



SOUTH POLL NEWSLETTER

FALL 2010

Taking care of, not advantage of, new breeders

By SPGCA President Teddy Gentry



As an established breeder we need to take care of the brand new breeders in our organization. A lot of times, I think too many times, purebred associations are set up to take care of the old breeders rather than taking care of the new ones.

Anyone showing an interest in the breed is sometimes looked at as new money and oftentimes this lack of knowledge of the breed leads to inflated prices at the new breeder's expense. In order for a breed to survive and prosper new breeders need to be mentored and educated if they want to be.

To an established breeder this means making sure that the cattle you sell someone are worth what the buyer paid you. This will become evident when the buyer gets ready to sell the cattle. This means standing behind your cattle and replacing or returning the money for cattle or bulls that don't work. This means shipping to market any problem cattle that should not be used as seedstock.

Taking care of each new breeder should be everyone's personal responsibility. This will ensure the success of our breed and the integrity of our breeders.

Field Day to be held at Bent Tree Farms

The South Poll Grass Cattle Association's third annual meeting and field day will be held on Friday and Saturday, June 24 and 25, 2011, at Bent Tree Farms in Fort Payne, Alabama.

Activities will kick off at 10 a. m. Friday with breed president Teddy Gentry welcoming attendees to his farm and speaking on the history of the South Poll breed, which is a four way cross of the Angus, Hereford, Senepol and Barzona breeds.

The highlight of the two-day event will be an auction of South Poll cattle that will be held at 2 p.m. on Saturday. Gentry says he hopes to have 30 lots of top notch bulls, heifers and cows for sale at the auction. Evaluation of the sale cattle will be at 1 p.m. on Saturday.

Visitors will also be able to view Gentry's elite herd of South Polls that he built over 20 years of breeding cattle.

A concert featuring Gentry and his band will be held Friday night in nearby Rainsville for those registered for the field day. Gentry, the bass player from the legendary country music band Alabama, said the concert will also be open to the public with

proceeds going to the South Poll Association.

Talks by graziers and breeders and demonstrations on mob grazing, ultrasounding, the taking of linear measurements and a pasture walk will be spread throughout both days. A grilled hamburger lunch will be served on Friday and a lunch catered by Chef Clayton of Birmingham will be served on Saturday. A country breakfast will also be served on Saturday to registrants.

A silent auction will be available on both days with items to be donated by board members of the association.

Preregistration for the field days will be needed, with a \$60 per person per day fee, or \$100 per person for both days, being charged by the association for entrance to all activities including the meals and the concert. After June 1, \$75 per day will be charged or \$120 for both days. Those not attending the field day may purchase a ticket to the concert for \$10.

Watch future newsletters for more information on the various activities.

Jank Farms grazes stockers and his own purebreds

Hello. I'm John Lyons and along with my wife, Andra, we are owners of J-Jank Farms. Our farm is located in northeast Alabama, about 50 miles south of Bent Tree Farms.

My wife and I didn't grow up on a farm. She lived in town and my family moved frequently due to my father's job. My older sister and I attended a combined 22 schools before we graduated high school. After I graduated from high school, my parents moved again to a small farm in northeast Alabama. I started reading agriculture magazines, visiting other farms, and attending field days. At the age of 19, I bought my first cows and have been in the cattle business ever since.

Andra and I married during my mid twenties. While driving around one day we found a very overgrown farm that we ended up buying. This became my grazing laboratory. I saw an ad for a free grazing magazine and that ad changed my whole view of grazing. The maga-

zine was *The Stockman Grass Farmer*. I stopped feeding cattle and started rotational grazing.

Fast forward nine years and three kids later, we sold our farm and while driving around trying to find another farm my wife spotted a washed-up dirt road that led to an abandoned farm that we purchased. I learned that the farm used to be row-cropped but had been abandoned for several years.

After almost a year we were able to start grazing. I sold my cow herd and started contract grazing steers, which I still do today. Several years later I was given a lifetime lease on another farm and started grazing steers on it. One day while searching the web for grazing articles I found the Bent Tree Farm web site.

I talked to Dave Roberts and I eventually bought 33 South Poll cows. Regardless of what the cow costs, we always cull every cow that doesn't calve, raises a poor calf, or has a bad disposition. After a few years we had 27 great brood cows. About this time I learned what a

lifetime lease meant. The land owner was killed by a drunk driver and after meeting with his family they informed me they were going to build houses on the property and gave me two weeks to move my cows.

Lease land is very hard to find in my area and I realized that I was going to have to sell the cattle. Before I met with the owners' fam-

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Andra and John Lyons



John's South Polls graze Kudzu on highway right-of-way.

South Poll Grass Cattle Association

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Join the
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Grass Cattle
Association
today!
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Lyons

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ily I had received 150 steers that I had contracted to graze through the winter. So I had nowhere to put the cattle and called Dave Roberts who helped in dispersing the cattle.

Shortly after the cows were sold several things happened; I was able to lease another farm, Dave called and invited me to a meeting about starting the South Poll Association, and I began reading articles by Kit Pharo and Greg Judy which caused me to alter my grazing practices.

I was lucky that I was able to purchase some South Poll cattle from Martin Turner's herd. The South Polls graze on the leased farm from October to usually the middle of July. They are hauled home and graze what is left over from the stockers (Kudzu, Crabgrass, Johnson grass and Bermuda). The leased land is not grazed during this time and usually has a lot of stockpiled grass for the cows when they return in the fall.

When people ask me if the South Polls are func-



Kudzu is one of the many grasses used by Lyons in his grazing operation.

tional I always tell them it depends on what their definition of functional is. I tell them that they are the cheapest breed of cows they can raise. My only cow-costs are the farm lease, minerals, cattle hauling, and the gas to operate a pump to fill water tanks once a week.

After years of grazing several thousand stocker calves that consisted of al-

most every breed known to man, I realize that South Poll cattle do the most for the least cost than any other breed that I've seen. If these cattle can thrive in my envi-

ronment (hot & humid summers, cold and wet winters) without any pampering they can thrive anywhere else in the United States and do it cheaply!

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- John Lyons



Teddy and Linda Gentry chat with junior member Paul Shanks at the Oct. 15 board meeting in Belle, Mo. Shanks celebrated his 14th birthday the day before the meeting.

