

COSHOCTON COUNTY AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCESDecember 2, 2020 Issue

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for December 4
The Goal: Feed Less, Graze More

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Hello Coshocton County! Welcome to the month of December! I have to admit it was beautiful to wake up yesterday and to see the sight of snow.

December has arrived meaning that deer season is full swing this week. Good luck to all the hunters out across Coshocton County. Stay safe out there!

As we move into the winter season there is a lot of uncertainty. I appreciate all the 2021 pesticide applicators who have returned their surveys providing us advice on the best practices for offering re-certification training this winter (given COVID-19). Just last Wednesday we learned the re-certification deadline has been extended from March 31 to July 1, 2021 for pesticide & fertilizer applicators. This will help give us more time to complete re-certification training as we negotiate the coronavirus pandemic.

Stay safe and well. Day by day. I step at a time!

Sincerely,

David L. Marrison

Coshocton County OSU Extension ANR Educator



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Grouping the Cowherd for Winter Feeding

By: [Steve Boyles](#), OSU Beef Extension Specialist

Source: <https://u.osu.edu/beef/2020/11/25/grouping-the-cowherd-for-winter-feeding/>

Young-bred heifers and young cows that have just weaned their first calf should be fed separately from the mature cows in the herd. The young animals are smaller, still growing, and are replacing their temporary teeth. They may be pushed away from feed by cows in their prime and settle for what hay is left and is likely of lower higher quality. The results of feeding young stock with the main cowherd is thin heifers and maybe overfed cows.

Older cows that are kept for being exceptional producers (or are just special to the cattle producer) merit some special attention. Consider feeding them with the younger heifers and cows. Keep a close eye on this groups because they may be missing some teeth and decline in body condition.

Grouping the herd according to fall body condition could allow for thinner cows to catch up with cows are already in adequate condition. Admittedly, wintering facilities and number of feeding areas can limit the degree of grouping of cows. Grouping cows will also allow you to ask the question, "which cows are my easy keepers and which cows are my hard keepers?"



Body Condition Scoring, Beef Cow Nutrition & Reproduction

Body Condition Scoring, Beef Cow Nutrition & Reproduction

By: [Steve Boyles](#), OSU Beef Extension Specialist

Source: <https://u.osu.edu/beef/2020/11/25/body-condition-scoring-beef-cow-nutrition-and-reproduction/>

Net calf crop or number of calves weaned per cow exposed is an important calculation for commercial cow-calf producers. A 9-point system is commonly used to condition score beef cows. The importance of body condition at calving on subsequent reproductive performance has been documented extensively. Cows should have an optimum Body Condition Score (BCS) of 5 to 6 at calving that should be maintained through breeding to ensure optimal reproductive performance. The most important factor influencing pregnancy rate in beef females is body energy reserves at calving. In addition, low energy intake before calving appears to be the major culprit to reduced reproductive performance during the subsequent breeding season. Body condition score is a better indicator of the nutritional program than is body weight.

Calving Interval and Profitability: One of the major constraints in the improvement of reproductive efficiency of beef cows is the postpartum interval (PPI), defined as the period from calving until cows resume estrus activity. Calving interval, defined as the period between the birth of one calf until the birth of the next calf, is significantly affected by the postpartum interval. If a cow is to calve on a 365-day interval, with a 283-day gestation length, she has to conceive within 82 days of calving. It takes approximately 40 days for the uterus of a well managed cow to recover after calving, and this leaves a 42-day window in which to conceive. Cows that conceive within 80 days of calving tend to have a lower breakeven cost of production per pound of calf weaned than those that take more than 80 or 90 days to return to estrus.

Each time a cow is not bred during a 21-day heat cycle, it can cost up to 39 lbs of weaning weight (assuming an average daily gain on calves of 1.85 lbs/day. What do you expect for your calving season? Is it 60-25-10-5 (e.g. 60% of cows calving in first 21 days of calving season, 25% calving from day 22 to 41, 10% calving between day 42 and 62 and 5% open)? Open cows don't produce a calf but they can at least be sold. Do the lighter calves in the 10% calved between day 42 and 62 make you money?....maybe?..... but not as much as the heavier/earlier born calves.

Effect of body condition score (BCS) at calving on postpartum interval (PPI)

BCS	PPI – Days
3	88.5
4	69.7
5	59.4
6	51.7
7	30.6

Adapted from Houghton et al., 1990

Rule of Thumb #1: The recommendation is to target a body condition of 5 at calving for mature cows and 5.5 to 6 for young cows. Routinely feeding cows to achieve condition scores greater than 6 is not cost effective. A cow calving in a BCS of 5 will return an income of approximately \$100 more than a cow calving in a BCS of 4. Compared to a maintenance diet, a cow needs approximately 160 Mcal of NEg to change from a BCS 4 to a BCS 5. Corn has approximately 1 Mcal of NEg per pound; therefore, approximately 160 pounds of corn supplementation would be needed. In this example, if corn is valued at \$3.00, \$5.00, or \$7.00 per bushel, then the added cost above maintenance to change body condition from 4 to 5 would be \$8.57, and \$20.00, respectively. This is far less money spent on feed than would be lost if cows were allowed to stay in a BCS of 4.

