

Fall 2018 Newsletter

I have missed several newsletters since I have not had that many “AHH!” moments to relate. I fully believe we can learn the most from things that didn’t go as you expected. I have laughingly told people I have written a book titled “Ranching Made Hard”.

In the spring, we completed our annual soil testing (we are grass farmers) which required a balance of fertilizer and of course lime. Then we experienced a “2011 summer” – NO RAIN AT 7P for 2 months plus. Then the rain came in early fall with this came a “2011 invasion of army worms”. We did not see them early enough and when we did, we elected to turn in cattle to salvage what grass we had left. We started to be more observant and sprayed with a quick kill and residual chemical at \$16.50 per acre put out on the rest of our pasture. This was partially effective and kept some ground cover with coastal Bermuda grass. The pasture that we grazed only became stems and recovered with rains very slowly with very little growth. The last 45-60 days were only 2 inches high.

I give you my experience so in the future I will spray all my pastures with this combo as soon as we see any worms before it becomes stems. Conclusion: having the worms eat the grass to the ground is like scalping your hay meadows to the ground in 100° days – it doesn’t jump back rapidly even with good rains.

We will have our 43rd annual sale the last Saturday in October, offering bred SimAngus and purebred Simmental heifers and bulls, and a set of F1 bred Braford heifers. Also, for the first time we are offering a set of open F1 SimBrah heifers, certified F1 by ABBA and ASA. The last two years we have been breeding purebred Simmentals to purebred grey Brahman AI sires. We will be offering these heifers as bred heifers in the future. They offer the best of both breeds with hybrid vigor.

All bred females we offer in our Fall sales are raised on grass alone from early spring (April) to sale date. We have a winter pasture program – when it works we have great growth in our Fall calves. Our Spring calves weigh about 100-150 pounds less since they are not creep-fed and must gain weight on our summer coastal Bermuda, which results in modest gains. The growth of these calves is better on Tifton Bermuda but not all of our country is covered with Tifton. We cannot creep-feed even if we wanted to because of feral hogs.

We have elected to follow the lead of many progressive breeders in listing the EPDs of each animal only, which is a much better indicator of the animal’s potential. One can make these animals weigh what you want with feed but that does not help our customers one bit for the reasons we all know.

So, the new thing is that out of our 850-animal herd we are breeding about 300 AI with sexed semen (heifers) from beefy grey Brahman AI sires. We have had about the same conception rate as we have with non-sexed semen. We still do breed all of our females AI and have for the last 45 years; which has been beneficial in developing our cow herd. We do timed AI now and actually use the sexed semen slightly different by breeding at 18 hours after standing heat. We have had no calving problems with these SimBrah heifer calves. I am really proud of our Fall offering of bulls, bred and open females. Come see us.

Joe Prud'homme