

# Area feed yard moves to high-tech system

By Ron Wilson

Director, Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development

What happens when cattle meet computers?

That sounds like one of my kid's riddles. Actually, it could be a way of describing a scientific process for evaluating and managing cattle that is being used by an innovative beef feed yard in rural northwest Kansas. It's the subject of today's Kansas Profile.

Warren Weibert is owner and general manager of Decatur County Feed Yard near Oberlin. He's an innovator using a high-tech management system.

Oberlin is a town of 1,955. That's rural – but there's more. Warren actually grew up near Durham, population 114. Now, that's rural.

After growing up, Warren went to K-State and then into a business management career. He married Carol, who is from Oberlin.

In 1971, some 45 investors around Oberlin went together to create a cattle feedlot known as Decatur County Feed Yard. In 1977, Carol's father bought the yard and invited Warren and Carol to come back to Oberlin to manage it, which they did. Warren and Carol now make their home in Manhattan.

The feed yard expanded through the years and now has a capacity of 40,000 head. During the 1980s, Warren set out to work more closely with the ranchers who supplied cattle to be finished at the yard. He and the ranchers were seeking to get more data to add value to the cattle.

A key breakthrough came in 1994, as new technology came on the scene which made it possible to gather in-depth, individualized information on each steer. First came electronic ear tags to identify each animal, followed by software which could track and project the growth of each one.

This allowed yard managers to evaluate, sort, manage and market each animal appropriately. In other words, rather than a pen of steers being lumped together in some sort of average, each animal

receives the type of management customized individually for him. It's a great concept, but it wouldn't have been possible on this scale without the computer.

How does this work in practice? When 600-pound steers are brought to the feedlot, they go through a processing shed where the high-tech system processes them in. This shed is sometimes referred to internally as the "gee whiz" barn. It certainly seems like gee whiz stuff to me.

The cattle are moved through a series of stations to evaluate them. First is a sequencing station, which then automatically moves the cattle through a series of chutes to a second station where video imaging is done. The third station is an electronic scale, followed by an ultrasound station where internal tissue characteristics are identified.

It sounds like an entry into a high-tech hospital, but it is actually a way of gathering individualized data on each animal. When the data is put together on size, shape, weight, and genetic potential, the manager can project the point at which each animal will be ready to go to market. The animals are then grouped according to their stage of development and sent into the yard. As they reach mature weight, each group will be marketed.

Even though these cattle will come from different owners, they can be grouped with those of like characteristics while still being identified individually. Then after the cattle do go to market, the data on each animal are reported back to the individual ranchers from which they came. The final close-out report includes 25 columns with information on each animal.

"We're providing more information back to the rancher than virtually anybody else in the industry," Weibert said.

These data tools help producers reach the goals of providing beef with lower costs, improved quality, greater convenience and improved consistency while maintaining the highest standards of food safety.

So when cattle meet comput-

ers, innovative, individualized management can follow. We commend Warren and Carol Weibert and all those involved with Decatur County Feed Yard for making a difference with their forward-looking approach to cattle management.

And what else happens when cattle meet computers? Well, in the feed yard, those hungry steers take a lot of giga-bites.

For more information, go to [www.decaturfedyard.com](http://www.decaturfedyard.com).

*The mission of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development is to promote rural development by helping rural people help themselves. The Kansas Profile radio series and columns are produced with the help of the K-State Research and Extension Department of Communications.*



## Thomas County Farm Bureau Association

### ANNUAL DINNER MEETING

DATE: August 12, 2010

TIME: 6:30 p.m.

PLACE: Community Building, Colby

Speaker will be: Richard Shank, Hutchinson, relating experiences working with Attorney General Vern Miller during 1970s.

Supper provided • Door prizes to be given away  
Election of Board Members • ALL members are invited!

# NORTHWEST TECH

## NORTHWEST KANSAS TECHNICAL COLLEGE

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Northwest Tech's evening and on-line class listing as follows.

For more information or to register:

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Register for classes soon!