Rule of Thumb #2: It takes about 80 pounds of actual cow body weight for a mature cow to change one (\pm) BCS. First-calf heifers, on the other hand, require about 150 pounds to increase one BCS. The difference in weight required to change one BCS can be explained by the fact that first-calf heifers must continue to grow before they can begin improving BCS by depositing fat.

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Supplement Energy to Ewes in Late Gestation

By: [Dr. Benjamin Wenner](#), Assistant Professor, Department of Animal Sciences, The Ohio State University

Source: <https://u.osu.edu/sheep/2020/12/01/supplement-energy-to-ewes-in-late-gestation/>

As we approach the winter lambing season in Ohio, producers have a variety of approaches to feeding pregnant ewes. Those who believe underfeeding their ewe will decrease fetal size are partially correct (as addressed in the ASIA Sheep Production Handbook, 2002), but the likelihood of decreasing dystocia with underfeeding is nearly nil. In a 2007 review of lambing data, late gestation energy supplementation could account for increasing fetal weight by roughly $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Certainly, there are many other factors leading to dystocia that deserve consideration before a $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. increase in lamb birth weight garners attention. Twinning alone can reduce birth weights (despite increasing ewe conceptus weight and energy requirement) and thus practices to achieve greater fertility in your breeding flock are a wiser pursuit than trying to nutritionally limit birth weights during gestation.

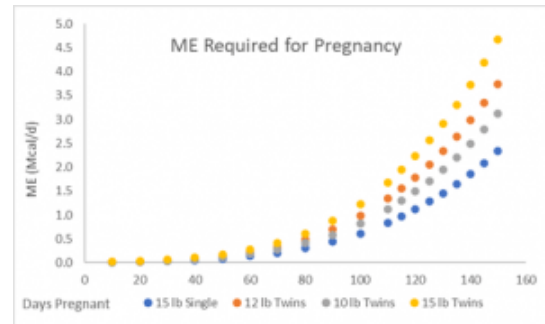


It has become common practice to put ewes on marginal feeding once pregnant. In fact, 30 days into gestation, the fetus only increases the ewe's demand for energy or protein by roughly 2%. Of course, like many species, the pregnant ewe will cry for feed and make you feel guilty but free-choice hay alone can often exceed her requirements in the first 2-3 months of gestation depending on the quality provided. Some exceptions

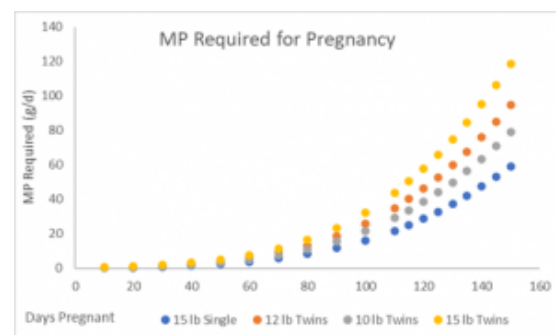
apply, especially that the colder temperatures may increase sheep requirements by 10-15% depending on the temperature, precipitation, wool cover, and shelter. But the general consensus is that early- and mid-gestation ewes have minimal increases in requirements compared to their maintenance diet. So when do we need to start supplementing these ewes and by how much?

The increased demand of the fetus(es) for energy and protein both grow dramatically during the last 6 weeks of gestation.

Academically, we'd estimate these increased requirements in metabolizable energy and protein – estimated as the amount of energy or protein that is digested, absorbed, and available to the animal for metabolic processes. By the end of 4 months of gestation, the average 200 lb. ewe, bearing twins, has an increased requirement for both metabolizable energy (ME) and metabolizable protein (MP) by nearly 60%. One month later, she has reached a 120% increase in ME and MP requirements by lambing! This dramatic increase in both ME and MP requirements at the end of gestation is captured graphically for a variety of lamb and birth weight combinations. And it is these last 2 months of gestation where the average quality grass hay can no longer provide the nutrients demanded by the developing lambs.

