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Life Skills

In the 4-H program, we are all about teaching “life skills”. Some of those life skills come easier than others. My sons were always dreading doing their record books and then the even more dreadful “thank you notes”. Sometimes they would say “but I told them in person” and I would tell them that it wouldn’t hurt them to write a formal thank you note. This past month, my youngest son returned to his hotel room, after a 12 hour day trying to restore power to those in western Kansas. That was one freaky May blizzard! He found some handwritten thank you notes. A 4th grade teacher, had her class write the “thank you” notes to the lineman. It was pretty special for him, and maybe, just maybe he understands now why we wrote those thank you notes, after all those county fairs!

Breeding seasons for spring-calving herds will begin or have begun now.

A good manager keeps an eye on his bulls during the breeding season to make sure that they are getting the cows inseminated. Occasionally a bull that has passed a Breeding Soundness Exam may have difficulty serving cows in heat, especially after heavy service. Breeding Soundness Exams cannot evaluate bull libido. Such problems can best be detected by observing bulls while they work. “Libido” or sex drive refers to the desire to mate and is thought to be a highly heritable trait in cattle. Remember that semen quality and scrotal circumference are not related to libido. Therefore, a bull that passes a Breeding Soundness Evaluation may have poor libido, or a bull with good libido may fail a Breeding Soundness Evaluation.

Therefore producers should (if at all possible) watch bulls breed cows during the first part of each breeding season. If problems are apparent, the bull can be replaced while salvaging the remainder of the breeding season and next year’s calf crop. Likewise a small proportion of bulls can wear out from heavy service during the breeding season and lose interest. These, too, will need to be replaced. The greater the number of cows allotted to each bull in the breeding pasture the more critical it is that every bull be ready to work every day of the breeding season.

Injuries to bulls during the breeding season are relatively common. When a bull becomes lame or incapable of breeding, because of an injury to his reproductive tract, he needs to be removed from the breeding pasture and replaced with another bull.

In my last article about the pop bottle water filters, I was remiss to mention the help of the Jackson county Recycling center. They graciously, helped me collect the clear pop bottles for the project! It only cost me two batches of chocolate chip cookies. Thanks Mixie and crew!