

Over My Shoulder

A monthly review of the livestock market by J.D. Sartwelle, Jr.

The short month of the year is now over and from the standpoint of weather, most wanted to see it over with.

From the markets standpoint most would like to see February prices hang around for a good while.

Meanwhile in Washington, the biggest news to us Ag folks might be that USDA is back to the drawing board with a national ID system.

February weather across the nation was harsh and helped to make this winter a very long one in most parts of the country.

It's taken its toll on livestock from production areas to the feeding areas and has caused lots of losses in terms of lost animals, lost performance and monetary costs and losses.

Depending on where you were in the country, it was excessive snow, rain, mud, temperature or whatever, and generally made life with livestock miserable.

February is now over with and the first spring month is now on us.

More moderate temperatures are in the near future and it seems there will plenty of moisture in most places.

As usual though, there are a few areas particularly in far south Texas that haven't received what they should to get spring off to a good start.

The weather was cold on the East Coast, but hot in Washington as talk of another go round of health care debate heated up during the month.

Of interest to Ag folks, Secretary of Agriculture, Vilsack, announced that USDA had listened to the industry during the fall in hearings around the country con-

cerning NAIS (National Animal ID System) and was scrapping those plans.

He asked for industry help in establishing a trace back system beginning with livestock that entered interstate commerce.

We'll have to see how all of this plays out.

In the feedyards, wherever they are, snow and rain made for muddy, sloppy conditions that affected performance and yields and added days to feeding time.

As ready supplies of harvest ready cattle slowed down, packers hunted for supplies and fed prices jumped from the mid eighties to the low nineties.

Quality, yields, and carcass weight all took hits because of the weather.

Meanwhile in the country, farmers twiddled their thumbs, unable to burn any diesel and work some land for the first time since the late harvests of last year.

Cowboys caught a little break from January weather and worked a few cattle and came to town with a large number of still big calves.

While they were able to work a few cattle, numbers were basically short and demand begin to grow with the spring moisture prospects.

Slaughter cows and bulls took quantum leaps in prices as well as the feeder cattle.

The lightweight calves jumped well over the dollar bill while the heavier steer and heifer calves sold high nineties to over the dollar.

Slaughter cows sold into the sixties while the best bulls sold

into the seventies.

The pork complex, with slightly fewer numbers, sold into the mid fifties and was affected with movement difficulties just like the fed cattle.

Spring is around the corner for us in the southern areas and a little longer for those in the north.

Daylight hours are increasing and we'll start to warm up.

When we dry up a little, we ought to jump start the planted green grazing, clover, and winter grasses before a full-fledged spring.

It really needs to get here pretty quick because most folks are running out of hay.

Recipe For Cornbread With A Kick

With barbecue season right around the corner, many grilling enthusiasts are readying themselves for another season spent in the backyard around the grill. While steaks and burgers might be on the horizon, it's important to remember the side dishes as well.

Finding something that goes well with barbecued chicken and meat can be tough, but the following recipe for "Southwest Cornbread" from Linda Collister's "Quick Breads," (Ryland, Peters & Small) is sure to please grilling aficionados and their guests.

Southwest Cornbread
Makes 1 medium bread
Serves 6 to 8
2 cups corn kernels, fresh or frozen
2/3 cup fine yellow cornmeal, preferably stone-ground
1 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1/2 cup pine nuts, toasted
1 rounded teaspoon chopped fresh sage leaves
1 scallion, sliced
1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour

1/4 cup corn oil
2 extra-large eggs
1 cup buttermilk
1 pat of butter
1 9-inch cast-iron ovenproof skillet or an 8-inch square cake pan

Preheat the oven to 350 F.
Put the corn kernels, cornmeal, baking powder, salt, pine nuts, sage, scallion, and flour in a

large bowl and mix well.

In a separate bowl, beat the oil with the eggs and buttermilk, then stir into the dry ingredients to make a thick batter.

If you are using the skillet, heat the pan with the pat of butter in the oven until foaming — about 3 minutes. If you are using a cake pan, then grease it well.

Pour the batter into the hot

skillet of the prepared pan and bake in the oven for about 20 minutes until firm to the touch and a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Serve while still warm, either straight from the skillet or turned out of the pan onto a cutting board and cut into large squares.

Best eaten the same day. Not suitable for freezing.



Jobless

Continued from front page
ployment rate in the state at 6.0 percent (not seasonally adjusted), followed by the Lubbock MSA and the Midland MSA, both with 6.2 percent.