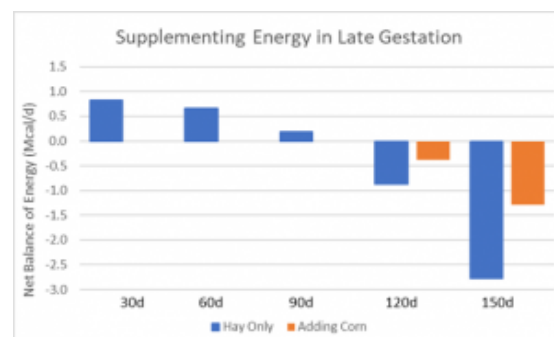


This leads to the question of titles. If both the ME and MP requirements are increasing dramatically in tandem for the last 6 weeks of gestation, why does the title lead you to believe you should focus on the energy supplementation? As a general rule across sheep production systems, sheep are commonly fed in excess of their requirements for protein. Overfeeding crude protein (CP) is certainly better than the alternative of shorting your sheep on the essential building blocks for all measures of farm productivity (meat, milk, wool). However, when evaluating the diets balanced for sheep versus their listed requirements in the NRC for small ruminants (2007), diets can accidentally exceed CP requirements by up to 20% quite often. Rations for show stock reach a fresh level of excess CP as we aim to capture every ounce of muscle gain possible, regardless of cost. But that is a topic for a different day.



By no means am I implying that protein is an innocent bystander to the conversation on ewe supplementation. Early in gestation, there is evidence that amino acid supplementation of the ewe can influence the genetic expression of her offspring (Sinclair et al., 2007) and that underproviding CP to ewes can influence brain pathways related to energy usage in the lamb (Begum et al., 2012). However, the greatest risk of protein deficiency is in a mishandled flushing scenario (high provided energy decreases pasture/hay intake and dietary CP) or in late gestation when ewe intake and rumen volume are depressed by fetal encroachment.

However, it is much more likely that a pregnant ewe will be deficient in ME than MP during late gestation. Depicted in the figure is the net balance of energy without supplementation by month (blue bars) versus the net balance of energy with supplementation of corn in months 4 and 5 of gestation (orange bars). As the ewe loses gut volume for hay intake, the increased need for supplemental energy could require 1-1.5 lbs./d in month 4 and ultimately reach 2-3 lbs./d whole corn by the time of delivery. This corn provides marginal quantities of MP but will also drive increased microbial growth in the rumen, supplying additional MP to the ewe. Thus, it is likely with corn supplementation in an average ewe (200 lbs., 10-12 lb. twins) that MP requirements of the ewe will be met incidentally.



The two primary categories of nutrient-induced pre- and post-parturition diseases revolve around energy and calcium. Making sure the ewes have access to a free-choice mineral can help prevent hypocalcemia, making energy your primary concern. As you move into the winter months and prepare for lambing, the best way to monitor the need for supplementation remains to body condition score your ewes. Putting a hand on them at the feed bunk or through the chute is still the simplest way to monitor change in condition over time. Ewes should not noticeably gain or lose BCS through late gestation and if you sense a shift in the group average then it's best to adjust supplementation immediately. Based on the size of ewe and number of lambs, supplementing 1-2 lbs. of corn up to 3 lbs. of corn at the end of gestation can help prevent many issues around parturition and improve the viability of your lamb crop.

The New Tick on the Block in Ohio – Gulf Coast Tick

By: [Tim McDermott](#) DVM, OSU Extension Educator, Franklin County (originally published in [Farm and Dairy](#))

Source: <https://u.osu.edu/beef/2020/12/02/the-new-tick-on-the-block-in-ohio-gulf-coast-tick/>

Right now you are probably getting tired of hearing from me about new tick species and the diseases and potential allergies they vector to producers, livestock, and companion animals in Ohio that we have to worry about. I wrote an article for All About Grazing back in June of 2019 warning about the mammalian muscle allergy that can make you allergic to red meat from a Lone Star tick bite. My colleague Erika Lyon submitted an All About Grazing article introducing you to the Asian Longhorned Tick in January of 2019 and I submitted an article as a follow up to the Asian Longhorned tick in Ohio in July of 2020. Now we have a confirmed case of that invasive in Gallia county and are keeping our eye out for further spread. It is enough to make your head spin even further in this challenging 2020 year.



The tick we are going to talk about today is the Gulf Coast tick, *Amblyomma maculatum* Koch. This tick is not an invasive like the Asian Longhorned tick, but instead has a very long history of impacting the livestock industry in the United States. First described in 1844 this tick has had a historical habitat range of coastal grassy areas as its name implies, mostly in the southeastern United States. The tick played an important role in the spread of the devastating screwworm outbreaks in the southern United States in the early 1900's through infestations of livestock. The bite of the Gulf Coast tick can cause severe inflammation and ulceration at the attachment site because it has a very large hypostome (mouthpart) that it uses for attachment and feeding and this provided an easy entry path for screwworm larvae into the livestock host. A preferred feeding site on livestock is the ears and if numerous ticks bite and attach you can have swelling, inflammation and drooping of the ears, also known as "gotch ears." This tick species has shown the ability to migrate and to spread to new habitat over time gradually expanding its range up the east coast as well as into pasture habitat in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. It had been noted to have a migration pathway up the Mississippi River and Ohio River valleys and has now been confirmed in Ohio in Hamilton and Butler counties. What does that mean for Ohio as well as our surrounding neighbor states? The best guess is that it will continue to spread slowly to new habitat and new host ranges. This tick can travel on birds so spread to other regions is not unheard of. The habitat that this tick prefers is similar to the American Dog Tick such as pastures, meadows or more open areas and it is noted to be a little more sunlight and heat tolerant than other tick species. Besides birds, this tick feeds on multiple species including humans.

