Bull Session November 2023

​[00:00:00]

Tonight our special guest is Bob Sager from Medicine. Medicine Creek Bovine Health. There you go. And Bob is going to help us go through I guess really just think through why our weights were low this year, what happened. It was a great year as far as grass growth.

Most people had good moisture. But in the fall when the calves came in and the we got preg testing done, they were both a disappointment. So Bob is going to just help us talk through what happened this year and maybe give us some tips and pointers on how we could be a little bit more proactive going forward, like things to look for early on so that we can maybe try to.

Cut it off at the pass. So anyways, Bob, I'll let you go ahead. And [00:01:00] this is just going to be a really laid back session. If anybody has a question at any time, please don't hesitate to to answer or to ask it. And, Bob's more than happy to have interruptions Bob?

Yep. Yep. Thank you, Holly. Greetings to everybody. I prefer my name, Bob. So if you address me, just call me Bob. Very short background. I was raised on a cattle ranch west of Bozeman and wanted to ranch my career, but came from a small complex and knew that there wouldn't be opportunity for two families to live off of it.

I went to school and I'm lucky enough to be a veterinarian. I still am, but after 42 years of practice, I had two practices, 50 miles apart. After 42 years, I had an [00:02:00] opportunity to sell both of them to my client, my associates and went back to graduate school using my social security money to finance my education.

So I'm pretty unique that way, but. I got my doctorate in nutrition in 2014, spent two years in Southwest Russia working for the largest Beef cattle complex in the world that involves 60 some ranches and a half a million head of cattle. And then with the Crimea incident and the sanctions going on, they sent all 17 foreigners home in 2016.

And I did not want to retire. So I started this business about six years ago. So about three fourths of my workload now is working with ranchers trying to improve performance. For And health through doing custom mineral programs and helping them with [00:03:00] nutrition issues. I do some troubleshooting on performance and health issues still, but most of my work now is a veterinarian.

And I'm happy to have an opportunity to visit with you tonight. One of the more common questions that's come up the last month or so is why are weaning weights lower than they have been in past years? Why is my cow herd five to eight percent less bred the first service? Why, do I have more open heifers this year?

Things like that. I would like to propose that we have Holly put up a chart. We can briefly talk about this chart, which I think is a good... Visual explanation on what basically happened this year. I deal with probably [00:04:00] 200 to 250 forage analysis a year. Most of them I utilize from Midwest labs out of Nebraska.

But this chart, if you can see it, it's it's a great example of when we see plants mature. And particularly this year when we had early moisture we were blessed with better moisture in May and June. And I know a lot of people, particularly in our area, did not get to harvest their first cutting or their forages a lot.

At normal growing stages that were often a week to 10 days later in the growing stage, you see this chart as the plants mature and they go from a leafy stage the decrease as far as crude protein and particularly the microminerals decrease in it, and this is one area that I've [00:05:00] noticed with evaluating forage samples From late June until September is we saw a lot of the nutrients lower than we did on the same ranches in past years.

As, I would briefly explain, as we get larger volume of forage, it tends to dilute. Some of the nutrients out and cow, if she's maintaining two to two and a half percent of her body weight, dry matter, a lot of times she just does not get the amount of the micro minerals, particularly or the nutrients that you would in other years.

And out of the 60 some clients I have in Montana, I've only had one client. That is shared with me that they had equal to or better weaning weights than they did a year before. It's safe to say, in my opinion, [00:06:00] that 95 percent of the ranches are experiencing lighter weaning weights by up to 24 pounds.

I had a couple that were actually 40 pounds off. And I visited with clients the last week where their cow herd pregnancy rates were 6 to 8 percent off. And particularly their heifers. Whereas as much as 12 percent off in certain situations. I think this chart, if you can just spend a little time looking at this, you can see that stems and fiber increases as the plant matures.

We get crude protein, which is critical for lactation. If we had a way of measuring lactation in our beef herds. We'd see that during the year, they just did not lactate as, as well. Correlation of 82 percent of growth and weaning waste is due to lactation of the cow. So that explains a, lot. I might add as [00:07:00] I've learned throughout my career something that's really unique is that the leaves have four to five times the mineral content that the...

Stems are the rest of the plant does in a unit. Measure, and we see a lot higher crude protein in the leaves than we do on the stems or the rest of the plant. And you can see this chart is an excellent example on sharing with you on what we have experienced this last year. With plants being harvested later in the growth stage and particularly having more moisture where we got greater volume, but still got about equal amount of nutrients in a greater volume and therefore is just diluted out.

And the net was that the animals [00:08:00] just did not consume. As much of the necessary nutrients, they did consume a larger sometimes volume, but just did not adequately intake what was necessary a lot of times for lactation and reproductive performance. I'm not gonna keep rattling on, Holly.

forever. So if everybody could take a look at this chart and maybe if there's any questions at this time that might come up in relation to this, I'd be happy to inject that. We had several people that did supplement this last year. We use some high energy protein blocks. I work with a couple companies doing some custom blocks.

And we've utilized particularly in natural programs, we've utilized [00:09:00] supplements on energy and protein three weeks before and during the breeding period, and we've had improved first service conception for the last couple years on, on several ranches that have elected to do this.

And I can go into more detail. With you on that, but this is a great, I think, opportunity where we end up having a year like we did in the summer of 23, where we saw a later harvest and the most of the hay that was harvested. And I even had. Quite a lot of pasture samples come back late August and early September where the crude protein was below seven, which was the first time in my career that I've had protein forages come back that low, that early in the fall season.