The unemployment rate stood at 6.4 percent in the College Station-Bryan MSA.

Labor Department Delays Job Growth Data Release
Due to Inclement East Coast Weather

The U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics has informed TWC Labor Market and Career Information of a delay in the release of the seasonally adjusted Current Employment Statistics (CES) due to inclement weather on the eastern coast of the United States.

CES data provides information on job growth in Texas and in each major Texas industry.

At this time, TWC has not been notified of a time estimate when the data will be available.

Artificial Turf, For Your Lawn?

Once reserved for baseball fields and indoor football stadiums, synthetic grass, commonly referred to as "fake grass," can now be purchased by private citizens as well.

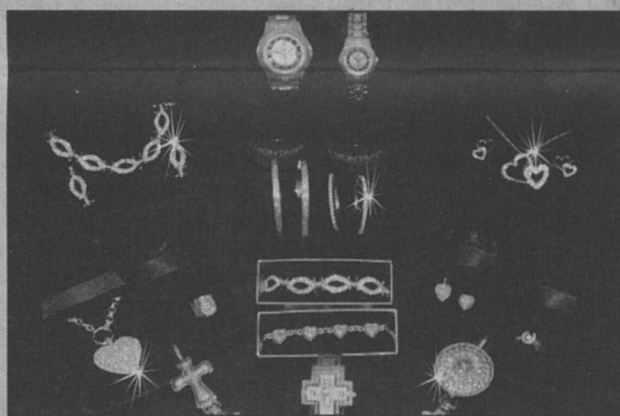
While synthetic grass has evolved over the years, the principle of providing a realistic and aesthetically appealing alternative to natural grass is still the same. One thing that might be changing is the way people look at synthetic grass, particularly with respect to its environmental impact.

While a common objection to synthetic grass is that it negates the positive effects grass has on the environment, namely its intake of potentially harmful carbon dioxide, it's important to note the conservation value that synthetic grass provides.

Synthetic grass does not need to be watered or mowed, helping to conserve water and fuel. In fact, a synthetic lawn might help homeowners save more than 20,000 gallons of water per year. That makes synthetic grass an especially viable option in areas that routinely suffer from drought and often require heavy watering just to keep a lawn going strong.

In addition, synthetic grass does not require the use of potentially harmful pesticides to maintain its aesthetic appeal. Homeowners should also consider the life span of synthetic grass. Synthetic grass can last anywhere from 15 years to several decades, making it a potentially more attractive option than many homeowners might initially think.

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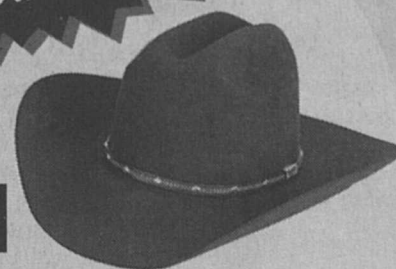
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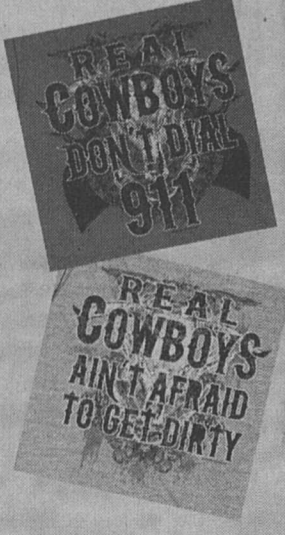
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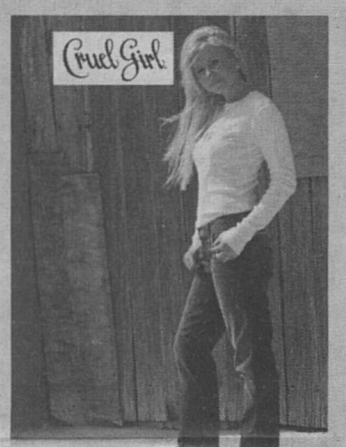
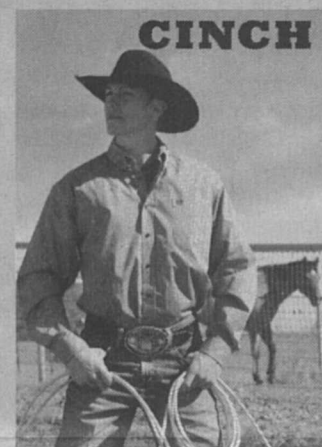
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