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Livestock and Natural Resources

Here's a reason a tried and true black baldie is the most favored cow in America's cow herd. Her calf and her steer mates are in demand, regardless of end point. Don't miss the video below that features Jess Herbers discussing the value of Hereford genetics in the Goose Creek Valley Farm commercial herd.

The stakes have never been higher to create VALUE and EFFICIENCY throughout the production system. In the past decade, Hereford has documented dramatic improvements in calving ease, weaning and yearling performance and end product merit. The Spring 2015 Hereford Pan-American Cattle Evaluation (PACE) documents consistent improvements in all traits of economic importance. From 2004 to 2014, AHA Genetic Trends indicate a 14% reduction in birth weights, 20% improvement in weaning and yearling performance and a 30% improvement in end product merit.

Data is power and Hereford is leading the industry in genetic technology. In 2001, AHA implemented Whole Herd Total Performance Records (TPR), which has helped AHA and Hereford breeders build the largest database in the industry for lifetime cow productivity. In an era when "sustainable agriculture" is the new buzzword, the Hereford breed stands poised to deliver on those traits that will sustain the profitability of the commercial industry.

DNA testing technology continues to evolve, giving Hereford breeders even more predictive power when making genetic decisions. The AHA has taken a very scientific approach by collaborating with some of the brightest animal geneticists in the country to develop Hereford-specific genomic enhanced expected progeny differences (GE-EPDs) through the national cattle evaluation (NCE). By blending pedigree, phenotypes and now genetic information, the Association has the ability to predict the breeding value of young unproven animals with new accuracy levels that equates to an animal having between three to eight progeny on record.

Two recent, large-scale research projects have documented the value of Hereford genetics in the commercial industry. Calves sired by Hereford bulls have a \$30 per head documented advantage in feedlot profitability and 7% advantage in fertility when compared to Angus-sired calves. This advantage was documented during a three-year, real-world commercial heterosis project comparing progeny by Hereford and Angus bulls when crossed on Angus-based cows. The study also documented a maternal advantage of 7% higher pregnancy rate when comparing the Hereford-sired females to Angus-sired females.

David Hallauer, Agent
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Lawn Weeds: Yellow Nutsedge

One of the more commonly misidentified weeds in the home lawn is yellow nutsedge. Mistaken for a grass, yellow nutsedge has the typical triangular stems that place it in the sedge family. Leaves come off all three sides of the plant rather than on two sides like grasses.

Yellow nutsedge will also tend to be a pale green color as compared to the darker green most of our turf grasses exhibit. It will also tend to grow more rapidly than typical turf grass species and thrives under ample rainfall and/or irrigation.

Because of its tuberous root system, nutsedge is a tough one to control! Pulling actually activates dormant tubers, increasing the numbers of plants over where you started! If pulling is your control method, it will likely take more than one season of persistent removal.

As with many weeds, nutsedge is less competitive in a dense, healthy lawn than in an open, poor lawn, particularly if drainage is an issue. In those cases, herbicide applications may be in order. Several herbicides are available for nutsedge control. The active ingredient halosulfuron is found in SedgeHammer and Hi-Yield Nutsedge & Horsetail Control. Plan to apply after the nutsedge has reached the three- to eight-leaf stage to help improve translocation of the active ingredient to the underground tubers and rhizomes. Products with the active ingredient sulfentrazone (Bonide Sedge Ender, Ortho Nutsedge Killer and Spectracide Weed Stop for Lawns Plus Crabgrass Killer) are also effective.

Plan for a first application before the third week of June. Later applications may stimulate growth of additional tubers.

Shade Tree Diseases: Anthracnose

This spring's cool/wet weather has spurred a number of cases of anthracnose. We are starting to see anthracnose on sycamore. Anthracnose is a fungal disease that results in young leaves withering and turning black. On older leaves, look for brown areas that follow the major veins of the leaves. In some cases, the petiole (leaf stem) is infected, which causes leaf drop. The leaf may look perfectly fine, so look for browned areas on the petiole.

In severe cases, the tree drops heavily infected leaves and may be completely defoliated. Fortunately, healthy trees will leaf out again in a few weeks. Defoliation this early in the year does not affect overall tree health and trees should have plenty of time to produce new leaves and make the energy reserves needed to survive the winter.