So that was a, striking. [00:10:00] Concept. And we've ended up on those particular ranches where we saw forage samples come back below seven. And one reason that seven is critical is you need at least 7 percent crude protein for microbial growth and reproduction in order to digest and ferment fiber digest in the room.

And so we try real hard to watch that pretty close. A lot of times I'll have people collect forage samples several times during the summer, try to get an idea of what's going on.

Is there anybody that might have any particular questions at this time off this chart? I'd be happy to try to entertain or try to answer.

Are you, as far as persistence tonight or attendees, have you seen or experienced the same as far as your weaning weights lower, like [00:11:00] I have with my clientele, are you seeing that across? Obviously with 37 participants, we've got a pretty broad geographical range involved here. Is there anybody that was, excited that their weights, weaning weights on their calves came back even two or higher?

In central Montana, almost all of my neighbors have been reporting light calves. Yeah, I think thank you, Chris. I think the average has been about 14 to 18 pounds light is the average. The extremes have been 40. I've had quite a few in the 10 to 12 pound less weight on steers. Seems like the heifers are even another five pounds off.

No, I'm really blessed because we came in two pounds over last year. Give that man a beer, okay? And [00:12:00] Mr. Holzer where, are you from? We're about 45 miles west of Lewistown. Now help, me. And when you said you were two pounds. I, assume that you, weaned up at the same time the year you didn't wean a week later, 10 days later or anything like that. Pretty close to the same time. I don't have the exact date from last.

What's that? Just a couple days later, my wife said. I wouldn't make that much difference in my mind, but you're, the second person that's. Reflected that. Did you do anything different? Did you do anything different as far as your grazing management? Or anything like that? No, we do the rotational grazing and cell management.

Yeah,

I have a majority of my clientele that utilize some form of a grazing management as far as rotation [00:13:00] too. It helps a lot. Good for you. Congratulations. Yeah, it's a blessing. It is. And of course this year, that, that helped a lot because most people were able to, sell with at good prices. I've seen a little drop here the last week, 10 days, but projections are supposed to come back again.

I have probably about 25 to 30 percent of my clientele that weans and keeps their calves on the ranch for another 60 to 75 days. We've tried to promote that management if they have ground and feed available. And we try to get them to contract their calves with the same order buyer at the same price that they would at weaning.

And most of those operations we [00:14:00] utilize regrowth pastures of grass or we use regrowth off of center pivot sprinklers. And mob graze that for 10 days to two weeks until we get it down almost bare. And then we'll feed a high quality hay with a custom cake for about, 60 days.

And I've got probably 20 percent of my clientele that do this. And then they'll either move their calves in middle of December or the first, after the first year, depending on what their program... Requires so we try to get another 100 to 140 to 150 pounds of growth on them between the first week, October in the middle of December at the same price.

And so we've ended up sometimes a gain in gaining as much as maybe 50, 60, 000 more. [00:15:00] Income off of three, 350 to 400 head of steer calves, and that's becoming more popper all the time. But as it does require a little bit of labor, and it certainly requires more, ground and opportunities to mob graze forage and things like that.

That that's becoming more popper all the time. And those people that have utilized that type of program have been real happy with the extra income. Something that, that often comes up this time of year is price of hay. This year we're fairly blessed that price of hay has come down from last year.

But last year we used we used as much as seven pounds of barley hay. In most of the cow herds, once we started feeding them up to mid gestation. And for most part that saved 35 to [00:16:00] 40 per cow for winter feed costs. And I do believe that straw particularly in this state is probably the most underused forage that we have.

So I utilize a lot of straw at different times particularly up to Oh, 75 to 80 days. Pre calving, we do strongly recommend a strong mineral program, or if we're feeding cake, we put a custom mineral in a cake that's designed to maximize the amygdalums or maximize the quality of colostrum in the milk for calving.

As most of probably the best thing you can do to, to any calf is provide that extra oomph of colostrum at birth. We know now through research that's a lifetime [00:17:00] gain both as far as reproduction and performance in the feedlot. So I have a lot of people that utilize some type of a custom program pre calving for 60 to 80 days to try to maximize the quality of the cluster, particularly in the first calf heifers.

And that's been a popular program for a lot of my clientele to, to do that. And if anybody had any questions or would like to discuss that during this program, I'd be happy to go a little bit more in detail.

I'm still learning. There's a lot of, you out there that are on the program tonight that I recognize names. That I learn all the time from, and it's speaking of old timers here, speaking of old timers, we have one with his [00:18:00] hand up. Oh, I see it. Yeah, I know this guy. He's always good for something and pretty challenging.

Yes, sir. Go ahead, Bill.

Sorry, Bill. I'm back. Oh, my God. So Bob, can you speak a little bit more on that issue of colostrum, particularly how just what that difference in colostrum output is with these different feeding programs the last 60, 70 days, particularly, how does that help the reproductive value of the animal long term.

Other than your, other than you're talking about your macro minerals and your crude protein the micro minerals, particularly the four micro minerals, copper, zinc, cobalt, and selenium, are not only critical in amygdala [00:19:00] formation at the cellular level in the mammary gland. They're utilized there as far as manufacturing antibodies or amygdomas.

But those four are very critical in reproductive capability of the animal too. Those four minerals are by far the most important of the 17 that I work with as far as mineral requirements in beef cattle. And we try to emphasize those. We base a program on what you have available in your forage.

