



# NICHOLS

NEWSLETTER

## ROSS' THOUGHTS



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### Feed Efficiency Means \$\$\$

After a national presidential election, some of you might expect a politically charged column from J. David Nichols. And while I know many of you miss his take on things - always sure to stir a reaction no matter which side of the aisle you're on - I think I'll stick to what's happening in the cattle business. As Dave famously said, "If I were a dictator, I'd be a benevolent one."

These days, the biggest buzzword in the beef industry is **feed efficiency** - and for good reason. With rising input costs, producers are searching for ways to maximize profitability without sacrificing performance. Recognizing this, all major beef breed associations are now incorporating Residual Average Daily Gain (RADG) and Dry Matter Intake (DMI) EPDs, along with new \$ Indexes, to help producers select for genetics that improve efficiency.

At Nichols Farms, we've been using C-Lock's SmartFeed and SmartWeigh

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## The Crow Family Farm

James Crow's operation defines what a middle-America family farm should be. Located in Asbury, Missouri, they are primarily a commercial cow-calf operation, but also farm about 600 acres of row crops. James gives much credit to his father, Richard, who passed away in the summer of 2022. It was Richard that structured the operation so it could pay for multiple livings, and then gave what James says is the "opportunity to live the farm life, and the work ethic it takes to do that."

Today James along with his son, Quenton, run the day-to-day operation that includes 400 commercial cows, pasture and hay ground, and 600 acres of row crops that includes corn, soybeans, milo and wheat. His mother, Carol, still lives on the farm, and is always ready to run an errand or pick up a part when needed. She also still helps with the cattle records using the program Cattlemax. James' wife, Brandy, keeps busy keeping all the books, as well as working off the farm as a cosmetologist, and his daughter, Mackenzie, who works for Farm Bureau, can be counted on to help out on busy days when they are working cattle. On big days working cattle through the chute, Quenton's wife, Zoey, will pitch in when she is not working as a physical therapy assistant.

James is also excited that Quenton and Zoey have added a new grandson to the family named Walker. It is James' hope that someday Walker will have the opportunity to join the operation if he desires.

In order to make a living year in and year out, James finds it is essential to spread risk and sell quality products. In the cattle operation this means having a spring and fall calving season, which gives them two market windows. They also cut out any calves that for any reason won't group up with the other cattle when they market them at the Fort Scott Sale Barn in Kansas. This can be for any number of reasons - frozen ears, off size, bad eye - which amounts to about 10 to 12 head a year. These are placed in what James calls the "cull pen," and fed out for freezer beef, which Brandy oversees.

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**Mackenzie, James, Brandy, Zoey (holding Walker) and Quenton Crow.**



## ROSS' THOUGHTS

*More THOUGHTS ...continued from page 1*

incorporate our Nichols Efficiency \$ Index into our selection process. Current cost of gain projections show that reducing feed conversion from 6.5 lbs. of feed per pound of gain to 6.0 lbs., while maintaining or improving ADG, can lower the cost of gain by \$6.50 per cwt - or about \$55 per head over a typical feeding period. That kind of savings adds up fast and makes a real impact on the bottom line.

But efficiency alone isn't enough. At Nichols Farms, we continue to focus on a well-rounded genetic approach - balancing feed efficiency with growth performance, carcass quality, longevity and fertility. The cattle that will thrive in the future are those that eat less, grow efficiently, produce high-quality beef, and stay productive longer.

We're in the busy part of bull season and still have a great selection of bulls for sale at Nichols Farms. So come pick out your next herd sire as Nichols Farms is committed to leading the charge in genetic selection, ensuring a more profitable and sustainable future for your beef operation.

### Notes from Lillian

Thank You to everyone who came to the January opening day of bull sales to buy bulls, who ordered a bull sight unseen, used DV Auction to buy a Nichols bull or let us help you find the right bull for you. Thanks again!

My Aunt Evelyn said to me once, "I love everything about Iowa, except March!" I agreed with her because Iowa weather in March can be just plain depressing. So, as I was looking through the past newsletters and reading Dave's *A Few Thoughts*...this is to remind us that March always passes.

