

BRAD Z RANCH

Optimal Beef Genetics

Dear Friends,

This is that time of year that calls us to reflect on the many blessings we have been given over the past months and years. Paramount among our blessings are the many cattlemen and women who have been our loyal customers. I would like to acknowledge and thank my family and especially Dan and Erin Hanrahan for coming into our business as growing partners.

Whether we look at constructing a building or engineering the genetics of a cow herd, we select materials and genetics that will withstand daily and long term challenges.

So too our founding fathers chose sound principles to safeguard individual liberties and keep in check the powers delegated to government-principles embodied in our constitution designed as checks and balances for our executive, legislative, and judicial branches.

While our elected representatives swear to uphold these constitutional mandates, very few do so and thus the ever expanding growth of government.

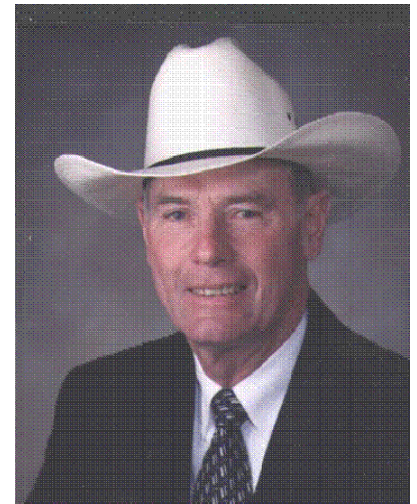
Money (taxes) is power-power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

My wish for all this Christmas is that we elect people who espouse and practice constitutional principles. While this is Santa Clause time, the politicians play Santa with your dollars while legislating away our freedom and lending us to a socialistic totalitarian government.

“Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom.” This vigilance calls on us to research for the truth on issues and what long term effect will be placed on our children and grandchildren. Can we leave them with opportunities as great or greater than we have enjoyed? That is the challenge for 2010 and beyond.

Merry Christmas and a New Year of unprecedented blessings!

Jim Bradford



Mark Your Calendars!

**Our 2010 Bull Sale
is on
Saturday, March 6th.**

**Check out our
website for updated
information,
including the 2010
bull sale sheets!**

www.bradzranch.com

Biggest Bang For Your Buck

For years many seedstock producers have been talking about matching your genetics to your environment. While this is certainly sage advice, it doesn't take into account the third leg of the stool our operations sit on: management.

Some of you may know that I worked for a year and a half at a grain elevator in Winterset. There, like here, I got the chance to meet

some fantastic individuals. On three different occasions I had feed customers of the elevator tell me, "You know you've really got a good job. You get to go around and see how everybody else does it." They were right. It was a great job, but there was no reason why I needed to be the only one who got a chance to see how everyone else does it.

At the Brad Z we are just like you, always looking for ways to get a bigger bang for our buck. As your seedstock producer perhaps we can be well served not only by providing great genetics, but also by passing on rewards ourselves and/or other fellow producers have found in changing areas of their management practices. To that end in this newsletter will highlight just a couple of things we found in 2009.

Interseeding Legumes

Legumes, especially red clover, have been touted as a way to reduce our input costs when it comes to fertilizer. Most commonly the payoff is shown by figuring the establishment cost of a legume over its lifespan and comparing it to current fertilizer prices. A lot of articles I've read seem to show establishing the legume is worth the cost on this basis alone, but saving your fertilizer cost may not be the only benefit.

Bruce Anderson, with the University of Nebraska Extension, was quoted on Beef magazine's website this spring discussing a five year trial that was done in Eastern

Nebraska. In the trial stocker gains were recorded for calves grazing either bromegrass pasture fertilized with 50 lbs of nitrogen or bromegrass pasture interseeded with legumes. Over the five years of the trial they noted a .4 lbs increase in average daily gain for the calves grazing the interseeded pasture over those grazing the fertilized one.

Additional research has shown interseeded legumes also increase milk production and conception rates, especially if they are seeded in a stand of endophyte infected fescue. Lowering your fertilizer

cost and boosting cow, calf and reproductive performances could potentially generate a lot of return for the dollars you spend in establishing a legume like red clover. If you choose to establish a legume, frost seeding in February or March is a very cost effective way of doing so.

