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Membership

Belonging to the Maine Beef Producers Association is a good thing for anyone raising beef. Joining the Maine Beef Producers Association will allow you to participate in Association activities and help develop a stronger voice for Maine's beef industry. As the Governor pushes for consolidation of the Natural Resources Departments and looks for ever bigger budget cuts, numbers do make a difference in Augusta.

Included with the \$35 membership fee is a subscription to *New England Country Folks*, a weekly agricultural magazine. The Association is in the process of updating its website and may include a membership directory on the site. The enclosed membership envelope has a place to indicate if you wish to be included in that directory or in a print version should one be printed. Several additional member benefits/services are also being explored and information on these will be made available once they are in place.

Fall Feeder Calf Sale Results



Pictured are two of the calves sold at the Fall Feeder Calf Sale, a Maine Beef Producers Association sponsored event held at Dick Brown's in Richmond. All cattle entered in this sale had to meet a pre-conditioning health and weaning protocol.

Eighteen beef owners from around the state consigned 164 animals, ranging in weight from 379 to 1406 pounds. In all, 103,017 pounds of beef were sold for \$96,885.57 with an average price per pound of \$0.94. The highest selling lot was consigned by the Guimonds of Fort Kent and sold for \$1.31/lb.

Starting Young

Katherine Newcomb, and her 11 year old brother Samuel, were the youngest buyers at the Fall Feeder

Calf Sale. By day's end the two had added six calves to the four they already own. Four of the calves purchased were black while the other two were Herefords.



Katherine & Samuel Newcomb

Katherine is especially grateful to Jerry Chadwick and Lew Randall, the consigners of the animals she purchased, for giving her the opportunity to expand her herd.

2008 Calves 4 Kids Recipients



Tyler, Carrie & Rhoni-Sue
2008 Calves 4 Kids Recipients

The Maine Beef Producers Association is pleased to announce that 3 Maine youth have received heifer calves through the Calves 4 Kids Program. Carrie Butterfield, 18, of Chesterville received a Hereford heifer, donated by Paul & Wendy Gallagher of Gray.

Rhoni-Sue Clark, 16, of Wilton was the recipient of a Simmental heifer donated by McGee Farm of Richmond.

An Angus heifer, donated by Pineland Farms of New Gloucester, was presented to Tyler Stevenson, 14, of Thorndike.

Youth wishing to be considered for the Calves 4 Kids Program must complete an application and have suitable facilities. In addition, the youth agrees to show the calf at the New England Livestock Expo Youth Show and one other recognized show. At the appropriate time, the heifer will be bred to a registered bull. The

first heifer calf born will be donated back to the program.

Anyone wishing to apply for 2009 should contact Pam Harnden, 645-2568, or harnnp@exploremaine.com, or Dick Brown, 737-8650.

Thank You

A sincere thank you is expressed to Paul & Wendy Gallagher of Gray, McGee Farms of Richmond and Pineland Farms of New Gloucester for donating calves to the recipients of the 2008 Calves 4 Kids Program. To show its appreciation, the Board of Directors voted to provide each with a year's membership to the Maine Beef Producers Association.

Agricultural Trade Show

The Maine Beef Producers Association is pleased to announce the educational component for the Agricultural Trade Show on Wednesday, January 14th. At 1pm there will be a presentation on various computer programs that are available to help beef producers make management decisions. At 2 pm there will be a discussion focusing on basic feed, shelter and health care needs. This is designed for anyone interested in raising one or two beef animals for their own consumption as well as for new producers with little or no beef knowledge.

The Annual Meeting of the Association and the regularly scheduled Board Meeting will also be held beginning at 3 pm. In addition, the Association will have a booth on the Trade Show Floor to help raise awareness about programs, benefits, and services available with membership.

National Belted Galloway Sale

Fryeburg Fairgrounds will once again be the site for the 2009 National Belted Galloway Sale and Youth Expo, which will be held April 24th & 25th, 2009. For further information, contact Brud McCabe, 802-748-5107.

NELE 2009

The dates and place for the North East Livestock Expo 2009 have been set. Windsor Fairgrounds will host the Expo May 15, 16 and 17. Kim Mackay is chair of the Planning Committee and can be contacted by phone at 207-453-7890 or by e-mail: cnkangus@roadrunner.com.

Beef Fundamentals

The October issue of "Farming: The Journal of Northeast Agriculture" had an article on cow-calf operations that is timely given the high price of feed, fertilizer and fuel. Even though fuel prices have dropped for the moment, they may rise again in the coming months. Reviewing your management practices and the resources available will help increase profitability in the long run.

Soil samples can help reduce fertilizer costs for both pastures and forage land. Applying the needed amount of only those nutrients lacking, at the appropriate time, can also have an impact on feed quality. Use perennial grasses and over seed with clover or other legumes to reduce nitrogen needs. Review pasture plans and consider rotation options to keep quality high throughout the season.