We only supplement for what is. necessary to meet the requirements that class class animal and what their requirements are for late gestation. And I have had a great opportunity to work with people that once we start this, they've minimized their calf health problems. We've ended up in most years having not [00:20:00] only better healthy calves, but we've actually seen better growth and higher, weaning weights in most years because of that.

So it's. It's critical, how it all actually starts at birth and the intake of high quality colostrum is lifetime. So I, don't have any quote general formulation bill, but we utilize your forage and your analysis that you provide us and we work with you to try to produce a product or a program where you can maximize.

the ability of that cow to form as good a quality colostrum as we possibly can. And I think of all the things that we've had the best results with in my six years with starting this company, some of the most rewarding examples that have been fed [00:21:00] back to me is the examples of people that come up to me in August and say we had the most healthy cap crop we ever had.

They look good. And as you well know, there's documentations out there from research that shows that those. Particularly those heifer calves that are born in the first, cycle. If they have good quality colostrum the opportunity for them to breed back is, as high as 14 or 15 percent higher than just average colostrum.

So it's it's, a big advantage at birth that carries on throughout the lifetime of the animal.

I hope I answered your question. No, that was good, but could I just follow up really quickly with just she didn't say no, so I'm going to do this. So with these different forage conditions we see from year to year and there's a variety of. [00:22:00] Supplements that a lot of us use that could be available to bridge the gap.

Do you find with your clients that with different forage conditions from year to year, are you using a similar kind of supplement year to year? Or do you find you're making a... Good, question, sir. As an independent nutritionist, I'm not associated with any particular company. I don't push Crystallux.

I don't push any particular product or anything like that. We try to work with producers on a one to one ratio, we try to evaluate what products are out there. Definitely emphasize cost, we use, emphasize cost value we do [00:23:00] ratios. I do that all the time, comparing products. We look for products that are key to what we need as far as the difference in the supplementation rather than feeding something that might be high in one particular product and not in the other.

We'd look, at that. Sometimes we end up actually designing a product. I'm actually work, I'm actually working with a company in Utah this year that we're designing a particular molasses high energy block. And we're actually using a a Saccharomyces yeast that's been documented for helping rumen development in, in nursing calves.

I presently have a study with 1, 400 headed calves on this particular custom block that they were given blocks in a creek feeding situation while [00:24:00] the calves were nursing. They're now on a cake with the same yeast product in it, and we're gonna weigh controls versus treatment.

Calves. Every 30 days during the winter period. This particular producer keeps all of his calves over until summertime. So we'll have a great opportunity 60 to 70 days from now to see if we're getting any Improvement in performance with this particular product. So Holly, this would be maybe a good opportunity for you to ask me back sometime late winter, maybe spring that I could maybe share this with you.

They've done research with this particular product on dairy calves. On small numbers, they've shown a great improvement in, in dairy calves that are on, milk replacers. They've actually taken and sacrificed calves and actually did histological [00:25:00] analysis of the rumen and seen that development of the rumen papillae, which means that they get increased surface area in the rumen papillae, which correlates to uptake of vortical fatty acids that go across the rumen membrane.

And so there's more glucose available through the liver metabolism. And so I'm pretty anxious to see How we do on that. I've got one ranch that is a natural beef production unit that's actually utilizing this product in their weaned mineral. They can't use it in a artificial substance or a grain type product with a cake or anything, but they're using it in the mineral.

And so I'll have three or four different. production units that are utilizing this product presently. And in 75 to [00:26:00] 80, 90 days, I'll have a good idea of whether this particular product is a advantageous product to use. It's running between 2 and 3 cents per calf per day on the product. We are hoping to get one tenth of a pound more gain.

And so the return on value would be nine or ten times the cost of it. So we're anxious to, to get some information back on that. That's pretty exciting. I'm working with some other companies on some other, products similar to that. So in a year or so, I hope to have an opportunity to share with you about some of these.

Newer products are coming out. Bill mentioned particular products, and I'm not I'm not particularly keyed into one particular product. We usually utilize [00:27:00] what is the best value for what we need on each production unit. Good question.

Anybody from extreme eastern Montana with us tonight? There's a couple in the chat here, Bob, too. I didn't know if we wanted those first, Kian. I don't know if yours was a question or not. And you just said your yearlings on tabe forage were light, but your herdmates on native came in heavy.

Once again, Holly, the same herdmates that were They were heavier, and they were on what type of forage? It says native. The yearlings were on tame forage, were light. Herd mates on native came in heavy. Someone done mute. The different species of forage, and of course your native is has adapted to the environment over.

Hundreds or thousands of years and [00:28:00] have adapted to more stresses and things like that and are likely, species of, forages that are not going to be I don't want to say responsive to increases in moisture. Does that make sense? So you would not get the quote, extra volume off of. Those native type species, the grass production as you would with the cool tame varieties that we.

Utilize now, that would be my answer to you.

So the, cool tame varieties were crested early on and then into some meadow brome and, sand thawing later on. And those calves stayed at about two pounds all the way through. Whereas the stuff that went out and ended up on native, which happened to have an awful lot of first year clover, wild clover in it [00:29:00] those calves stayed over three pounds all summer.

Wow, whoever. You're, that's excellent. Those are excellent results, and it speaks well on your management. You've obviously are managing those cattle very, well. The native species. Do you have any idea on those? Is it is it both grudges and grasses and some seds or what species.