Most medium red clover has around a 3 year lifespan so interseeding your pasture ground in thirds could serve to spread your costs and risks out and make things more manageable from a labor standpoint.

Fence-line Weaning

Last fall Oklahoma State University Extension cattle specialist Greg Selk wrote about a California study looking at the differences between fence-line weaned calves and traditionally weaned calves. The study found the fence-line weaned calves had a 23 pound advantage over their traditionally weaned counterparts. The calves went on to maintain this advantage in the weeks and months to come. Through day three the fence-line weaned calves were observed eating and resting more, but little difference was observed from day four on. After day seven the groups were comingled and managed together.

When I first read about fence-line weaning I was farming at my father's in Cumming, Ia. My initial

hesitation to use it was due in large part to envisioning cows and calves in a grass pasture separated by a single electric fence wire. By nature I tend to worry, and 80 cows on one side of a poly wire and 80 calves on the other added up to give me 161 things to worry about (including the wire of course). However, a follow up study showed similar results by weaning the calves in a dry lot with the cows having access to pasture and direct fence contact with the weaned calves. It is this model we've used on my father's farm for the last two years, and we've been tickled with the results thus far.

There the calves are weaned in about a half acre trap attached to the corral. We try the best we can to

let the trap grow up in grass from mid summer on. The fence is lined with cattle panels and to date we haven't had an issue with a calf getting out or a cow getting in. There is no water system there, but hauling 425 gallons a day easily keeps up with 80 calves.

We still wean the first calf heifers traditionally due to how their pasture is set up. This year we compared the traditionally weaned calves out of the first calf heifers with the fence-line weaned calves out of the dams one year older. Two weeks after weaning the fence-line weaned calves had gained an extra 27 pounds per head. If your facilities and time allow, this could be a great way to put extra pounds on your calves with minimal input.

2009 Calf Crop

We are very happy with the 2009 calf crop, and in how they made it through a cold, wet October. During the first part of November we sorted through 210 bulls and settled on 80 sale candidates. These 80 candidates represent the top 40% of our bull calf crop.

We took our initial test weight on these bulls the 10th of November. As always, they are being fed here on the farm. While we know it has been a long fall for all of you, we invite each and every one of you to stop in and go through the bulls at your leisure. If

possible please call ahead, and we will have current information ready for you on arrival. Our 2010 sale will be on Saturday, March 6th, and our next newsletter will carry the individual bulls and their figures.



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The Calf Path

Recently Bill Eaton of Clear Dawn Farms dispersed his Angus herd. In his catalog was this poem:

One day through a primeval wood
A calf walked home as good
calves should
But made a trail all bent askew
A crooked path as all calves do...
The trail was taken up next day
By a lone dog that passed that
way;
And then a wise bellwether sheep
Pursued the trail o'er hill and
glade,
Through those old woods a path
was made.
An many men wound in and out,
And dodged and turned and bent
about,
And uttered words of righteous
wrath

Because "twas such a crooked
path..."
The forest path became a lane
That bent and turned and turned
again;
This crooked lane became a road,
Where many a poor horse with his
load
Toiled on beneath the burning sun,
And traveled some three miles in
one....
The years passed on in swiftness
fleet,
The road became a village street;
And thus, before men were aware,
A city's crowded thoroughfare...
Each day a hundred thousand rout
Followed this zigzag calf about
And o'er his crooked journey went
The traffic of a continent.
A hundred thousand men were
lead
By one calf near three centuries

dead.
They followed still his crooked
way
And lost one hundred years by
day;
For thus such reverence is lent
To well established precedent.
...For men are prone to go it blind
Along the calf path of the mind,
And work away from sun to sun
To do what other men have done.
They follow in the beaten track,
And out and in and forth and
back,
And still their devious course pur-
sue,
To keep the path a sacred groove
Along which all their lives they
move;
But how the wise old woods-gods
laugh
Who saw the first primeval calf.

Sam Walter Foss