Assess the condition of your herd. Cows, especially young ones, with a condition score of 5 or less will be harder to breed back, provide less milk, require additional feed and may have more health problems. Check the condition of mouths, feet and udders to ensure the cow is capable of getting her calf to market. Feed supplements, usually energy, may also be needed to get some cows through the winter in good condition.

It is estimated that feed costs will exceed \$400 next year, so pregnancy checking is crucial. It just isn't profitable to winter a cow that isn't carrying a calf. Vaccinate for respiratory complex and the seven strains of Leptospirosis.

A bit of pre-planning now can positively affect the sale price of your calves. Pre-conditioning practices have shown to reduce stress to the calf, thus increasing bidder price and overall profitability. Wean calves before the date specified, vaccinate them with the

specified vaccines and castrate bull calves. Recheck calves castrated with rubber bands as they can fall off or not be effective. Identify all calves and be able to verify parentage.

Now is also a good time to look ahead. Consider the genetics of the bulls being used since this can have a huge impact on the resulting calves. Using bulls with little or no genetic information available can be a costly mistake. Plan now on how you can shorten the calving window in future crops since this will simplify management and result in a more uniform calf crop. Spending a bit of time now can help your bottom line.

Workshop Pointers

I recently attended workshops on **Customer Service and Marketing** that brought out some good advice that can be relevant to beef producers or anyone in agriculture. Customer satisfaction is a combination of both a quality product and the way it is delivered. It takes much more time and expense to attract new customers than to keep present ones. Word of mouth is still your best form of advertising (or the worst if you leave a negative impression on your customer). Find out what your customers want/need rather than trying to sell them what you think they need. Your attitude and nonverbal communication can have a significant impact on customer response.

Marketing boils down to differentiation and creativity. How is your product different from others and how can you encourage customers to buy yours rather than similar products? Things that might not seem to relate to your business can impact your sales. Try to match what your customers want with what you can offer. Always know who your core customers are and keep them happy as 80% of your revenue will come from 20% of your customers. Remember that the female in the family still does most of the decision making. Who are your competitors, what are your competitive advantages and how can you piggyback on other events/businesses around you.

Johne's Disease



Cow with "Bottlejaw",
a symptom of Johne's Disease

- Research shows that, today, one out of 10 animals moving through livestock auction facilities has Johne's disease.
- Lost productivity due to Johne's disease is estimated to cost the U.S. dairy industry \$200 million to \$250 million annually.
- National Animal Health Monitoring Systems (NAHMS) study, Dairy 2007, shows that 68.1 percent of U.S. dairy operations are infected with *Mycobacterium avium* paratuberculosis (MAP), the bacteria known to cause Johne's disease. Dairy 2007 also suggests that at least one out of every four U.S. dairy operations may have a relatively high percentage of Johne's-infected cows in their herds.
- Although most U.S. beef herds are not infected with Johne's disease, it is estimated that eight out of 100 U.S. herds may be infected with this devastating disease.

The USDA through its veterinary division developed a voluntary testing and control program for Johne's disease, and offered it to producers since 2000. All states had the opportunity to get funding through Cooperative Agreements to implement this program, and Maine has been able to offer Johne's testing and veterinary reimbursement at very reasonable to no cost since then, although the funding level and therefore program support has fluctuated year to year. In the current year we received \$20,000 in Federal Cooperative Agreement funds, and have offered testing on a first-come basis to all dairy and beef producers. To date in 2007 we have tested animals for Johne's on 39 dairy farms, 8 beef operations, 2 caprine dairies and one milking sheep flock, and we have bought ELISA test kits, vacutainers, needles and paid veterinarians who took samples and participated in producer education about Johne's disease. At this moment **we have roughly \$7,000 remaining**, and the time period for using those funds has been extended till March. I anticipate being able

to provide testing for the 10 herds that are on my waiting list, and several more. If you are interested, please do e mail me or call and let me know.

After March we do not anticipate having any more Federal Cooperative Agreement funding for Johne's testing in the federal budget. Because this program was funded entirely with federal funds, that means there will not be reduced or free testing available. However, there are many options for testing available in the marketplace and I will be glad to consult with you and figure out the best test to match your goals.

Beth McEvoy DVM

Assistant Maine State Veterinarian

Maine Department of Agriculture

Division of Animal Health and Industry

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CLEANEAST Program

Maine's Department of Agriculture recently announced that there are some funds available for Maine producers through the CLEAN EAST Program. This **free program** can provide environmental assessments, revision or updates to current Nutrient Management Plans (NMP), or the development of new NMPs. Impaired watersheds are given top priority. For more information, contact Mark Hedrich, 207-287-7608 or mark.hedrich@maine.gov. You may also go to the program's website at <http://livestock.rti.org>.