*"It's been a good winter; the cows are in the calving pastures dropping babies every day. And the tractors and planters will soon be heading to the fields. In the meantime: We're in the busy part of the bull season and are open for business and selling bulls every day. We still have a good selection for sale. We want to hear your success stories and learn from you how we can make it even better."* - J. David Nichols, *A Few Thoughts*, Spring 2017

# IGENITY® BEEF



**Nick Hammett**  
Neogen Beef Genomics

## The Power of Parentage

Over the last couple of years, you have been reading in the Nichols Newsletter about the value the Igenity testing your commercial females. As an Igenity distributor, Nichols Farms can help you capture the value of Igenity testing from at least four different perspectives. A primary objective of Igenity testing is to assist commercial producers in selecting replacement heifers who will be the most profitable to their operation. A secondary value is to generally characterize the strengths and weakness of their commercial herd, which enables more complementary selection of seedstock purchases.

Igenity testing can also qualify females, or their steer-mates, for Igenity Branded, which is a logo program that ranks cattle into quartiles based on their genetic merit. We will cover this in more detail in future articles. The final value, and one often overlooked, is the power of parentage to a commercial operation.

The vast majority of commercial operations run cattle in multi-sire breeding pastures. Knowing the exact sire of calves has many benefits to commercial producers. First, you can discover which bulls are doing a better job covering cows. Producers routinely find that one bull may be covering 50-60 cows and some bulls are covering almost no cows. Bulls with low coverage rates may need moved, may need a semen and soundness evaluation, or may need culled.

Secondly, producers can discover which bulls are producing outliers on both ends of the curve. These could include extremely high or low birth weights, weaning weights, carcass traits, productive daughters, docility issues, or anything that matters to your bottom-line. Knowing this information can help producers decide how or where to use specific sires, which ones to move on from sooner and which one to use heavier.

Understanding how parentage testing works can be a process for first-time users. Unfortunately, a massive database of all sires does not exist in the beef industry. When a producer submits samples on calves, they must also submit a list of potential sires including their animal ID and Registration number. To ensure producers have access to the parentage markers of their sires, the best practice is for the producer to submit a sample on each of the sires they own. Many of Nichols sires have been tested directly at Neogen and can be released for use. Occasionally, we must go back to the breed association and request the parentage markers. Be certain the potential sire list is all inclusive and all parentage markers are in place prior to running parentage to get the best possible results.

If you are interested in Igenity testing, which includes parentage, reach out to Ross to get started.



**Nichols Farms is a NEOGEN Genomics  
Distribution Partner for Igenity® Beef and Feeder.**

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*Crow Farm continued from page 1...*

In terms of producing quality feeder cattle that will demand a premium, James finds it takes a combination of genetics, management and communication. For the Crow family, this starts with Nichols Farms' bulls. James says, "Nichols Farms' Ross Havens is our eyes and ears. Starting with my dad, we've been customers of Nichols for about 35 years, but have only gone up there a few times to pick out bulls. Ross knows our herd and what we need and want, so sends us the right bulls every year." According to Havens, "The Crow family buys balanced trait bulls off the top of our annual offering." James also can't say enough about all the research Nichols has done over the years, and is really excited that they now are collecting dry matter intake (DMI) data and producing a genetic prediction for bovine respiratory disease (BRD).

The Crows then concentrate on managing the cattle to produce the best product possible. They typically market spring calves in January and fall calves in June. All steers are knife cut, and steers and heifers are weaned at least 100 days, bunk broke, not over conditioned, and have had all their shots, including the booster shots. They then make sure this information, including that calves are out of Nichols genetics, is known by the buyers prior to sale time. The results for this spring's feeder heifers and steers marketed this January was a \$1,900 average, combined.

Putting it into perspective, James says, "We're not in competition with our neighbors; in fact, the better the total offering at the sale



**Living the good life at Crow & Crow Farms.**

barn, the better everybody does. However, we typically top the sale in the weight classes we are marketing, and there is a satisfaction when a load of 90 of your calves weighing 689 pounds bringing \$306 cwt topping the sale."

The Crows enjoy what they are doing, and feel blessed they are able to make a living with a lifestyle they enjoy. James says, "If possible, we try to get to the lake for a week each summer, but in general, we are very satisfied to stay here on the farm doing what we like." With life priorities of faith, family and cattle, that makes perfect sense as the Crows are making the most out of their family farm.

*by Bob Hough*





**by Brian Fieser Ph.D.**

Beef Field Nutritionist, ADM Animal Nutrition™

## Unseen Value!

Calving season is often the time when many producers have a particular focus on their mineral nutrition. There are many reasons for this, the more important of which are improved colostrum quality, proper fetal development, and improvement in economically important traits like fertility and marbling based on generational nutrition. But for lots of producers it comes down to one thing – cows that do or do not “clean” after calving. It has been said in many settings that the job is done when the paperwork is done. This is similar to parturition in cows, until the last step is completed the job isn’t done. There are 3 stages of parturition: Stage 1) dilation of the cervix; Stage 2) actual birthing of the calf and Stage 3) shedding of the placenta or fetal membranes. There is little more frustrating to a cow/calf producer than having a cow do all we ask of her in having and mothering a calf, only to not “clean” afterwards. Meaning she will have to be caught and handled by a veterinarian and/or given antibiotics to prevent infection. It is a drain on time and money when a process that has otherwise gone off without a hitch becomes a literal stinking problem.

