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Dairy/Livestock

Grandin offers insights into animal behavior

By DOUG WARNOCK
For the Capital Press

GREENER PASTURES

Doug Warnock



Reducing stress on livestock during handling will help reduce sickness, minimize the time off feed and help maintain meat quality.

Dr. Temple Grandin, animal scientist at Colorado State University, encourages livestock handlers to reduce animal stress, which will improve livestock health and productivity. Grandin will be a keynote speaker at the Resilience for Land and Livestock Grazing Conference, March 27-28 at the Pendleton Convention Center in Pendleton, Ore.



Temple Grandin

Grandin is recognized internationally for her knowledge of animal behavior and its application in reducing livestock stress and improving effectiveness of animal handling facilities. She says, being a person with autism, it is easy for her to understand how animals think, because her thinking processes are like an animal's. Her thoughts are in pictures and are not language-based.

"I have learned that there is a whole continuum of thinking styles, from totally visual thinkers like me to totally verbal thinkers," she says. "People with autism and animals both think by making visual associations. These associations are like snapshots of events and tend to be very specific."

"Animals also tend to make place-specific associations. This means that if a horse has a bad experience in a barn with skylights, he may fear all barns with skylights, but will be fine in barns with solid roofs. This is why it is so important that an animal's first association with something new is a good first experience."

Grandin points out that fear is a major emotion in animals such as horses and cattle. Objects that make sudden movements cause the most fear. In the wild, sudden movement is feared, because predators make sudden movements when attacking their prey.

Both genetics and experience determine how an individual will behave in a fear-provoking situation. Animals with high-strung, nervous temperaments are generally more fearful and tend to form stronger fear memories than the more placid, calm types. People working with animals need to think about how the ani-

mals perceive the situations in which we put them.

Because livestock has wide-angle vision, loading ramps and handling chutes should have solid sides to prevent animals from seeing distractions outside the chute. Moving objects and people seen through the sides of a chute can cause balking or frighten livestock. Also, livestock working areas should have uniform lighting. Shadows and bright spots should be minimized.

Noise also causes distress. Most animals, especially cattle and sheep, are more sensitive to high frequency noise. Loud or shrill noises should be avoided.

Another important concept in livestock handling is flight zone. The flight zone is the animal's personal space. When a person enters the flight zone, the animal moves away. Just outside the flight zone is a zone of awareness, or pressure zone. Animals will each have their own individual flight zone and pressure zone, which will depend upon their temperament and past experience. Experienced livestock handlers will be able to determine an animal's flight zone and pressure zone soon after encountering the animal in a particular situation.

Understanding the behavior of livestock will enhance handling technique, reduce stress and improve both handler safety and animal welfare. Lower stress levels result in more productivity and healthier animals.

Livestock managers have an opportunity to learn more about animal behavior and animal management from Grandin at the Grazing Conference in Pendleton in March. Chris Schachtschneider, an Oregon State University Extension Specialist, will conduct a live demonstration on low stress handling as well. For more information go to rootsofresilience.org.

Doug Warnock, retired from Washington State University Extension, lives on a ranch in the Touchet River Valley where he writes about and teaches grazing management. He can be contacted at dwarnockgreener-pastures@gmail.com.

GDT auction jumps 4.2 percent

By LEE MIELKE
For the Capital Press

DAIRY MARKETS

Lee Mielke



The second Global Dairy Trade auction of 2019 got another boost in its weighted average of products offered, jumping 4.2 percent Tuesday, following the Jan. 2 gain of 2.8 percent.

It was the fourth consecutive session of gain.

All products, except rennet casein, were in the black, led by skim milk powder, up 10.3 percent, after it climbed 7.9 percent in the last event and 3.4 percent in the event before that. Lactose followed, up 7.9 percent. Butter was up 4.6 percent, after a 3.9 percent climb last time.

Cheddar was up 4.2 percent, following a 3.2 percent increase, and anhydrous milkfat was up 3.2 percent following a 3.9 percent gain.

Whole milk powder rounded up the gains with a 3.0 percent increase after it was up 1.2 percent in the

last event. Rennet casein was down 1.4 percent.

FC Stone equates the GDT 80 percent butterfat butter price to \$1.8860 per pound U.S., up 8.2 cents from the last session. CME butter closed Tuesday at \$2.2575.

GDT Cheddar cheese equated to \$1.5893 per pound, up 6 cents from the last event and compares to Tuesday's CME block Cheddar at \$1.4175. GDT skim milk powder averaged \$1.0907 per pound, up from 99.82 cents last time and the first time it topped \$1 per pound since June 20, 2017.

Whole milk powder averaged \$1.2597, up from \$1.2269. CME Grade A nonfat dry milk closed Tuesday at \$1.0450 per pound.