Just, grasses. I'm not really well versed. But there was, it's mostly shortgrass country. Yeah which, we had a really big crop of first year clover that they just every time it would be just about done. We'd get enough rain to green it back up again. So sure, we'll see that that clover is going to run 17, 18 percent crude protein too.

So on young cattle, that's going to [00:30:00] be great, a great source for, nutrients for growth. Wow. Which I, had never heard that. Which geographical area are you from? So I'm the son of the Holzer that you were talking to earlier, so we're right in the center of the state. Okay, very good. Very good.

Yeah. Thank you for sharing that.

Chad. Yeah, go ahead. I'm sorry. No, I'm curious. Does anybody out there? Do they utilize it? First foot tree foil in any way? It does require more moisture. But in particular, our area, we saw a lot of birds with tree foil actually come to life this year compared to the two or three years before it utilized the moisture that we had early on Probably as well as any species that we had on my small ranch.

I had a lot of birch tree foil that I had in areas that I didn't ever know that existed. And that's [00:31:00] a great forage as far as it's very similar to your clover, very high in protein. It's a short short plant, so they have to get down real close to graze it. Is anybody familiar with birth foot I see Chris nodding his head. Anybody We tried cover crop, but it didn't really come very well in our country. Okay. Anybody out there use any Sandpoint for grazing?

That's a wonderful species that as a nutritionist, I love but a lot of times it's hard to keep going because we have a most common species that they sell as far as seed has a hard time getting through the winter a lot of times if there's no snow cover. It kills out so bad in the wintertime.

We have dried plant in some of the sand point too, but and west here are little ways where it's a little bit sandier. It [00:32:00] seems like it does really well. We have really heavy clay soils and it just seems like we planted and within two or three years it's gone. Very good. Very good. Thank you. I love it.

I love it. As far as a species. Very good and new nutrients. It has the eight. They actually the stems have a higher level of sugars and starches than a lot of other plants, particularly compared to alfalfa and cattle. Cattle like it because of the sweet. Taste. It's just, hard to grow.

Bob, Chad says in here, cows won't consume mineral here, never have. Is it possible they don't need it? And I guess I would ask Chad if he could give us some context, like where he's at. That would probably be helpful.

East of Billings, 80 miles, a little town of Highsham. But we've always had consumption issues. During breeding [00:33:00] season, to breed our cows to calve in April. Those months of breeding season, they won't ever eat mineral. I wish I had every bag, every dollar back that I've thrown out there and let the sun and the rain have it, because I've tried over 20 years, we've tried about every mineral we could ever try, and there's just really no consumption.

There's some challenges. Do you have a lot of sulfate there in your water or anything like that? Yes, absolutely. Yeah, I run into this quite a bit, and sulfate. Sulfate in the soil or the water has a negative effect for intake of mineral. Have you tried have you tried adding a pound or two of dried molasses per 50 pound sack?

I have. We've done molasses. We've, tried sugar. We've tried they the [00:34:00] taste of garlic. But really, there's no luck of... Yeah, no long term luck it's just a tough gig getting mineral and anything during breeding season here. I've run into similar challenges like that before, in particular areas that have a lot of sulfate or, sulfur both in the soil and water.

It's particularly hard. Here's another thing. I don't know if you have an opportunity to put it in something else. What I'm referring to there is, it's a pain, but sometimes I'll put it in a cake or something like that. And I know that you're probably going to look at me like I'm a little bit dumb feeding cake in the summer months, particularly if you're trying to, breed the first part of July, feeding cake in June or something like that, pre breeding.

But I've had small groups[00:35:00] of, producers that have done that, feed it in a pellet or a a cake.

And the other thing is, you can, the other thing is, most of the high energy protein tubs and blocks now are customly, are, they're made with a particular, Formulation, but I am working with a company now that will make a particularly different block comes in an 80 or 100 pound molasses block that they'll custom make and we can do a custom mineral in that block and it's designed for anywhere from 4 to 16 ounces per head per day, depending on how hard they press it.

And I've worked with this company in the last year, and this is something that you may possibly consider. It would not run you any more I don't think cost per head per day. [00:36:00] And we could certainly that, I tell you, that I would welcome as a great challenge, whoever you are. And I'd welcome you to give me a call.

Holly's gonna give you my contact information. I'm not going to tell you that I will succeed or, win on that because I've run into other people that have had challenges like that. But I have at least improved consumption. And you said you've obviously tried different, products.

The thing I'll share with you there is that most of the over the counter products are designed for regional or national. Formulations and you might want to try either what I was referring to as far as another route to get your mineral into them, or you might want to try contact maybe I could work with you to try to get something as [00:37:00] far as a custom product.

We add wheat mids, we add distiller grains. The big thing with distiller grains, when I start adding it is we get over consumption. Even with, in areas where there's sulfates in the water, because they really go for that, particularly when they're lactating with calves on them. That tends to drive them to seek more.

And I've had actually challenges the other way where we've actually had distiller grains and minerals and we've had consumption as, as high as five or six ounces per head per day. So I've had challenges the other way too, but wherever you are, I welcome you to contact me. I'll be at the stock growers with a booth in a couple of weeks.

If you're close there, I'd welcome you to come by and and introduce yourself and we can visit. Thank you. I will probably do that. Appreciate that. And like I say, I [00:38:00] I'm an old dog or old bull it's a bull session. Actually bull was the first word I came on my mouth when I was about. Eight months old.

