

Whine or Wine?

Well it doesn't take much looking around, to start feeling fortunate. We can whine and complain about our muddy cow lots or the ruts in our roads, but up north, they have water covering everything. I suggest we just be thankful for what we have! There is nothing thing like a disaster to put things into perspective. Maybe it's not so bad after all?

There is help for the struggling cattlemen or others that have lost any type of livestock. The Livestock Indemnity program from the USDA and administered by your local Farm Service Agency will be put to use this spring. What you need to do, my humble understanding anyway, is to first document all deaths on your place. This needs to be verifiable information, like your calving book, a note from your Veterinarian, photos of the mortalities with dates recorded etc. These losses need to be told to the FSA office within 30 days of loss. Even though you may have a 60, 75 or 90-day calving period, you must let them know within 30 days of loss. Notify them of each loss. You have to trigger the normal mortality rate, I assume for our state, and then you will get some sort of payment for the ones you've lost above that number.

The FSA office, hasn't received the new regulations, so they are working off of the 2018 rules, which they assume it won't change much. So for that year, the normal mortality is 2.73% for baby calves and 1.1% for cows. Adult cattle may not be covered due to cold weather, this is kind of fuzzy for me, I would recommend documenting this just in case. The Indemnity payment is based on 75 percent of the fair market value of the livestock. For 2018, the payment for a baby calf was \$468.92, according to the FSA Fact sheet.

This calving season has been a real struggle. It sure has made the hoop barns look attractive. I recently was able to visit some sheep hoop barns in western Kansas. This family was lambing out 1800 head of ewes. It was quite an operation! The lambs and their mothers were color coded with numbers and symbols to keep the little family together. So you might see # 397 in purple with 2 hearts paint branded on her back and then her two babies would have purple hearts as well. The sheep were so clean and comfortable in their hoop barns with about 12 inches of straw bedding. The Simons use a fodder system to raise fresh green barley sprouts for them daily. Six days from seed to feed! They put barley seeds in trays, and six days later they have barley sprouted about 12 inches tall. The sheep absolutely love it!

From there we visited a lamb feedlot! It's safe to say I saw more sheep that week, than I probably have in my entire life.