In terms of medical importance to producers, companion animals and livestock there are several diseases that we need to be aware of. It can vector, or transmit the disease *Hepatozoon americanum*, a protozoal parasite which causes Hepatozoonosis in canines. In livestock it can vector the pathogen for Heartwater, although this is not found in Ohio currently. In humans this tick is known to transmit the bacteria *Rickettsia parkeri* which causes a spotted fever that is similar although not as severe as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. When you are outside working your animals, enjoying time with family or your pets make sure to practice tick-safe behaviors such as permethrin treated clothing, frequent tick checks, and use of repellants to keep yourself safe. Make sure to include your furry friends in your plan for ticks with a veterinary approved product for flea and tick control as well.

Farmer's Tax Guide- Tax Guidance for Your Farm Business

By: Barry Ward, Director, OSU Income Tax Schools & Leader, Production Business Management

Source: <https://u.osu.edu/ohioagmanager/2020/12/01/farmers-tax-guide-tax-guidance-for-your-farm-business/>

Do you need a resource to answer those tough farm tax questions? If so, you can access the Farmer's Tax Guide (IRS Publication 225) online at: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p225.pdf>. The 2020 Farmer's Tax Guide explains how federal tax laws apply to farming. This guide can be used as a guide for farmers to figure taxes and complete their farm tax return.

The explanations and examples in this publication reflect the Internal Revenue Service's interpretation of tax laws enacted by Congress, Treasury regulations, and court decisions. However, the information given does not cover every situation and is not intended to replace the law or change its meaning.

Some of the new topics for the 2020 tax year which are included in this publication are: Tax treatment of Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) payments, Payroll Protection Program (PPP) Loans and Forgiven Debt, Increased section 179 expense deduction dollar limits, COVID-19 related employment tax credits and other tax relief, Redesigned Form W-4 for 2020, New Form 1099-NEC, and much more. Hardcopies of the 2020 Farmer's Tax Guide are also available at select county OSU Extension offices.

The Rural Tax Education Site has additional resources for agriculturally related income and self-employment tax information that is both current and easy to understand: <https://ruraltax.org/>

Farmer Sentiment Pulls Back Post-Election

By: James Mintert and Michael Langemeier, Purdue Center for Commercial Agriculture

Source: <https://ag.purdue.edu/commercialag/ageconomybarometer/farmer-sentiment-pulls-back-post-election-regulation-trade-and-taxes-rated-as-top-concerns/>

U.S. farmers sentiment weakened following the November 2020 elections, as the Purdue University-CME Group Ag Economy Barometer fell 16 points from a month earlier to a reading of 167. Although this month's reading was nearly equal to the pre-pandemic high set back in February, it was 9 percent lower than the sentiment reading taken just two weeks prior to the 2020 elections. The decline in the Ag Economy Barometer was the result of weakened expectations for the future on the part of agricultural producers, as the Index of Future Expectations declined to a reading of 156 in November, 30 points below the October reading. On the other hand, farmers perception of current conditions on their farms actually improved. The Index of Current Conditions, buoyed by the ongoing rally in agricultural commodity prices, rose by 9 points from October to November setting a new record high for the index of 187. The Ag Economy Barometer is calculated each month from 400 U.S. agricultural producers' responses to a telephone survey. This month's survey was conducted from November 9-13, 2020.