So this is a great great analogy here to spend time with you, Holly, and you and your group tonight, but be happy, to visit with you about a challenge like that.

Okay. And then there's someone from Southwest North Dakota. There's a lot of cows in this area, 20 to 40 percent open some attribute opens to flies, hard winter nutrients and grass. So I don't know if this person wants to get on and ask a specific question or just address that and the one below says to horrible fly issue this year.

So how you can how that affects the breed back. So maybe those two questions you could put maybe together or comment. I do work with a couple producers. Next to the [00:39:00] North Dakota line in extreme eastern Montana, and they experienced similar results. I would say from working with those clients.

The biggest challenge we had was body score condition at calving. By that is that last year the length of the winter and the extreme of the winter took a lot out of the cows and we did not have as good a body score at calving. And of all the ways to measure or... predict what type of pregnancy rate you're going to have is body score condition and calving has the greatest influence or predictability of your pregnancy that you're going to have in the following fall.

And a lot of the, a lot of those herds, we ended up knowing that we lost a half to a full body score, particularly at [00:40:00] calving. And they just never did catch up. We didn't have. Grass come on as early. Some people actually had to end up feeding supplemental hay. And those cows never did catch up.

Go back to the chart that we had at the very beginning of this bull session. And we had lots of volume, but we didn't have the quote, the umph in the grass and a lot of those cows did never catch up, particularly hard to catch up with body score while you're trying to lactate or even we're trying to grow with two and three year olds.

I would, I guess in closing on this topic, I would recommend that you have a neighbor or somebody that you trust, or somebody that hasn't seen your cattle come over, invite them over for pie or something like that, and have them give their opinion on what your body score condition is on your herd [00:41:00] 30 days before calving.

I think of all the things that I work with as far as clients that time of year. I emphasize body score. I told you I feed a lot of straw early on in the gestation period, but we continue. I'm with most of my accounts four times a year. I try to select those times a year to evaluate. Body score condition, health of the animals, intake of mineral, things like that.

And I think that's something that I could pass on or share with you that body score condition at the cow at calving is very, critical. They've actually got charts out showing a body condition. Cow four at calving has about a 38 percent chance if she maintains a four. to get bred for a cow with body score of six, that even after [00:42:00] calving and as lactating, if she maintains a 5.

5 or higher, has an 84 percent chance of first service conception. So you see a remarkable difference in breed back just on two body score points. And I, Holly, I'd be happy to share that chart with you after this program. It's actually in one of my books. That's a opportunity to tell you that I wrote a book, textbook, instead of doing my master's.

Thesis. I actually wrote a textbook for Dr Patterson, my advisor, and it was designed to give to the extension service. And I've got a book out and I can share it with you that chart in that book. And it's very critical. I think of all the single important things that we deal with as far as reproduction performance during the breeding season is that body score condition is very critical and you want to make sure not only that they have [00:43:00] an adequate body score condition, but they're actually gaining weight at the time of calving.

Happy to share that. You can pass that on to your group afterwards. Okay. Hey, Bob quick, question on that front. Yeah, in terms of kind of body condition at calving versus that breeding on the gain. Do you feel like there's, would you emphasize one of those over the other, depending on when you're calving?

For people later on May, June, July, it feels like you may have that body condition at calving you still got cows starting to go downhill once you actually turn bulls out. Yeah, Stuart, that's an excellent question because you're dealing with a time period.

Where you start seeing your forage quality drop off quite a bit. And then you're also seeing at that time of year that the cow is probably reaching her peak lactation. Demand as far as [00:44:00] nutrients are peaking. So you have two challenges going on there. To directly answer your question, I would rather have some type of a gain going on in that animal rather than any particular body score.

What, I'm referring to there is if. If there's any kind of gain going on, either naturally or due to supplementation it, triggers the hypothalamus and secretes all the necessary hormones for estrous and reproductive potential. So the gain probably is more critical than, quote, the body score.

Does that answer your question?

. I probably put him to sleep. I'm sorry. I'm good at that. My wife tells me I'm a lot more efficient than sleeping pills. No, you're good. I'm actually oiling up my gloves, so it takes me a little bit to take off my glove and then click the unmute button again. Yeah. That's all right.

Stuart, where are you from?[00:45:00] Outside of Cascade. I'm actually on I'm on Seabin Livestock. Oh, you're the steward that I know. I just never knew your last name. So yeah, that's a great question. Bob, did you address the flies on the breed back and the weights? Because I know you and I were talking earlier about how bad the flies were in eastern Montana. Could you maybe just talk about that a little bit? I think maybe that might be a good question.

Here's a great opportunity to tell you I don't know very much about that topic. I'm a straight shooter I do recognize that flies are a stressor. I do recognize that they bother grazing. Cows have a tendency socially to behave to, where they shade up, stay in groups, things like that. Don't not get out and graze.

So that definitely affects your, intake on grazing and your performance, lactation and all that. I've utilized different things [00:46:00] with trying to minimize. Flies with mixed results. We've tried additives like garlic. We seem like one place we get fair results. Next place, we don't get any good results at all.

I'm, still open on that. And honestly, I just don't know enough about that topic to make a answer that your attendees deserve at this point. So I'd be in, in operations that are natural, where we can't use any type of insecticides we, have a real hard time with that. This year, particularly in our area.

We didn't see a big fly problem until late in the summer, and then it seemed like it came on with a vengeance during the during the growing season of June and July up to about the second week of August. We really didn't have much fly problems at all, [00:47:00] but then late August and early September, we had a lot of problems.

