

Beginnings of recovery coming as cattle herds shrink

MANHATTAN – The pain of recent record losses in the U.S. cattle feeding industry will not diminish soon, but tightening supplies could lead to a modest rebound in late 2010, one expert says.

Speaking at Kansas State University's Risk and Profit Conference Aug. 21, agricultural economist James Mintert said that consumers have responded to the U.S. economic downturn by saving more and spending less. Not a bad thing on the face of it, but it means that they're spending less on some foods, such as beef.

"Historically, beef demand has benefited from growth in the U.S. economy and a low (consumer) savings rate," said Mintert, who recently became the assistant director of extension at Purdue University.

Into 2010, he said, he expects weak consumer expenditures to hold back beef demand.

That demand slowdown is partly responsible for the record losses realized by cattle feeders during 2008 and 2009. For example, Iowa State University's estimated livestock returns indicate that cattle feeders lost an average of \$120 and \$100 per head during 2008 and the first seven months of 2009, respectively.

Mintert, who was a livestock marketing economist for K-State Research and Extension for 23 years, noted that the U.S. cattle industry was "a picture of a healthy industry" from 1925 to 1975 as the industry grew over time in response to growing aggregate demand for beef.

Since the mid-1970s, however, the industry has responded to a lack of profitability among cow-calf operators by shrinking its numbers – from more than 130 million head in 1975 to about 94 million today – a reduction of about 28 percent.

In addition to demand issues, the cost to produce beef calves, including feed costs and returns to owned assets, has jumped 30 percent since 2005, which has made even a break-even situation beyond the reach of most producers in the last couple of years.

Break-even prices for calves in Kansas have jumped from just over \$100 per hundredweight in 2006, to more than \$140 this year when producers factor in all of their costs, he said.

While the costs of production were rising, prices paid for calves were dropping.

Cattle producers have responded to the situation by sending cows to slaughter. That trend, Mintert said, will likely abate somewhat, but the cattle herd will continue to shrink in part because dairy cow slaughter during 2009 (through July) was up 15 percent compared to a year earlier.

As a result, the Livestock Marketing Information Center expects commercial beef production in 2009 will total about 25.4 billion pounds and in 2010 will be just 25 billion pounds – both down from 26.5 billion pounds in 2008.

By 2010, overall total meat supplies are expected to be "very tight," the economist

said. Annual U.S. red meat and poultry consumption in 2010 is expected to drop to about 207 pounds per capita, well below 222 pounds in 2007.

Other factors affecting the cattle market are supplies of competing meats and any impact the so-called swine flu virus has on pork demand, he said.

The media continue to refer to H1N1 as the swine flu. This has confused some consumers and led to a reduction in pork demand, even though the illness is not related to eating pork, he said. And oftentimes, when pork prices slump, they weigh down beef prices as well.

More from presentations given at the conference is available at www.agmanager.info.

On the Beat

COLBY POLICE Wednesday

4:24 a.m. – Removed dead deer from U.S. 24 in the 2200 block.

8 a.m. – Subject came to station about attempted murder cold case from 1991/92. Information being collected.

8:04 a.m. – Provided an escort.

10:11 a.m. – Walk through at Walmart.

10:59 a.m. – Child in vehicle without car seat at Sonic.

11:18 a.m. – Walk through at Colby Middle School.

11:48 a.m. – Walk through at Colby High School.

4:01 p.m. – Four officers assisted in looking for vehicle going wrong way on I-70.

4:02 p.m. – Theft from Pioneer Library.

9:42 p.m. – Violation of protection from abuse order.

9:46 p.m. – Roadside assistance at K-25 and I-70.

11:32 p.m. – Disabled vehicle in the curves on Willow by Country Club. Unable to locate.

THOMAS COUNTY SHERIFF Wednesday

5:37 a.m. – Received a 911 call from the college beef barn, static on line even on call back. No one in house; possible moisture in line due to fog.

2:36 p.m. – Assisted motorist with flat tire at I-70 westbound mile 53.

4:15 p.m. – Numerous calls reported vehicle driving wrong way on I-70 at mile 52. Two deputies responded; not found.

7:31 p.m. – Suspicious person going door to door asking about tutoring kids. Not found.

Foundation encourages ag topics in classroom

The Kansas Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom has prepared for the new school year by offering opportunities for teachers and students.

For teachers, the foundation will give the Janet Sims Memorial Teacher of the Year award, which recognizes a Kansas teacher for efforts to incorporate agriculture into the classroom.

The 2010 teacher of the year will be recognized in March during Ag Day festivities at the state Capital in Topeka.