Sycamore is the most commonly affected species, but others may be hurt as well. Since it seldom causes significant damage, chemical controls are usually unnecessary. Fungicides do not cure infected leaves. Applying fungicides now will not help.

Cindy Williams, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Food and Nutrition, FNP

Broccoli Leaves: The New Kale?

Could broccoli leaves be the new “it” food? Fresh broccoli sold in grocery stores is without the leaves as consumers just want the florets. Growers chop the leaves into mulch.

Broccoli leaves are edible. It is best to use them when young and tender. Older, tough leaves tend to be bitter in taste. They look similar to collards greens.

If you grow broccoli, save the leaves. Store unwashed in plastic bags in the crisper drawer up to two weeks. Use evenly colored leaves with no holes.

Add broccoli leaves to soup and stew. Roast into chips, use as a wrap, add to stir-fries, saute with garlic for pasta, or grind into pesto.

Broccoli leaves pair well with citrus flavors and making them a great addition to fruit smoothies. They also work well with smoky flavors and Asian meals.

Broccoli leaves are a rich source of vitamin A. They are also a good source of calcium.

Is Your Pet Obese?

Pets, like humans, can become obese and is a serious problem for their health. It is estimated that 58% of cats and 54% of dogs in the U.S. are overweight.

Pet diseases from obesity are similar to human diseases. They can get diabetes, osteoarthritis, high blood pressure, heart and respiratory disease, and kidney disease.

If a pet is 20% over ideal body weight, they are considered obese. This ideal weight varies by animal, age, body type and metabolism. Talk to your veterinarian about how much your pet should be eating.

Here are some signs of obesity to look for:

- *Look at your pet from the top. If the back is broad and flat like a footstool, it is overweight.
- *Can you feel your pet's ribs?
- *Is your pet's stomach sagging or tucked in?

Nancy Nelson, Agent
Meadowlark Extension District
Family Life

Berries - More than Pretty Colors

It is time to enjoy fresh berries! While the blue and red hues of berries are beautiful, the fruits are so much more than pretty colors. They represent some of the best nutritional bargains around.

Berries are low in fat, carbohydrates, and calories, but they are rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Berries contain phytochemicals and flavonoids that help prevent some forms of cancer and heart disease, while they contribute to slowing the aging process. Cranberries and blueberries contain a substance that may prevent bladder infections. Blueberries and raspberries also contain lutein, which is important for healthy vision.

Summer is the time to enjoy fresh berries. Look for berries that are ripe, colorful, and firm, with no mushy spots or signs of mold. The freshest berries are usually found at farmers markets, where the produce often was harvested earlier that day. Or, find a berry farm where you can pick your own fruit - a great family outing.

Most berries are sweet enough to serve just as they are. You can also enjoy them combined with bananas and low-fat milk in a smoothie, added to a bowl of whole-grain cereal, or stirred into vanilla yogurt. Berries are great sprinkled on a salad or blended into a salad dressing, as a topping for pancakes and waffles, and served as a dessert.

Berry Custard Brûlée

1/4 cup sugar, divided
2 teaspoons cornstarch
1 cup fat-free milk
1 egg, beaten
2 tablespoons light dairy sour cream
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
3 cups fresh berries, such as strawberries (halved), raspberries, blackberries, or blueberries

- 1) To prepare the custard, combine 2 tablespoons of the sugar and the cornstarch in a small saucepan. Add milk and beaten egg. Cook and stir with a wooden spoon over medium heat just until mixture begins to bubble. Immediately pour the mixture into a small bowl and let it cool about 5 minutes. Whisk sour cream into custard and add vanilla. Cover and chill custard up to 24 hours.
- 2) To serve, divide berries evenly among four dessert dishes. Spoon chilled custard over berries.
- 3) Topping (optional): Heat remaining 2 tablespoons sugar in a small, heavy saucepan over medium-high heat until sugar begins to melt, shaking pan occasionally to heat evenly. Reduce heat to low, and cook sugar until melted and golden, stirring mixture occasionally with a wooden spoon. Immediately drizzle caramelized sugar over each dish and serve.

Makes 4 servings. Nutrition information per serving: Calories - 148; Fat - 3g; Carbohydrate - 27g; Fiber - 6g; Protein - 5g; Sodium - 50mg