



.....STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH

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It is September! Can you believe that? Where did this year go? Labor Day weekend is upon us and the Nebraska State Fair is in full swing. To many, including me, it brings a favorite time of year to mind. It is football season with the nights and even the days getting cooler. I will have to admit that sitting at the State Fair it doesn't feel much cooler, but you know it is just around the corner. This time of year also brings us the sounds of the cicadas singing, which is also a well-known harbinger of the upcoming frosts that will be obviously coming our way. If you haven't noticed our crops are starting to show the end of their season. Some of course are showing it earlier than we like because of the lack of moisture this last month, but many fields are starting to turn and it won't be long and we will be seeing the combines entering the fields and the grain trucks traversing the roads. It won't be long now and probably sooner than what we think.

The potentially early harvest in many cases will be good news for many of our cattle producers as there is no secret that we are fast running out of grass. Those harvested fields will look awfully good to those cows and to the producers who will need that residue grazing to stretch their feeds to what could shape up to be a cold, snowy winter if El Nino does indeed kick in. If we don't get some moisture soon we will need to be considering a lot of things like supplementing the pastures, pulling cattle out of pastures into sacrifice areas or feedlots. I suggest we look at early weaning to take some pressure off these pastures and for sure take a real hard look at the grass to make sure we don't damage the crowns and leave enough leaves to get the grass through winter and a good start for next grazing season.

In my opinion, we really never got out of drought conditions. The subsoil moisture is gone and we have been living on borrowed time and a couple of timely rains. That lifeline unfortunately has ran out for many livestock producers in south central Nebraska and alternative practices may have to be looked at very seriously. I know this certainly sounds like a broken record, but it is what it is. We have not had "normal" weather for quite some time and we should be used by now to having to make some decisions as to pulling cattle, culling cattle, early weaning, supplementing and much more progressive management of our pastures, which will mean more work and time involved. One thing is for sure, we will all have to be even better managers of our resources by taking a complete inventory of where we are, what we have and what we can do!

This will be a busy couple of weeks for many folks and I am one of them. I have the pleasure of attending the 6th Nebraska State Fair to be held in Grand Island. The open class shows are now complete and we the 4-H and FFA youth exhibitors are starting to come in. Tomorrow will be a big day as hundreds of youth and thousands of beef, sheep, goats, swine and rabbits will be descending on Fonner Park and the Nebraska State Fair to compete for ribbons, championships, premiums, cash awards and of course the ever illusive Grand Champion trophy and the chance to be a part of the Parade of Champions. That means that there will be a lot of support for these young people with moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas and a contingency of supporters from their home communities. It becomes a large family affair.

I just got done watching the Supreme Breeding Beef competition with the champion breeding females and males in each breed paraded in front of two beef judges from Illinois and a third guest judge being Governor Ricketts. I have to tell you that we have some tremendous beef genetics in this state and we should be proud of that. Every producer has their likes and dislikes. That is why there are so many different breeds. Each breed brings with it its own traits, style and qualities that make it appealing to their perspective owners. It never ceases to amaze me on the quality and quantity of high quality animals that are brought to the fair and of course presented to individuals to purchase to improve their own herds. I am proud to sport my "Nebraska the Beef State" license plates as I firmly believe we really are the Beef State!

For those of you that haven't walked the Midway, it is unbelievable the many things that you have to choose from to watch, see, experience and yes – even to eat. I didn't know you could put so many different things on a stick, deep fat fry, embellish a hamburger or shredded brisket--- or create in such a way that it tempts the culinary desires that all of us have in some way or form. I am usually a little more reserved about what passes my palate, but oh the smells and wonder each plate or food art piece on a stick that you see everywhere about you, all giving you the incentive to sample - if not to devour. All of us have our favorites. I would love to hear from any of you what your favorite food is at the fair. Please drop a line to dlienemann2@unl.edu and I will give the results in next week's column. I think I will likely try the Kettle Korn tomorrow!

Of course when the dust clears, the trailers are on their ways home, all the livestock loaded on the trucks for slaughter and the static exhibits picked up and ready to go home - it will all start again. These families, farms, adult and youth exhibitors will display their prizes, lick their wounds, talk about what they learned or what the judges saw or didn't see and then rest. Many probably will say they are tired and this was too hot, too long, too expensive and too tiring and maybe it is time to hang up the halters. But I will guarantee that most of them will be soon heading for Ak Sar Ben and/or start looking again for that unique heifer or steer and eventually hog or sheep to start getting ready for next season. I understand that regimen and have myself done the same thing. It is hard to explain, perhaps a little hard to understand, but it is what we "barn rats" must do. It is on the level of Cornhusker Football. You can discuss it, cuss it, despair over it and then next year be ready to go again. Same exact thing in my books. Oh that is right! We also have football season ahead of us.... Go Big Red!!

The preceding information comes from the research and personal observations of the writer which may or may not reflect the views of UNL or Nebraska Extension. For more further information on these or other topics contact D. A. Lienemann, Nebraska Extension Educator for Webster County in Red Cloud, (402) 746-3417 or email to: dlienemann2@unl.edu or go to the website at: <http://www.webster.unl.edu/home>