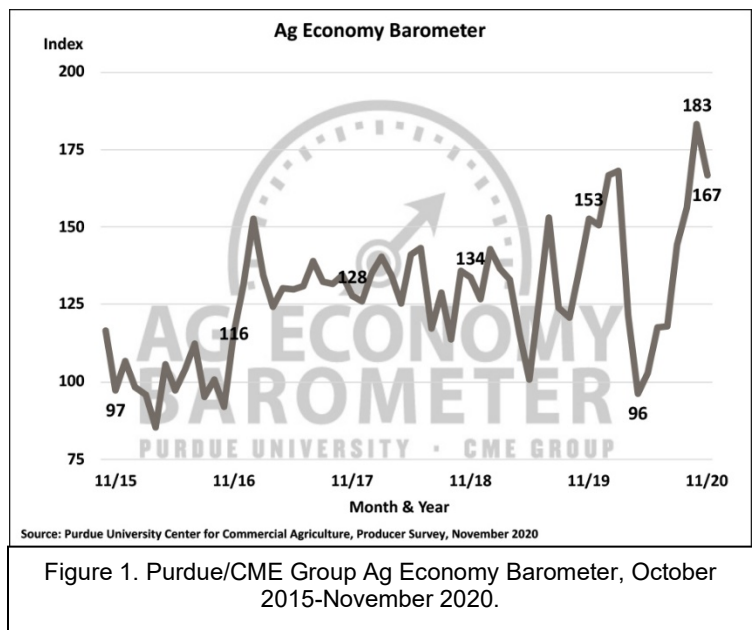


Figure 1. Purdue/CME Group Ag Economy Barometer, October 2015-November 2020.

Although farmers' expectations for the future weakened, they remained relatively optimistic about making large investments in their operations, as the Farm Capital Investment Index changed little in November with a reading of 80, just 2 points below the index's record high set back in October. However, when asked more specifically about their plans with respect to farm machinery purchases, survey respondents pulled back somewhat in November compared to October. In this

month's survey, 10 percent of farmers said they planned to increase their farm machinery purchases compared to a year earlier, down from 14 percent who planned to increase purchases back in October. At the same time, the percentage of farmers planning to keep their machinery purchases even with a year ago, fell from 53 to 50 percent on the November survey, while the percentage of respondents planning to reduce their purchases rose from 33 to 40 percent.

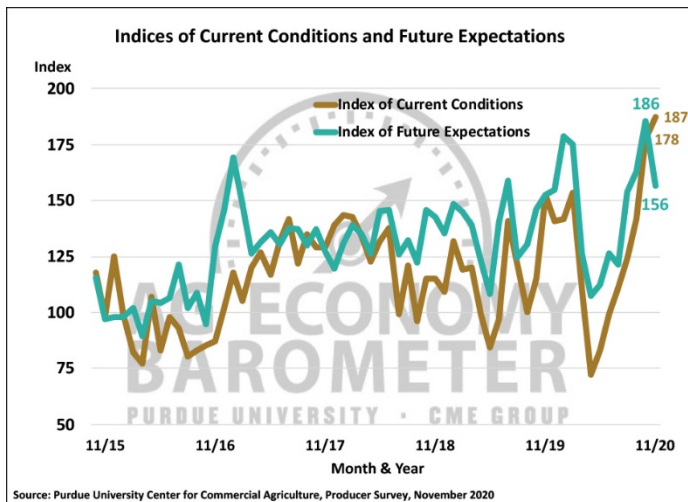


Figure 2. Indices of Current Conditions and Future Expectations, October 2015-November 2020

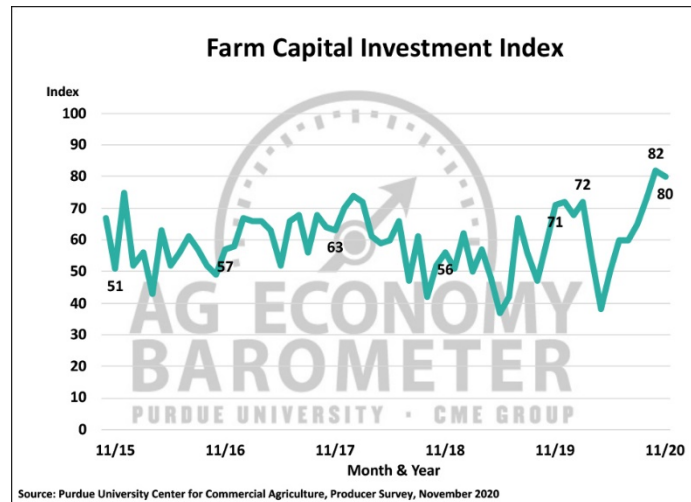


Figure 3. Farm Capital Investment Index, October 2015-November 2020

Producers' optimistic view of current conditions on their farms provided support to their short-run perceptions about farmland values. When asked to look ahead 12-months, survey respondents' expectations for farmland values in November were virtually unchanged compared to a month earlier. However, consistent with the decline in future expectations among survey respondents, there was a softening in producers' longer-term views on farmland values. In particular, the percentage of producers expecting to see farmland values rise over the next five years declined from 59 percent in October to 54 percent in November. Still, that remains a much more optimistic view on farmland values than this past spring when the percentage of producers expecting to see farmland values rise over the next five years ranged from 41 to 44 percent.