Milk spigot slows, but outlook uncertain

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press



Carol Ryan Dumas/Capital Press File

A bank analyst says the outlook for U.S. dairy exports is uncertain.

Growth in milk production in the major exporting regions is expected to slow to a trickle in the first half of 2019 to less than 0.5 percent, bringing some recovery in milk prices.

But there's a lot of uncertainty in world markets, according to Rabobank analysts.

"I think we're going to be better than '18, which is no great shakes, but I don't think we're going to be as high as we were in '17," Mary Ledman, Rabobank global strategist, told Capital Press.

Rabobank is forecasting no more than a \$1 per hundredweight increase in the Class III milk price, bringing the average in 2019 to \$15.55, she said.

Markets are poised to move higher, but there's a lot of uncertainty, including Brexit in the EU, economic instability in South America and trade wars in

the U.S., she said.

"China is the real wild-card for trade," she said.

The trade war with the U.S. has resulted in devaluation of the Chinese currency and lessened its purchasing power. As a result, Rabobank lowered its forecast for Chinese dairy imports in 2018 from an increase of 14 percent to an increase of 8 percent, she said.

The positive news is that China has depleted its stocks, and imports should be up 11 percent in 2019, she said.

An improvement in prices can't come soon enough for U.S. dairy producers, but it's

not going to be as much as they'd like. A \$17 Class III price is not in the forecast, she said.

The last three years have been brutal — especially for smaller dairy producers, who have faced headwind after headwind, Tom Bailey, Rabobank senior analyst, said.

While the new farm bill will help smaller producers still in business, there are challenges ahead. Demand hasn't been great for domestic retail sales. Natural cheese was the only category to increase year-over-year sales in November. All the others,

Small-scale cattle producers step onto bigger stage

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press



Brad Carlson/Capital Press

Mike Relk of Mi-Hud Angus Ranch in Kuna, Idaho, says small operators are producing big-time genetics. He and several other small producers have put together an online auction.

also offer excellent genetics, in part by accessing these same superstar bulls through artificial insemination.

"We continue to improve our herd, through specific genetic matings, to have efficient cattle to bring to our customers," Relk said.

Mi-Hud's registered Black Angus cattle are bred from high-quality "AI" sires for calving ease, feed-to-growth efficiency and beef carcass traits. The herd originates from cows he acquired five years ago from a large

Idaho breeder known for strong genetics.

"I was comfortable with the quality of the cattle right off the bat, but for the small producer, there is no platform to market these good genetics," said Relk, who historically made most sales through word-of-mouth or advertising.

The online auction, which opened for viewing Jan. 4 and closes at 1 p.m. Mountain Feb. 25, "is a way for the small producer to put together a number of bulls

of high-quality genetics, and market them," he said, adding that the format also figures to provide "true price discovery."

Eligible animals pass parentage-verification and breeding-soundness tests. Buyers can purchase insurance on bulls for the breeding season, and share that cost with sellers.

"I promise you, somebody from Butte, Mont., doesn't know about the bulls we have in the Treasure Valley," Relk said. "This gives them an opportunity to look at the genetics we have."

Zach Raptosh, a cattle producer and veterinarian in south Nampa, Idaho, said he expects the group to field about three dozen bulls in the auction. All will be DNA-tested to give buyers confidence about parentage.

"Every bull in our sale is sired by some of the industry's top genetics," he said. "We are all really passionate about cattle. We are all aiming to be progressive breeders and to raise animals that are in the upper echelon of the breed."

Analyst: Cattle markets spark optimism

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

ployment is down sharply, wages are starting to gain and there are plenty of jobs. People have money, they like beef and they're buying beef," he said.

In addition, exports have been strong all year. If things keep clicking along as they are, it spells a pretty good year in the cattle business, he said.

The industry also sent a lot of cows to slaughter, up 12 percent year over year at certain times, he said.

"The bottom line is we killed a lot of beef cows.

At the same time, we didn't bring a lot of heifers in (for replacement). So we stalled expansion," he said.

Combined with higher dairy cow slaughter in the fourth quarter of 2018, total cattle inventory should only be up about 0.5 percent year over year at the start of 2019, he said.

"We slowed the rate of increase in expansion in the beef herd and reduced the size of the dairy herd," he said.

Based on data through November, beef cow slaugh-

ter should be up 9 percent year over year and account for 9.7 percent of the beef cow herd — the highest rate since 2013 when the industry was liquidating, he said.

"I don't see any liquidation, but we kind of stalled expansion," he said.

He thinks the Jan. 1 beef cow herd will be even with a year earlier.

He also thinks the 2018 calf crop will come in with a 1.4 percent increase year over year, lower than USDA's forecast of a 2 percent increase.

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