Yes it does affect performance. Because it affects their social behavior, it affects their intake as far as grazing.

Maybe I can try to find out more information on that question and get back to you. Troy has a question in here and then I'll shut up. But have you ever added some of the micronutrients in the water? No, I have not gone through the water on micronutrients. Most of them are not water soluble.

I've done that with certain vitamins. The, water solu vitamins I've added to water supplies when I've needed to, particularly in treating polio with vitamin vitamin B, B one I've added to the water supply, but I've never added any type of mineral to liquid formulation or into [00:48:00] ous solution like water.

Good question. I'd be curious if anybody out there has. tried to do that, or if they've had any, luck putting it in any other liquid other than water, something that's more viscous they certainly the liquid supplements, they have most of the liquid supplements utilize a vitamin mineral type of supplement in most of the thick.

molasses based products. And they claim that they get a pretty good intake that way. But I've never had anybody use it in a water source?

Good, good question. Yeah, I've actually used it. I do it a little bit. I don't I don't have control of the water all the time. They drink out of drains and stuff, but when I do pump it I, put the copper zinc and iodine in, their water, sometimes in a slug and sometimes with [00:49:00] a dose. I feel like I can't, because my cows don't, it's hard to find a macro to carry it with they won't eat salt and Dical, sometimes I'll eat a little bit. Sometimes I won't. So I just. I try to catch them up on the traces that way sometimes, okay. But I don't have any huge deficiencies here either, so I'm not sure. I, assume they're, getting it, sure. We're doing them some good. Are, you buying it as an individual product or a combination? Are you buying a, I just, I actually mix my own mineral that way. Yeah I just get copper sulfate, zinc sulfate, and EDDI. Yeah, manganese is low here, so I don't mess with it, and selenium is not low either, so yeah, or cobalt.

Okay, real good. I do utilize clients that, We end up, particularly with EDI, when we end up having [00:50:00] challenges with foot issues, we actually add a little bit more to a mineral, and I've used copper sulfate a couple of times. I've actually used copper sulfate in water supplies when I worked in Russia.

On a real severe molybdenum levels in the water and soil, we had a lot of antagonistic problems, and we ended up having issues with yearling cattle, having BRD problems in the summertime, and the only way we could get the thing turned around 700 miles from a production unit that would make anything is we ended up getting copper sulfate, Remind me to tell you the, story about trading 50 pounds of.

Copper sulfate from a Russian dairy farmer for 10 pounds of gummy bears. That's a great story. It actually happened. And I [00:51:00] proved that to gummy bears is a form of international monetary exchange in certain parts of the world. So we actually got copper sulfate from a dairy that was using a foot bath, and we actually mixed it with hot water at a rate about three times NRC, and we actually put it in the water tanks for about 12 days, and we turned the BRD complex around, they were losing up to 3 percent of the herd on a weekly basis, and had mass treated them for four different times with everything from Draxin to, Zaktran, Mass treatment with no luck and got there and recognize it was a copper.

So copper deficiency and we ended up using copper sulfate in the water supply. So I actually have to take back. I actually did it myself in another environment and within about 14 days [00:52:00] we stopped the death loss and got the whole thing turned around and 92 percent of the Ones that were still alive after two weeks went to harvest the next year.

So it was a great success story. Good good question, Troy. Thank you.

I think I used up my time, Holly.

Yes, Mr. Milton. I see his hands up again. Yeah, I if someone else is asking a question, I would certainly defer.

But if there is a huge pause, then I will jump in. Bob, I'm trying to figure out how to best frame this question. But all of us are trying to raise the most adaptable. cow who that can take, that can optimize the environment we're in. And so this targeted supplementation is trying to certainly meet the needs to get optimum performance.[00:53:00]

But what advice do you give your clients to try and keep some pressure on our cattle to where yeah, we're optimizing and really targeting supplementation, but we're not doing it at such a level that we're really Substituting what we're providing with our normal forage base rather than doing targeted supplementation.

I guess the thing is, how do we optimize our genetic capacity to perform profitably while targeting supplements that are very, targeted that aren't concealing weaknesses in our cattle? Yeah, excellent question, Bill. First of all, I think we, as an industry, have inadvertently selected for genetics that have not been as a whole, adaptive to certain range conditions, and we're using genetics that a lot of times you only have [00:54:00] available, and you've got to work with that genetic base for many years until you get them adaptive to your particular environment or operation.

I also would answer it by saying that we inadvertently have selected for particular traits in beef cattle the last 25 years, such as carcass traits and maybe higher lactation and things, and we have obviously not selected for health And other issues that are critically important, like sustainability, longevity of the cow herd, things like that.

And we need to, I think, recognize the fact that we've And now we actually harvest the same amount of beef from four animals or four steers at harvest as we did [00:55:00] 25 years ago with five animals. There's, hardly any industry in America that can can say that their production has increased 20 or 25 percent in that period of time, and we're actually doing it.

With a a smaller input in, most instances, but I would answer you by saying every individual unit production is going to be different and I don't have a answer for you that I would say would fit every particular attendee at this full session. There's certainly some challenges out there.

I think part of it is that we have selected for particular genetics. A perfect example is we have tremendous carcass data back on a lot of sires and we're utilizing utilizing those genetics. But yet, in the last 25 [00:56:00] years, the incidence of bovine respiratory disease and sudden death in the feedlots has gone up remarkably.