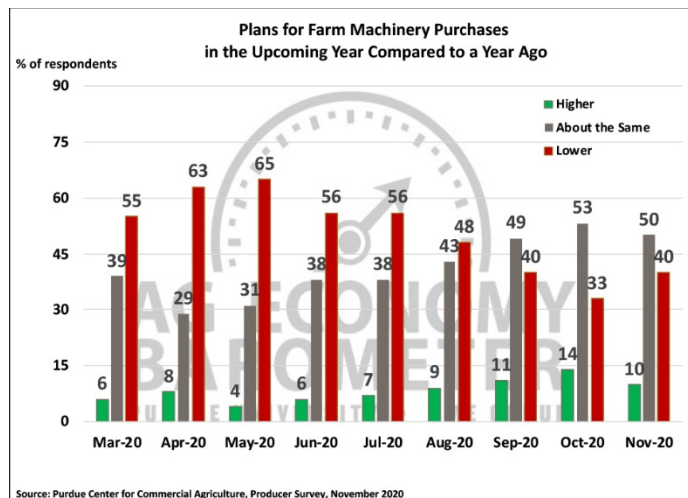


Figure 4. Plans for Farm Machinery Purchase in the Upcoming Year Compared to a Year Ago, March-November 2020.

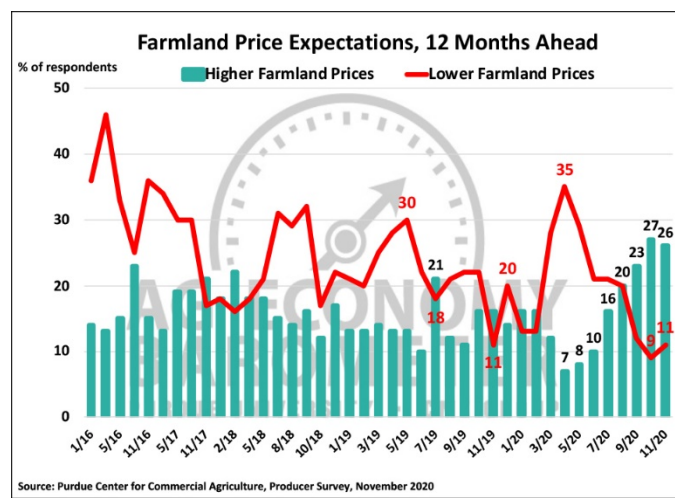


Figure 5. Farmland Price Expectations, 12 Months Ahead, January 2016-November 2020.

Farmers' attitudes regarding the trade dispute with China have changed over the course of 2020. Back in January and February of this year, 80 percent of survey respondents said they expected to see the trade dispute with China be resolved in a way that benefits U.S. agriculture. Optimism about the trade dispute started to fade last spring with approximately two-thirds of respondents during the spring quarter still expecting a favorable outcome. On the November survey, the percentage of farmers expecting a favorable outcome for U.S. agriculture declined to 50 percent, the lowest percentage recorded since we first posed this question in the summer of 2019. In a related question, only 44 percent of respondents to the November survey said they think it's likely that China will fulfill the Phase One Trade Agreement requirements, down from 59 percent a month earlier.

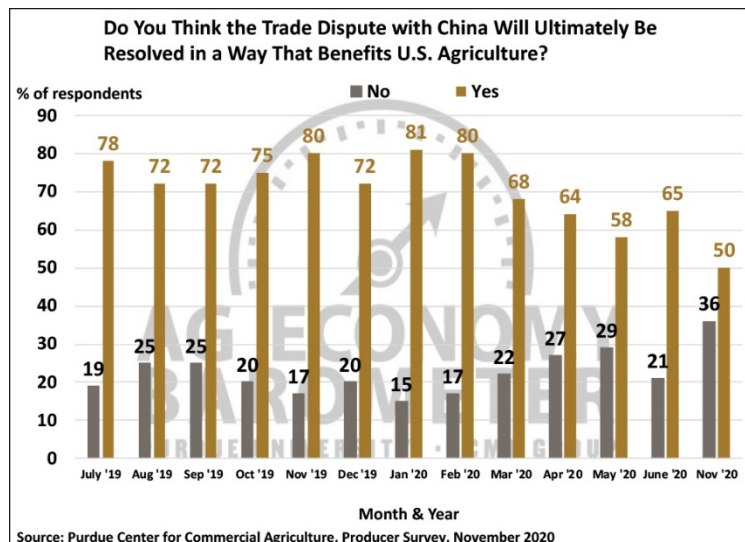


Figure 6. Will Trade Dispute With China Be Resolved in a Way That Benefits U.S. Agriculture?, July 2019-November 2020.

