



SOUTH POLL NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2011

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.

Busy days ahead for South Poll breeders

By Ralph Voss, SPGCA Board Member

The next six months will prove to be extremely busy for South Poll breeders. In fact, our president is so busy with recent developments in the music business, he begged off writing his column for this newsletter. If he thinks he's busy now, wait until June 24 and 25 when hundreds of South Poll fans descend on Fort Payne for the annual meeting of our organization.

If you haven't already marked your calendar for the annual meeting and field day, do so right now. A number of outstanding presentations are being prepared and some great cattle will be sold.

As we move into 2011 our members are finding even greater interest in our cattle. I can't think of a better way to take advantage of \$6.50 corn than to have a field full of South Poll cattle efficiently converting grass to beef. Apparently there are many other people who feel the same way. We have a great breed and more and more people are coming to that realization.

While you're marking your calendar for the field day, let me urge you to also note mid-April and mid-July. In mid-July our South Poll board member from Louisiana, J.A. Girgenti, will be hosting a dung beetle field day at his farm in Amite. This is tentative, but Truman Fincher, the godfather of the dung beetle movement in this country, has committed to taking part in the field day. You will not want to miss Truman and the horde of Gazella dung beetles that have populated J.A.'s farm as a result of Truman's years of service to the spread of dung beetles and J.A.'s good farming practices.

And don't forget mid-April...at least if you live near Interstate 70. In this area that's the approximate time to start spraying your pastures with raw milk, sea salt, molasses, fish and other soil amendments. If you live considerably north of I-70, you might need to look at late April, or early April or even March for those in southern states. Space does not allow me to go into detail, but I assure you these amendments work. Don't take my word for it, check with Teddy and Dave. They tried it at Bent Tree last spring and they're delighted.

Pleased to be in on ground floor of South Poll Assn.

By Bruce Shanks

Hello from Sassafras Valley Ranch, owned by my wife Sunshine and me and our sons Paul and Cameron. Our family lives on a 300 acre farm in Belle, Missouri where we raise low input South Poll cattle and Katahdin hair sheep. Additionally, Sunshine teaches at the local elementary school, and I am an assistant professor of Animal Science at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, where I teach classes and conduct research.

My wife and I are both originally from Missouri, but educational endeavors took us to Montana and South Dakota before returning home to Missouri eight years ago.

The focus of our farming operation centers on a sustainable, cost-sensitive, grass-based approach to livestock production. The mainstay at Sassafras Valley Ranch is combining leased land, which currently consists of seven farms numbering over 1,000 acres scattered across two counties with leased South Poll cows owned by Holiday

Ranch in Vernon, Florida and Voss Land and Cattle from nearby Linn, Missouri. We are extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to partner with such great folks. Additionally, we have some of our own

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Bruce Shanks and one of his South Poll bulls.

South Poll Grass Cattle Association

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Join the South Poll Grass Cattle Association today!
Contact Lisa Sanders at 256-845-6851

If you have information you would like to share in upcoming issues of the newsletter, please submit information to or contact:

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Sassafras

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cows, and we contract with two local farmers to graze several more South Poll and Barzona-Hereford cattle for two other South Poll Grass Cattle Association members, Tim Gillis and Rod Stevens, which are ultimately managed and marketed through Sassafras Valley Ranch.

Missouri is hot, humid, and dry in the summer and often cold, snowy and/or muddy in the winter. In our area, the farms and pastures are pretty marginal, rocky, and cursed with large quantities of fescue grass. Many farms we lease have no fence other than polywire we string-up and no working facilities. Like most folks, time and money are hard to come by. So, how do we make all of this work? It's actually a pretty simple recipe. Gentle, easy-keeping, low-input South Poll cows are the main ingredient. Additionally, we are very firm believers in managed grazing. We feed no supplements other than salt, mineral and some purchased fescue hay during the winter. We keep our machinery purchases to a minimum and own no haying equipment; rather we purchase any hay we may need. The gentleness and



Sunshine, Cameron, Bruce and Paul Shanks.

problem-free nature of the South Poll breed are very important to our operation; and in my opinion, are probably the most under-touted traits in the breed. I can graze cows on farms that nobody else wants with a single hot-wire, lead them down and across public roads to access other pastures, and load them or their calves with a few corral panels. Furthermore, rarely do I have to dedicate time to calving problems, sickness, parasite control, etc. Also, I am really impressed with the mothering ability of the cows. I can definitely confirm that the easy-keeping and easy-nature of the South Poll breed really saves time and money in our operation.

Early on as we bought our first South Poll cows, I strongly believed in two notions. One, I felt like the cattle industry was going to move more and more in the direction of low-input, sustainable management practices and genetics. Two, I recognized the value in the opportunity to be in on the ground floor of a new organization, the South Poll Grass Cattle Association. Those two premises have proven to be very accurate and still hold true today; but, what I didn't realize was that involvement in the South Poll breed would lead to so many great friends and acquaintances. This is a great chance for me to reflect on that and a good venue for me to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for friends Teddy and Dave, my cattle partners, lease land owners, board members, and fellow South Poll producers and enthusiasts. I am proud and humbled that my family and I can be a part of a great organization and look forward to many future events and get-togethers. As always, call anytime or check out our website, sassafrasvalleyranch.com. Better yet, feel free to stop by because our gate is always open and we like nothing better than visiting about "grass-farming" and love showing folks good South Poll cattle.

Shanks has been a member of the board of directors of the South Poll Grass Cattle Assn. since its inception in May of 2008.



Bruce Shanks