Teachers may apply, and additional information and applications are available at www.ksagclassroom.org. Applications, along with a letter of recommendation, must be postmarked by Friday, Dec. 4.

For students, the 2010 Post Card Art Contest sponsored by the foundation and the Kansas Department of Agriculture is under way. The theme for this year is "Seeds of Understanding: Kansas Crops," and the focus is Kansas grain and specialty crops.

One winner from each grade level, kindergarten to sixth, and one grand prize winner will be se-

lected. Each winner will receive a U.S. Savings Bond.

Entry forms and information are available on the website. Entries must be postmarked by Monday, Feb. 1.

Arts season opens in Oberlin

The Western Plains Arts Association will open its 40th season with the Boulder Acoustic Society performing at 3 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 13, at The Gateway in Oberlin.

The members of the group make up one of the most youthful string bands working on the Colorado folk and bluegrass circuits. At the group's core are four multi-instrumentalists who don't call any one member their leader.

While their name implies tradition, the four-piece groups pushes roots music, all the while clutching instruments straight from grandpa's attic: Aaron Keim plays string bass and ukulele. Kailin Yong rips a mean violin. Scott

McCormick pushes a squeezebox (accordion), and drummer Scott Aller plays junkyard percussion – old favorites like the washboard, mixed with makeshift oddities like a wooden box and sea shells. They share vocal duties, and any given member may trade his instrument for a ukulele without warning.

They run a wide gamut genres that blends barroom blues, old American folk and bluegrass balladeering, arena-rock irony, Dixieland jazz, punk intensity, rockabilly, world music and vaudevillian vibes.

Admission to the concert is by season ticket or at the door, \$10 for adults and \$5 for students.

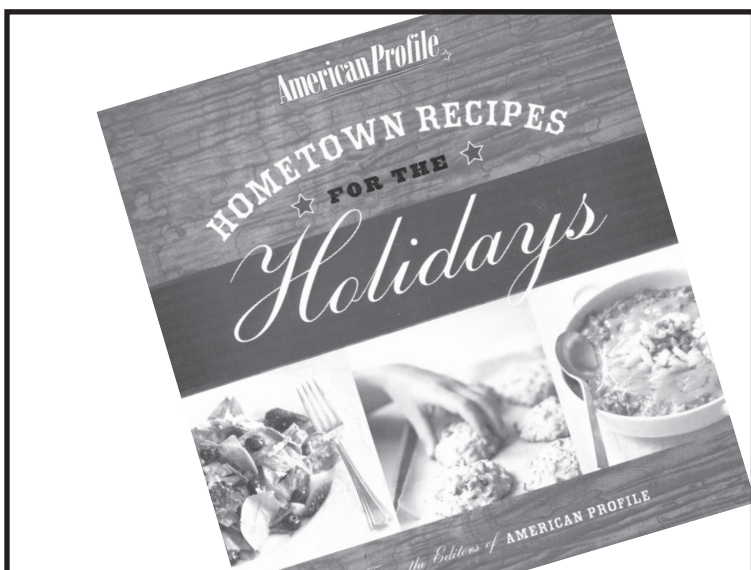
State Fair 4-H on web

HUTCHINSON – There's no need to wait, no need to pace....

4-H exhibit placings from the Kansas State Fair will be posted at www.Kansas4-H.org as soon after results become available as possible, said Justin Wiebers, Kansas State University Research and Extension 4-H specialist.

4-H families, neighbors and friends can check results from their homes or at courtesy computers located in 4-H Centennial Hall at the north end of the fairgrounds, Wiebers said.

"Making the results available electronically is a convenience for members and their families," he said, "as well as interested visitors, who report checking to see if their top pick matches the judge's."



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GOLDEN PLAINS HIGH SCHOOL HOMECOMING



Golden Plains High School Homecoming Candidates: Front: Griselda Monge, Melissa Ritter, Jessica Luna, Jenna Bruggeman, Katrina Griggs. Back: Andrew Luna, Tate Preston, Corey Shaw, Jeremy Hunter, Cole Christensen. (Photo by Judy Rogers/GPHS)

Highlights for the week!

Monday, September 7

No School
7 p.m. Jersey Auction, Hot Dog Feed, Bonfire

Tuesday, September 8

Fairy Tale Day

Wednesday, September 9

Super Hero Day

Thursday, September 10

Twins or Triplets Day

Friday, September 11

Spirit Day
Community Pep Rally at 4:15 @ Football Field
Royalty & Crowning at 6:15 pm
Game at 7:00 p.m. vs. Western Plains
Dance Following the Game

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