To learn more about what might be motivating shifts in producers' sentiment pre- and post-November election, several new questions regarding whether they expect to see changes to regulations, taxes, and other aspects of the agricultural economy (see below) in the next 5 years, were included on both the October and November surveys. Month-to-month shifts in responses to these questions provide some insight into the decline observed in the Index of Future Expectations that took place this month. Comparing results from October to November, far more producers in November said they expect to see 1) environmental regulations impacting agriculture to tighten over the next five years; 2) higher income tax rates for farms and ranches; 3) higher estate tax rates for farms and ranches; 4) less government support for the U.S. ethanol industry and 5) a weaker farm income safety net provided by U.S. government program policies. On the November survey, 77 percent of respondents said they expect more restrictive environmental regulations five years from now vs. 41 percent who felt that way in October. When asked about income tax rates, 66 percent of respondents in November said they expect higher rates for farms and ranches five years from now compared to just 35 percent who felt that way in October. Similarly, 66 percent of respondents in November also indicated that they expect higher estate tax rates for farms and ranches compared to 40 percent who said they expected higher estate taxes for farms and ranches back in October. The percentage of producers who said they expect government support for the U.S. ethanol industry to decline nearly doubled from October to November with 33 percent of respondents in November expecting government support to decline over the next five years compared to just 17 percent in October. This was similar to the shift in attitudes regarding the farm income safety net as 35 percent of respondents in November said they expect to see a weaker farm safety net five years from now compared to 18 percent who felt that way in October.

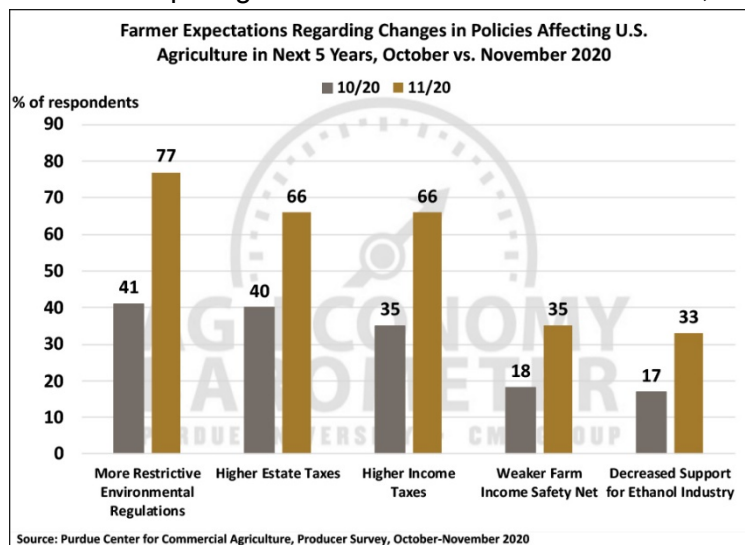


Figure 7. Farmer Expectations Regarding Changes in Policies Affecting U.S. Agriculture in Next 5 Years, October vs. November, 2020.

Wrapping Up

Farmer sentiment weakened in November as the Ag Economy Barometer declined to a reading of 167. The decline was entirely attributable to weaker expectations for the future as the Index of Current Conditions actually rose to a new record high while the Index of Future Expectations declined. Agricultural producers remained optimistic about making large investments in their farming operations, although fewer producers in November than October said they expect to increase their farm machinery purchases compared to a year earlier. Farmer's attitude regarding the short-run direction of farmland values was virtually unchanged from October, while their longer-run view of future farmland values softened somewhat compared to a month earlier. Shifts in responses to questions posed on both the October and November surveys, suggest that weakness in the Index of Future Expectations following the November election was at least partially explained by concerns about: 1) future environmental regulations impacting agriculture; 2) higher income and estate tax rates for farms and ranches; 3) potential for reduced government support for the U.S. ethanol industry and 5) a weaker farm income safety net possibly being provided by U.S. government program policies.

The Goal: Feed Less, Graze More

By: Victor Shelton, NRCS State Agronomist/Grazing Specialist

Source: <https://u.osu.edu/beef/2020/12/02/the-goal-feed-less-graze-more/>

I often talk about upcoming grazing conferences this time of year. Right now, meetings in person are scarce and perhaps rightly so. I still encourage you to continue learning whether it's from watching YouTube videos, reading books or articles, or attending a virtual meeting or conference.

It is also the time of year when I start thinking more about finding a comfortable chair, a warm blanket and some good reading material — especially when the snow flurries start. Winter is a great time for me to catch up on reading after checking on livestock in the cold, as long as I don't get too warm and nod off. But, that said, winter chores still must be done! I'm never mentally prepared for winter, but that won't stop it from happening. What's a perfect winter to me? It includes stockpiled forages lasting for as long as possible, dry or frozen ground and as little hay needed to be fed.