The actual cause of a retained placenta is very difficult to pinpoint, but deficiencies of vitamins A and E have been implicated, as well as insufficient consumption of dietary copper and selenium. All of these vitamins and mineral have a role as antioxidants. As the name implies, antioxidants are critical in the prevention of oxidation, which has a negative impact on tissue health and function. It is important to note that the supplementation of these vitamins and minerals is no guarantee to prevent retained placentas or fetal membranes. It is, however, a simple and effective step in ensuring cows have the best opportunity clean when the time comes.

I am reminded of a story I was told once by a dealer regarding this, they said that they could always tell when a prominent rancher started calving. The rancher believed that the best time to make their annual mineral purchase was at calving time, specifically to make sure cows “cleaned”. They used a simple but effective mineral program to help minimize potential problems. Whatever your motivations, you can be assured that all of ADM’s branded mineral lines (AMPT, MasterGain, MoorMan’s, and ADM Seasonal Minerals) are formulated to meet or exceed National Research Council (NRC) minimum requirements for minerals and vitamins. Something I often tell our customers and sales representatives is that when it comes to proper mineral nutrition, the value of mineral can be seen not in what you have to do, but what you don’t have to do!



## Chicks with Chicks

Cattle aren’t the only animals at Nichols Farms. Sophie Jameson and Rylee Schulte are working on their 4-H project. With the guidance of their parents, Garrett Jameson and Amber Dunham, and the local Extension office, they’re learning about poultry, animal care, and the importance of bio-security in the age of bird flu.



## LETTERS from you

**Marcie & Don Ver Ploeg, Rochester, NY**  
...I’m guessing both Don and I will share the Iowa State Fair BIG Bull article with our North Carolina friends when we finally get out of New York and back down to our sunny house in a community that was formerly a farm. Belties - Belted Galloways - are the mascots and iconic symbol.



**Glen Klippenstein, Maysville, MO**  
Great experience and sale - very upbeat environment. We know someone that is or would be beaming over a great team effort. Congrats!

**Mike Antisdell, Des Moines, IA**  
Hey, I am glad I made it to the sale yesterday. It’s been a while since I’ve last been to one. It was tremendous success all around for you guys, it was good to see the pickups lined up on both sides of the road. When I walked into the shop to eat, it reminded me of the bull sales in the mid-80s. Packed to the rafters. While the sale was humming along, I took Alex’s Ranger and drove thru both barns and out east along the herd bulls. While I did see new improvements over the years, a lot of the same from 40 years ago. Pictures of Blk Diamond, Destiny and Performa still hang on the wall of the office. Brought back decades of fond memories. Again, I had great time yesterday.  
(Mike worked for Nichols Farms 1977–1997)

**Haylee Pennock, Intern, Elliott, IA**  
Thank you for letting me work with you guys! Let me know if you need anything else from me.

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## Cowboys You Can Count On



**Gunner Kirchhoff** enjoys calving.

"I know most people either love it or hate it. I love it," says Gunner. "There's nothing like it."

At Nichols Farms he calves the Angus cows, after a year of training by Bart. "I try to learn something new every day. That's easy when you work with someone who knows as much as he does. And he's always there to answer questions."

When it's not calving season, he does what's needed at the farm – managing pastures, building fence, breeding cows and heifers – about anything on the cow/calf side of the business. He especially enjoys the pasture checks. "There's just something about seeing the young calves running around happy as can be. Nothing beats it."


Gunner lives in Atlantic, Iowa, where he was born and raised. Through high school and beyond he worked in area feedlots, gaining valuable experience. But says he likes the calving better than feedlot work. After knowing him for a few years, Ross recruited Gunner for Team Nichols about a year ago.

When he's not at Nichols Farms, he "mostly hangs out with cows," working for other area producers part-time or helping friends with their cattle.

He follows rodeo and likes 90s country music when he can find it on the dial. He spends some of his spare time hunting and fishing.

He wants young folks coming up to know success is not always about the money. True pleasure is in doing something you enjoy.

"Waking up in the morning is easier when you know you are going to go do what you love," says Gunner. "I get to do that every day."



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