

Mushrooms - Success is in the Details

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It's a mushroom spring. Nature, for many, can be very broad and often times simply can be stated as brown or green, dry or wet, cold or hot, dead or alive. For those who succumb to such broad brushes, the fine points of nature often are missed and the joy of piecing together the detail simply is brushed aside.

Those thoughts come to mind while reading the recent publication "Priorities First: Identifying Management Priorities in the Commercial Cow-Calf Business." The report, summarized and authored by Tom Field, Ph.D., Fort Collins, Colo., identified herd nutrition as the No. 1 priority for cow-calf operations.

The publication does an excellent job of stimulating additional thoughts. Cow-herd nutrition is a very large subject and much like defining nature. Feed can be yellow or green, wet or dry, present or absent, but it is more than that.

In beef production, as in most businesses, the "success is in the details." Field notes cow-calf producers and industry specialists who responded to a survey prioritized defined subcategories of herd nutrition as well.

Field noted that annual cowherd nutrition during the last third of pregnancy, during calving to weaning and replacement heifer nutrition, were all relatively high on the priority listing.

The lower two subcategories were the middle third of pregnancy and bull nutrition. These primary and subcategories provide insight into how cow-calf producers think, strategize and react. Reviewing the survey results offers an opportunity for insight, evaluation and change in individual cow-calf operations.

The No. 1 priority, nutrition, is a good place to start. The allocation of nutritional resources is critical, more so than determining if feed is present or absent.

Even in the big picture, if one reviews the 2006 report of the North Dakota Farm and Ranch Business Management program (www.ndfarmmanagement.com), there is a \$232.23 spread in net return over direct and overhead expenses in North Dakota cow-calf op-

erations. The \$232.23 difference certainly should point to a need to set priorities.

Jerry Tuhy, adult farm management instructor in southwestern North Dakota, said, "The difference in overhead expenses per cow between the high 20 percent and the low 20 percent of cow-calf operations (\$310.21 versus \$405.12) sorted on net return per unit was \$94.91. More than 68 percent (\$65.28) of that difference is in the difference in total feed between the same high 20 percent and the low 20 percent."

Nutrition is No. 1. This is a mushroom spring. Lee Manske, Dickinson Research Extension Center range specialist, and I were checking for fairy rings in the grass. It didn't take long to find the fruiting bodies (commonly called mushrooms) of the chlorophyllum. The walk turned up a large number of hygrophorus, amanita, russula, armillarius, mycena, panacolus and cortinari mushrooms.

We stopped looking because, in the world of the mycologist, mycelium is never noticed. For most of us, we are too busy painting with too big a brush. But nutrition and mushrooms have a lot in common, just like steak and mushrooms.

Success is in the details; not all steaks fit the grill and half the mushrooms we saw potentially were poisonous. Cow herd nutrition is a top priority and puts money in the pocket. However, don't forget, properly fed bulls breed more cows and cows in poor condition gain well after weaning.

Nutritional success is in the details. Pay attention to the nutritional needs of the herd, feed the bulls and thin cows and enjoy a good steak supper with a few mushrooms.

However, don't pick the poisonous mushrooms. They are best left to please the eye, not the palate.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.BeefTalk.com>. For more information, contact the NDB-CIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.COM> on the Internet.

SUCCESS



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