You certainly can't control the weather. You need to instead learn how to work around or with it, especially the farther north you live. Last month I asked the question "will there be enough feed or forage for your livestock until spring?" Livestock either have to be grazing something or be fed. One of the best ways to reduce winter feeding issues is to decrease the amount of winter feed that needs to be given to your animals. It is almost always cheaper to graze than it is to feed. Remember, if a wheel is turning, you are spending money. The more animals are concentrated, and especially when fed in one spot, the more resource concerns you will have. Seasonal feeding areas need to be managed and minimized to reduce environmental impacts and for the health and well-being of the herd. Cold weather and mud certainly increase livestock nutritional requirements, intake and costs. So, let's first try to reduce the timeframe for when winter-feeding areas are really needed.

Certainly, the longer you can graze annuals or crop residue in the early fall, the longer the pastures get to rest, grow and stockpile. The more stockpile you have, the longer you can graze into the winter. This all reduces the amount of time needed in winter feeding areas.

Making hay and feeding hay is the most expensive part of being in the cow business! It generally costs up to \$2/cow/day to feed hay and that is without counting waste. Jim Gerrish, University of Missouri-Forage Systems Research Center Manager, really made me start thinking several years ago when he said "there was more money to be made in the cow/calf business by managing cattle during winter; not just during the growing season." Gerrish has also pointed out that no matter where people lived, they tended to feed similar amounts of hay. That doesn't make any sense! You would think the ones in the far north would be feeding a lot more than the ones in the deep south, but quite often that's not the case. The longer the growing season, the more forage you can normally produce allowing you to graze a lot longer and perhaps easily not feed any hay; some have learned to be efficient, some haven't. If a wheel is turning, you are spending money.

Your goal each year should be to feed less and graze more. Think about how short you can cut your feeding time frame. If you are feeding hay five months out of the year now, can you reduce that to four, three or less? If you are short on forages during the growing season and don't change animal numbers or improve that animal-to-forage balance, you will be spending a lot of time and money feeding during the winter. If you want to graze longer and reduce winter feeding inputs, you first need to balance your forage base with the number of animals you have. Generally— and this is a huge “it depends” — on where you are located, your forages and your soils, but you'll usually need at least 2.5 acres per animal unit to supply dry matter requirements. An animal unit is 1,000 pounds of live weight. That 2.5 acres also includes being efficient in grazing or feeding.

If you don't have enough acres, then work to increase forage yield on the acres you do have. If you can double production on what you have, you just doubled your acreage without the extra taxes. You also need to be as efficient as possible in allocating out that forage and getting as much production as you can from it. You can increase production with good fertility, good soil health and good management.

I talk about “stop grazing” heights quite a bit. This is not only important during the growing season, but also over winter. This residual is important in the winter to reduce runoff, increase infiltration and to help balance that grazing animal next spring when forages are washy and have less fiber. So, it's good to leave a bit behind anyway. What is ideal? Four inches for cool season forages such as orchardgrass and tall fescue and six inches for warm season grasses such as big bluestem.

That can be grazed down tighter if you want to slow spring growth which is a positive thing if you are trying to get more clover into the stand. It takes some of the competitive edge away from the perennial grasses. Winter, and certainly early spring grazing, can be challenging at times. Ideally, you want either dry or frozen conditions, but you don't always get that. The more forage growth that is present when you do graze it, the less negative soil impact there will be in most cases. This is especially true if animals are not allowed to linger or remain on the same spot for very long. This is also true when grazing annuals on cropland and a good reason to not feed supplements or hay on cropland. You don't want to cause any undue compaction or have any long-term negative effects. An abundance of roots, soil life and natural freezing and thawing action fixes most compaction issues. You also don't want too much disturbance. This generally occurs trying to graze it down too close to not “waste anything,” especially under wet conditions. Too much disturbance creates openings for opportunist weeds.

It would be nice if hay was just a primary part of your contingency plan – your insurance policy. You would use it to meet shortfalls in production. But don't be afraid to feed hay if needed, especially if it will help production later and or reduce winter feeding time frame. That option sometimes appears during dry spells in the late summer. Reduce its use when possible to decrease resource concerns and input costs. It also never hurts to keep animal numbers flexible too. Remember, it's not about maximizing a grazing event, but maximizing a grazing season! Keep on grazing!

Buckeye Shepherd's Symposium Slated for December 4

The Ohio Sheep Improvement Association (OSIA) invites shepherds of all ages, sectors, and regions to attend the Buckeye Shepherd's Symposium on December 4, 2020 to expand their knowledge of sheep nutrition and connect with their peers. For the first time in the association's 71-year history, the annual symposium will be entirely online. This year's event will be offered in a condensed format, featuring multiple guest speakers presenting in various formats and styles about flock nutrition, with no fee to register. The symposium will run from 2-5 PM via Zoom. Register online at: <https://go.osu.edu/ohiosheep>. The full schedule for the symposium is available online at: <https://agmr.osu.edu/events/buckeye-shepherds-symposium>.

