Agriculture in Idaho

CATTLE AND CALF SALES GENERATED AN ESTIMATED $1.72 BILLION, UP 25 PERCENT FROM 2011, FOR IDAHO PRODUCERS IN 2012, WITH PRICE INCREASES AVERAGING 19 PERCENT, CATTLE SALES SET A RECORD. IDAHO’S CATTLE INVENTORY INCLUDED 469,000 BEEF COWS, UP 5 PERCENT FROM 2011, AND 581,000 DAIRY COWS, UP 1 PERCENT.

Source: “The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture 2010” at www.cals.uidaho.edu/aers/resources.htm

Expert writes book on cattle feed-use efficiency; Seminars aid producers facing high feed prices

ENSURING CATTLE USE THEIR FEED efficiently is vital for affordable beef and sustainable businesses, says animal scientist Rod Hill, whose book “Feed Efficiency in the Beef Industry” was recently published.

Hill, a College of Agricultural and Life Sciences livestock physiologist, has spent much of his career conducting feed efficiency studies on cattle.

UI Extension beef specialists reviewed the latest feed-use efficiency research and methods to reduce winter feed costs in seminars in Salmon, Pocatello, Burley and Caldwell last fall.

“There are obviously a multitude of factors involved,” Hill said, ranging from the individual animal’s metabolism, genetics, feed quality and others. He enlisted 53 experts at the University of Idaho and worldwide as coauthors.

Range fires, a drop in forage production and increase in demand for feed from a drought-stricken Midwest challenged Idaho’s cattle producers in 2012.

“One of the things that’s really concerning producers is the lack of winter range,” said John B. Hall, Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center superintendent.

U-Idaho Extension’s Beef Cow Winter Feeding Strategies seminars featured expert beef nutritionists, including CALS’ new beef nutritionist, Mary Drewnoski.

Sessions customized for each location focused on crop residues, alternative feeds and nutrition for improved reproduction.

Beef center offers high-tech tool to producers

IDAHO CATTLE BREEDERS who want to test their animals’ feed use efficiency can rent use of a sophisticated monitoring system at the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences research center near Salmon.

A National Science Foundation grant to support research on cattle feed-use efficiency underwrote the purchase of a feed-behavior monitoring system at the Nancy M. Cummings Research, Extension and Education Center.

Cattle breeders have begun to show interest in the technology, increasing the use of a valuable public resource, said John B. Hall, Cummings Center superintendent at Carmen.

The GrowSafe beef nutrition unit at the center monitors feed intake for individual animals to calculate feed to weight gain ratios.

Breeding stock producers may use the system to evaluate young animals’ feed-use efficiency for use in breeding programs, improving the genetics of commercial herds.

Private use of the unit reflects normal gaps in research projects and is offered to producers at the same costs researchers pay, Hall said.

“We wanted to let cattle producers know the service is available,” Hall said, adding the goal is not to compete with other operations and that feed costs may be higher in Salmon.

“It is too valuable a resource to be idle, so during times when a pen might be idle, we wanted to give Idaho seedstock producers the opportunity to take advantage of the unit,” Hall added. “This should be a win-win situation for Idaho’s beef industry and U-Idaho beef research.”

Spring break tour focuses on Idaho agriculture, jobs

A GROUP OF University of Idaho College of Agricultural and Life Sciences students embarked last March on what might seem an epic spring break road trip.

The 1,200-mile odyssey included an Anheuser-Busch malting plant at Idaho Falls, a potato plant near Jerome, a barley winery near Caldwell.

But the 18 students’ real goal was exploring Idaho agriculture in hopes of finding future job and internship opportunities in communities large and small.

As a class exercise for credit, students researched companies they visited, met with executives and learned more about the companies’ place in Idaho’s agricultural industry and their own possible futures.

“One thing that I really enjoyed was getting to learn about all of the different agricultural industries in Idaho and the people who run them,” said James Nasados, a senior studying agricultural education.

Shelbie Lincoln, a senior studying agribusiness, added, “The CALS Spring Break Tour opened my mind to the multiple opportunities we have in agricultural careers. It made me very excited to begin my own career, whatever that may be, as soon as I have my degree.”

Destinations included Salmon, Idaho Falls, Twin Falls, Boise, Nampa, Parma, and points in between, featuring stops at Liberty Idaho Gold Potato Co. in Blackfoot, SI-Ellen Dairy near Jerome, Clear Springs Foods at Buhl and Agri Beef in Boise.

CONTACT Rod Hill at rodhill@uidaho.edu

CONTACT John B. Hall at jbhall@uidaho.edu

CONTACT John FOltz at jfoltz@uidaho.edu

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