Executive Director's Thoughts

Even though the economic picture is uncertain, there are still many positives for Maine beef production. Fuel prices have dropped considerably, helping to reduce expenses. The results of the Fall Feeder Calf Sale saw prices similar to last year's and in most instances higher than for other sales in the Northeast. Consumer demand for fresh, local products is still high and more people are raising their own meat.

According to 2007 Ag Census data, Maine leads New England in number of farms, acres of farmland and cash receipts. There were 1600 farms raising cattle &/or calves in Maine with 12,000 head identified as beef cows that had calved at least once and 3500 beef

replacement heifers weighing more than 500 pounds. There were 2000 heifers not designated for replacement stock, 3000 steers and 1500 bulls weighing over 500 pounds. Maine also had 16,500 calves weighing less than 500 pounds. Only the first two categories differentiated between beef or dairy. All categories, with the exception of steers, showed more numbers than the previous year.

Many Maine communities are beginning to recognize the importance of agriculture and are looking at agriculture as a means of bringing in new or expanded economic development opportunities. Rumford has established the River Valley Agriculture Commission and views agriculture as a key economic and community development strategy. They are working to expand or attract agricultural businesses, build necessary processing &/or value added infrastructure, and address tax and zoning issues favorable to farms and rural community viability. The Oxford Hills Chamber of Commerce Magazine featured locally grown & prepared food on the cover of its 2008/9 edition. One of the lead stories was titled: "Local Food Local Farms, a revolution with flavor" followed by an article about 10 local food providers in "Farms to Kitchens". Franklin County has recently formed an Agricultural Task Force and is looking at ways to strengthen agriculture and help lessen or remove some of the roadblocks producers face. A number of beef producers serve on that committee, as do I. Other communities have also held meetings to address agricultural issues this year. Find out if similar meetings are taking place in your area. Get involved or start the process. It could result in huge differences for your farm.

Local agriculture is also becoming more important from a national standpoint. Consumers increasingly want to know where their food comes from. They also recognize the costs and energy consumption involved with trucking food across the country or from around the world. It will be interesting to see if any of these issues are addressed by the new Administration.

I enjoyed meeting some of you at the Beef Conference and look forward to putting more names and faces together at the Trade Show. I welcome your

comments, criticisms or suggestions and please don't hesitate to contact me if you have questions or need assistance. If I don't have the answer, I will find someone who does.

Pamela Harnden, Executive Director
Maine Beef Producers Association
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Classified Ads

MBPA's Board of Directors recently voted to offer free classified ads in the newsletter for members of the Association. Ads of up to 30 words will be accepted. Ads that are longer or have graphics can't be accepted at this time, although paid ads are being explored. Newsletters will be sent out 2-4 times each year. If interested, e-mail harnnp@exploremaine.com to be added to the notification list for the next newsletter.

FOR SALE

Reg. Polled Hereford bred cows & heifers. Due in the spring to FELTONS LEGEND, LAGRAND RELOAD, & BOYD FIRST CLASS. Contact MINI ACRES, Ed & Sharon Carter Richmond, ME
207-737-2872
Miniacres1@verizon.net

ALDERMERE FARM- offering quality Belted Galloway breed stock, semen, beef and hay. Contact us at (207)236-2739 or Aldermere@mcht.org for more information.

3 First calf Holstein/Jersey cross heifers. Pasture bred to Angus bull. Due end of February 2009. Weigh 1000 to 1100 each. Two years old. \$1200 each. Firm. Contact Norris Smith, Jay. (207) 897-4969 or email: zeke31@verizon.net

Pasture-Raised Beef

High costs for fuel, fertilizer and feeds may persuade some beef producers to shift to pasture-raised beef while those already raising beef on pasture may need to reassess costs. An article in the December "Farming" magazine points out that there are some important

points to consider in either scenario. For those utilizing grain-feeding, the highest single cost is corn. Land is the highest cost for pasture-raised beef, but there are several secondary costs to consider as well. Equipment, winter feed and fencing have significant impacts on profitability. Finding ways to produce more product per acre of land, marketing animals before the second winter and keeping the number of tractors to a minimum can help improve the profit margin.

Many producers in the Northeast currently use visual fat thickness, animal weight and frame size to determine when to market their pasture-raised beef. A consumer study found that fat thickness, frame size and

final weight of an animal had no relation to the taste, tenderness and overall desirability of the steaks. The beef animals in the study were all of similar age. Thus, fast weight gain, animal health and forage quality may be more important factors to strive for.

This is a preliminary study and more research is needed. Determining if there are any breed preferences by consumers and the age threshold for tenderness of pasture-raised beef are just two of the questions that need to be considered. The results will assist in making management and marketing decisions for all beef producers.

Executive Director
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