And yet with better better technology, better animal health products out there, we have failed and we have actually seen rates of morbidity and mortality and feedlots actually increased over the last 25 years. And I, as a veterinarian for 42 years, I was saddened to see it toward the end of my career that.

My pregnancy rates over the last 20 years had dropped off from what they were 20 years before, and I think a lot of it is a selection process that we've used in some of our genetic selection, and we're not necessarily selecting the right kind of genetics that would adapt to environmental conditions or that would adapt to a [00:57:00] better reproductive performance given the situation.

Environment that we have. So your question is an excellent one. And I think that we as an industry start to look at different traits that in my mind are more critical and more important for sustainability and profit. Then we have in the past as far as selecting for carcass traits and milk, potential.

I don't know if you, I don't know if you agree with that or not, but that's certainly my, that's my end point answer based on my experience. Holly doesn't know this, but I've actually raised cattle for almost 60 years of my life. And yes, I started out young, Holly, but I'm proud to say I've raised cattle.

And now now I'm back in the cattle business. I actually bought it. I bought a heifer this [00:58:00] fall after being out of the cattle business for three years. So I'm I'm now among all you pork people again. Okay. Yeah. Thanks. Thanks, Bob. Yeah. Always great. Thanks very much. Always great. Always great to be challenged by you, Bill.

Anybody have anything that is completely different than what we've talked about tonight?

Has anybody has anybody seen what the the price of calves have dipped a little bit here the last week, eight days? Has anybody seen any projections? I've heard that it's supposed to come back again. Has anybody followed it closer than I have as far as this? Market thing.

Everybody's quiet on that. I think this is a year that where we've seen this is a perfect perfect [00:59:00] year for those people that I talked to earlier in the presentation about the retaining their ownership for 60 to 75 days. post weaning. We're weaning two or three weeks earlier. We're giving those cows an opportunity to get another half of the body score better because when you wean a calf, you take the requirements of that cow, you drop it by 40 some percent automatically the first day.

And so it gives that cow a better opportunity to Gain before you're going in the winter, and then also we're utilizing supplements and better feed for that calf so they can do a little bit better as far as average daily gain. I think this is a great year for those people that did not sell early with this dip in the market.

And if it comes back, I think that's a great opportunity for them to utilize even a better [01:00:00] potential for profit. I've seen more of this all the time. I think this is a great opportunity for you producers to utilize that in your units of production to get a higher return per cow on your operation.

Mickey Stewart has a question for you, Bob. I'll let her ask. I'm sorry. I didn't know how to raise my hand. I we, operate in south of. Billings and out of large grass up against mountains, and we weaned our steer calves only about a little over a month ago and we put them on our irrigated pasture aftermath.

But then we put them. Into a multi species annual grain field, but [01:01:00] we waited until the grain field was complete until we got a hard freeze and then 10 days after the hard freeze. Cause there's a tendency to have a nitrate problem around here. But I saw on your graph earlier that in order for the calves to have To use the fiber, they had to be ingesting at least 7 percent protein and that the annual species go down in protein.

So I'm afraid that we put them on the annual grains and they got the mill and sorghum and whatnot. But the protein level was so low that they, that they weren't getting the utilization that they should and that it's goes along with my observation that they went off on the grain field.

We've got them back on the pivot aftermath now, and we're giving them 2 pounds of grain mix on top of the [01:02:00] alfalfa. Hey, and I think they're. Picking up quite nicely now, but my question specifically is what's your advice on the multi species annual crop utilized, as a forage? When, can you start and what are the dangers?

The answer is it depends on a lot of factors, your geographical area. I, have people that try to analyze. What, you've got, there's nothing better than spending 30 to do an analysis on a forage and find out exactly where you're at. You can usually get a analysis done in four working days.

And there's nothing better to start with than to work with you when we actually have some facts in our hand. That's a good answer. And that's what we probably should have done. But this is the first year we've tried the annual grains with the weanlings and. [01:03:00] I'm not sure that it was as successful as we would have liked it to be, and I was impressed by the graph that told me that the protein was probably about nil, and it needed to be 7 percent in order to do the fiber.

Yeah one is myself included, is we've learned a lot more about this than we did 10, 15 years ago and that We are now recognizing that there's a lot to be considered when you're dealing with a rumen environment. There's a synergistic effect between the rumen microbes and the host animal.

And I've learned at least in my career that I'm not necessary. Always looking or focusing on the host animal, but a lot of times I'm looking at what is actually in the rumen. And if you establish a good rumen environment, a good healthy microbe population, that's completely [01:04:00] reflective on how you're.

And I'm a big proponent on working with people. And one of the very first things I do is I try to get people to get a analysis of what we're talking about as far as their forage or pasture and know exactly where we are on that. And you'll see that changes on rainfall, it changes within your operation.

Certain, a perfect example is. I've gone to places where we've had performance and health issues with cattle, and they've been on to give you an example, they've been on different wells. We've actually taken water samples sometimes the wells are even a quarter mile, halfway a mile apart, and we've literally had to take panels and Fence off particular wells that were particularly high in antagonistic properties sulfates or iron [01:05:00] oxide or something like that, that interfered with the performance of cattle because they interfered, they were antagonistic to vital minerals that were critical for health and performance.

And so I've actually had people fence off different water sources. And once we knew what was going on. That's a perfect example 30, 40 is, a small amount when you actually reduce your neonatal calf health problems by sometimes 25 or 30%. I think water, is something that we all have a tendency to overlook.