## Evening and Online Class Schedule August 2010

Class Title	Credits	Start Date & Time	Days
PE 120-1 Aerobics	1	August 24th 5:45-6:45am	T/TH
PE 105-1 Weight Lifting	1	August 26th 6:00-7:30pm	TH
HUM 110-1 Stained Glass	3	August 25th 6:00-9:00	W
AL 150-1 Certified Nurses Aid	6	Sept 8th 6:00-10:00pm	M/W
BA 100-1 Intro to Business	3	August 12th 8:00-9:00am	M/W/F
CF 101- Computer Fundamentals	3	August 23rd 7:05-8:25am or 9:05-10:25am or 10:35-11:55am	M/W
ENGL 105- Technical Writing	3	August 23rd 7:05-8:25am or 1:05-2:25pm	M/W
MATH 105- Tech Math	3	August 24th 9:05-10:25am or 10:35-11:55am	T/Th
PSY 176-1 Psychology	3	August 25th 12:00-3:00pm	W
HUM 105- Ethics	3	August 24th 9:05-10:25am or 1:05-2:25pm	T/Th
MATH 70-4 Prep Math	3	August 24th 9:05-10:25am	T/Th
BEH 105-1 Human Relations	3	August 24th 7:05-8:25am	T/Th
BA 120-1 Accounting I	3	10:00-11:30am	T/Th
BA 130-1 Leadership	3	8:00-9:30am	T/Th
MATH 100-1 Beginning Algebra	3	2:30-4:00pm	M/W
MATH 100-2 Beginning Algebra	3	1:05-2:25pm	M/W
BA 110-1 PC Software	3	11:00-12:00pm	M/W/F
ENGL 110-2 English Comp I	3	9:05-10:25am	M/W
COMM 140-1 Social Networking	1		T/Th
AL 212-1 & 213-1 Emergency Medical Technician	12	Oct 18th 6-10 pm	M/W
ENGL 110-1 English Comp I	3	Aug 26th 5-8 pm	Th
SCI 150-1 Earth Science	5	August 23rd 6:00-9:00pm	M/W
COMM 130-1 American Sign Language	3	August 23rd 4:00-5:00pm	M/W/F
MATH 115-10 College Algebra	3	August 23rd	Online
PSY 150-1 Psychology	3	August 23rd	Online
COMM 135-1 Conversational Spanish	3	August 23rd	Online
CF 101-10 Computer Fundamentals	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 106B-3 Intro to Transmissions in Telecommunications	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 156-3 Data Communications & LANs	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 232-3 Voice Communications, A Technical Introduction	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 162B-3 VoIP	4	August 23rd	Online
TNA 216B-3 SONET	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 226-3 Code Division Multiple Access 2nd Generation	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 260-3 IP Networking & VPN's	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 265-3 CDMA 2000 & High Speed Mobile Internet 3rd Generation	4	August 23rd	Online
TNA 222B-3 Basics of Wireless Communication	4	August 23rd	Online
TNA 235-3 Fundamentals of Network Security	5	August 23rd	Online
TNA 220-4 Cisco Networking Academy I & II	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 270-3 Cisco Networking Academy III & IV	3	August 23rd	Online
CNT 147B-3 Basics of Telecommunications	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 280-3 Wireless LAN's	3	August 23rd	Online
CNT 131B-3 Digital Carrier, DSL, ADSL	3	August 23rd	Online
TNA 263-3 GSM	3	August 23rd	Online

## Fertility-care doctor to speak

Dr. Amy Hogan of the Salina Family Clinic will be one of the featured speakers at the Salina Diocesan Council of Catholic Women's biannual convention on Saturday, Aug. 28, at St. Andrew's Parish Hall in Abilene.

She will be sharing the story of how she got involved in the new medical discipline of fertility care. Instead of just medication or surgery to solve a fertility issue, fertility care involves observation and understanding the body's natural rhythms.

"I try to get my patients to see the goodness of nature in their bodies," Hogan says. "After they

see the goodness of nature, they can begin to recognize the goodness of God."

As part of her medical practice, she works with Natural Family Planning Providers throughout the Salina Diocese. "I really want to make this a ministry, and not just a job," she says. "I want people to know that they are being listened to."

The theme of the convention is "Discipline and Virtues: The Gospel of Life."

To register for the convention, contact Phyllis Peterson, 901 N. Buckeye Ave, Abilene, Kan., 67410.

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