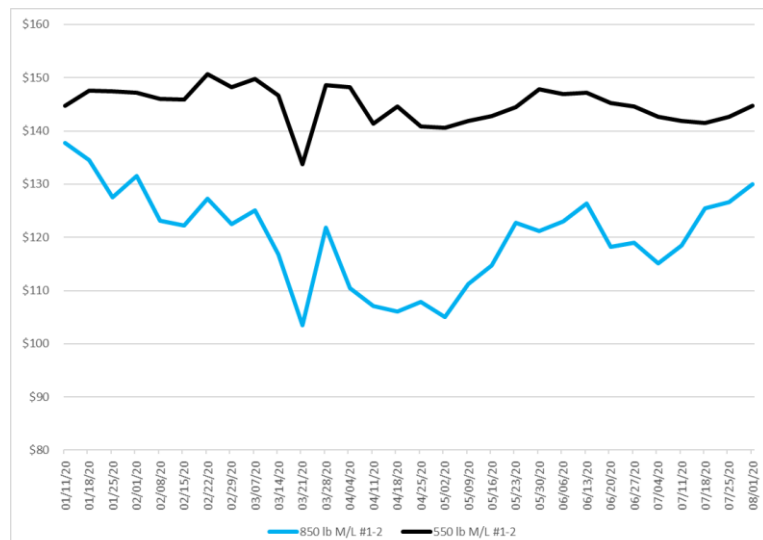
[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA\\_Traceability](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/SA_Traceability)

## Kentucky Beef Cattle Market Update

*Dr. Kenny Burdine, Livestock Marketing Specialist, University of Kentucky*

Fed cattle markets have continued to slowly and steadily increase from the first week of July. It’s not been a major increase, as the 5-area weighted average price is only up about \$3-5 per cwt from that time. But, the more that early July price looks like a seasonal low, the more confident I will be about things moving forward. From my Kentucky feeder cattle perspective, I’m most encouraged by the deferred CME© live cattle futures contracts, which are trading at quite a premium over August. The February contract, which is likely the relevant contract for heavy feeders moving through markets now, is trading \$11 higher than August.

**Figure 1: Feeder Steer Prices since the First Week of January, Kentucky Average \$9 (per cwt)**



Source: USDA-AMS, Livestock Marketing Information Center, and Author Calculations

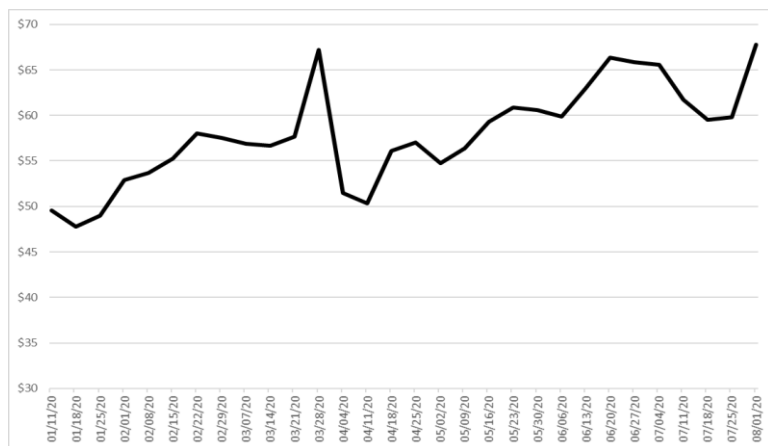
Federally inspected cattle slaughter continues to be very close to 2019 levels, running about 1% below over the last three weeks. Slaughter weights have been running around 4% above year-ago and are continuing to drive increases in beef production. But, the only cure for this problem is to keep harvesting cattle and get caught up. Boxed beef prices are now running about 5% below last year, but the cow beef cutout is still running above 2019. This is just another sign that we remain in a ground beef-oriented market.

CME© feeder cattle futures have been relatively stable since mid-July, trading the low-mid \$140’s across all contracts. That price level on the board points to pretty solid returns for summer stocker operators who have been grazing calves since spring. Heavy feeders have continued to improve throughout July and are up almost \$15 per cwt from the

first week of the month. Even calf prices, which had been steadily declining since May have put up a small rally the second half of the month (see figure 1.)

I mentioned earlier that cow beef cutout values continue to suggest that we are in a ground beef-oriented market. But cull cow prices had fallen off slightly in mid-July with average dressing 80-85% boning cows dipping below \$60 per cwt for two straight weeks. For clarity, that was still a strong July cull cow market historically, but off from what we had been seeing. However, cull cow prices stormed back this week to put in their highest weekly price of the year, even surpassing their late March high (see figure 2). While I am

**Figure 2: 80-85% Boning Cow Prices since the First Week of January Kentucky Average (\$ per cwt)**



*Source: USDA-AMS, Livestock Marketing Information Center, and Author Calculations*

showing the average dressing boning cows below, there were a lot of cows that sold in the \$70's and even the \$80's, and some very strong bull

prices at auctions this week.

Rains are always spotty in the summer, but I don't ever recall differences like this across the state. I am writing this on July 31st, the morning after our first significant rain here in several weeks. It was nothing short of a blessing, but I have heard from a lot of individuals that have had way too much rain at times over the last month. I'm just hoping the combination of a pretty widespread late July rain and some cooler temperature ahead will translate into some much-needed pasture growth during the month of August.