And when I start working with a clientele if it's not always free flowing water like a creek or... Something like that. I always recommend doing a water profile, and we're always both sometimes surprised on what we get back. Certain [01:06:00] operations, when we end up with drought after two years, we recommend getting a water sample from Their sources and see how much it changes in a period of 50 percent rainfall the year before something like this dramatic.

I can share some of these charts with you to Holly to your attendees. To see what the water quality will differ just with an inch of rain in a reservoir is quite striking.

Good. Excellent question. Excellent question. Thank you for your answer. Yeah. Thank you, Mickey. I wish you the very best.

Thank you very much. And I agree 100 percent with your water comments. We had a very bad breed up one year because we discovered that we had the cattle on a high sulfate reservoir and we used our grazing management to avoid reservoirs during the breeding season [01:07:00] and only work with well water that we know the quality of.

So I think too bad we weren't smart enough to sample our green crop, but we will next year. I've been fortunate to work with a couple of producers where we did do water analysis when I first started with them, found out that there was antagonistic properties in the water, and they were bold enough that they invested a pretty good sizable amount of money into a new water system.

And some some of those people have shared their results with me that not only is there reproduction. been improved with their calf. Health's been improved. And sometimes the return on investment is as short as three years. Sometimes on the difference between performance in the cattle, weaning weights and things like that.

And of course I'm talking about bigger units which are easier to to get [01:08:00] finances and investments started and then getting return on investment. But it, the same, Concept applies to whether you have 50 cows or 5000.

And I, would think I would state that probably 20 to 25 percent of the troubleshooting I do with producers that are new, either in health. Or performance, I would say at least a fourth of them. It's due to water quality and I was absolutely amazed at one ranch that I did water sampling on five wells and we actually closed one of them off because it was so bad.

And once we did that, we actually saw a dramatic improvement. In the performance of health on that ranch unit within six months to a year.

Anyways, great great [01:09:00] discussion. I hope that I've been able to share with you Holly and your group a little bit. If anything, my goal was to actually try to stimulate people out there to think about certain different things.

Holly will give you my contact information. I'm a, I was raised under old fashioned ways. It doesn't cost you anything to make a phone call. I don't charge anything for a first hour consultation. If you want to just call and visit with me, Holly will give you my... contact information.

Bob, I'm going to make Bart come on and ask this. Bart has a question. Okay.

Sorry, I couldn't find where on my phone to do this, but I had a question [01:10:00] for you. Like this time of year, we really watch the manure and if any stacking starts and yeah the whole mindset behind it is one. We don't want to get behind on body condition on these animals.

Yeah. And we don't wean, wean until January and if, we see body conditions sliding on these animals, we're already way behind, we're out of the game, in my opinion, or from my experience. And visual, sights are weeks, behind what performance is going on. Yep. I guess is the, so the thing we watch is manure and, if.

If there's stacking we'll, feed them because we're just grazing right now, for example, but we'll supplement them with some high quality alfalfa and then we use apple cider vinegar a lot too. And that seems to help us get those poops for stacking. But is that a proven, tracked record of [01:11:00] if you're really on top of that manure and watching it and keeping it, will you stay ahead of those body condition?

I'll answer that, but I think that's one one visual evidence that you can utilize. Like I stated in the program, we are with our animals every day. It's hard to recognize changes when we see them every day. I think one of the best things you can do is to have a friend or somebody that you have confidence in to come over and evaluate your, herd periodically.

Another eye or eyeball, I think is a great, way of analyzing your visual. Observation with the manure is pretty directly correlated with the level of protein in the ration or the grazing, too. [01:12:00] So the lower the protein, you get more of a stacking reflex. I'm not a, not an expert on manure, but when you start seeing a stacking plex of manure where it stays on top of each other, you usually are right at borderline on that 7 percent crude protein or microbial digestion of fiber too that's one visual observation that I would do again. I would support the fact that you take a sample. I can send Holly information that you can send it in yourself and have it analyzed. I think it's well money well spent and you can get usually a report back in about four or five business days.

There are several excellent labs out there. I try to use the same one. Thank you. Myself. So I get consistent reporting. I can send you information on that. You can do it yourself. Or if [01:13:00] you'd like to work with somebody through like somebody like myself, I'll be happy to help you on that. That's 4 examples you're talking about, correct?

Yes, that's 4 examples. Yeah, we've done that. We've taken 4 examples, but. I guess I'm, that should be an every year thing because every year is different, huh? I, would I would answer that by saying if you're suspicious about something, I would act on it, okay? Or if you're questioning or thinking that something is quote, not right I would ask you to act on it or have, somebody help you with evaluating your, body score, your performance where, are you located?

Bart? Missoula.

Okay. Okay. So we probably have time for one more question. So Does anyone else have one [01:14:00] that's been pressing or are we good to go?

Then fine. I take that silence as we're, done. So thank you very much. I appreciate you coming on. And if anybody has further questions, or wants to follow up with Bob, please let me know. And I did put his information in the chat. If anybody's interested in talking to him further and Bob, as soon as you get that stuff to me, I can get some information out that might be very helpful to everybody.

Appreciate everybody coming on and I hope everybody had a happy Thanksgiving and we'll have a great Christmas. So thank you, Bob. Thank you, Holly, for the opportunity to share this evening with your.

Attendees and I wish you every one of you a prosperous year and best wishes. Happy trails.

​[01:15:00]