SINCE 1929

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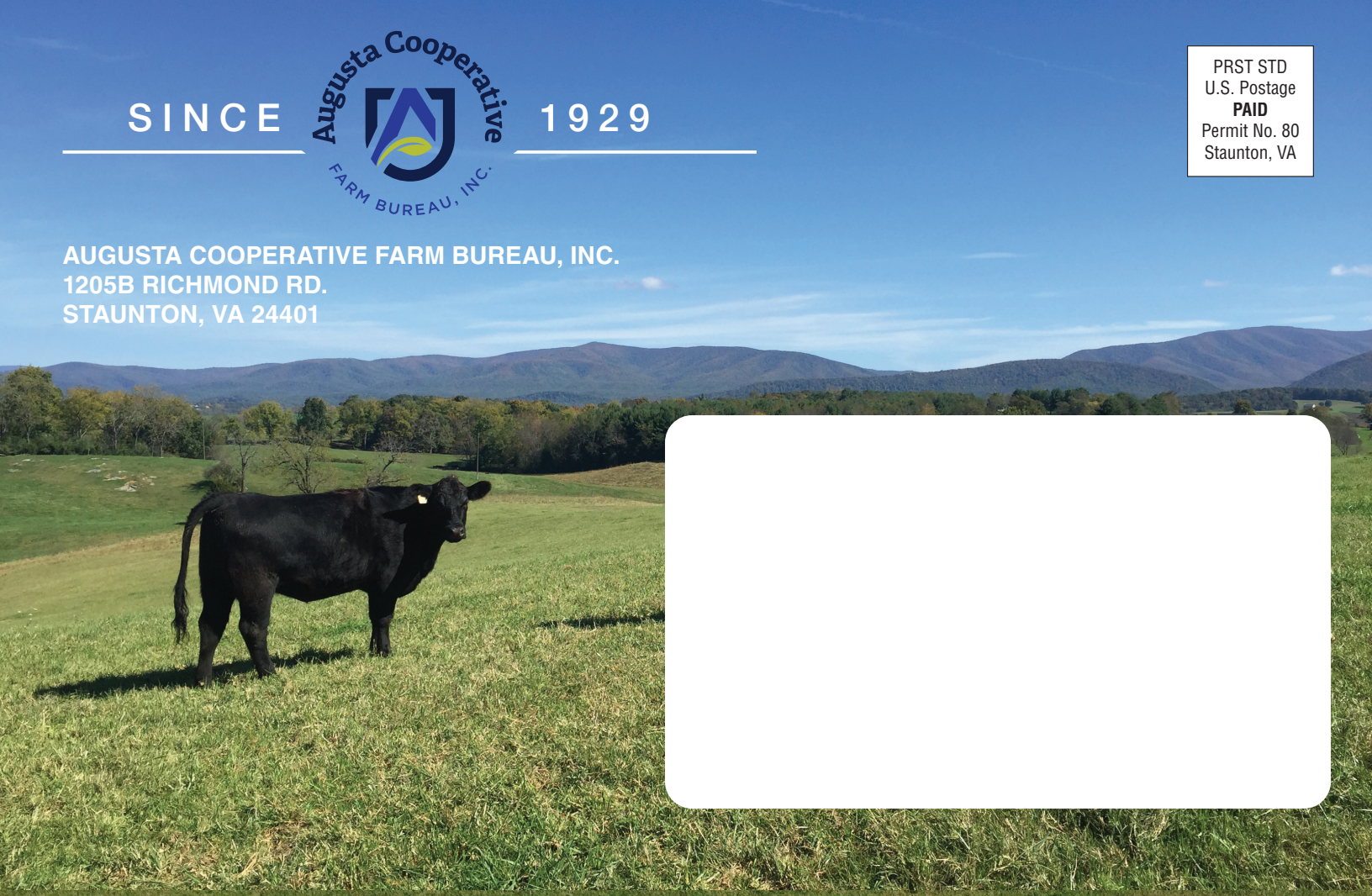

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AGRONOMY & BEEF BULLETIN

November 2025

SINCE 1929

Augusta Cooperative Farm Bureau, Inc.

MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS BASED ON PREGNANCY STATUS

With strong markets and cheap feed, producers have options, but pregnancy evaluation remains key to making the most of open and late-bred females.

If summer-bred cows have not already been evaluated for pregnancy, now may be a good time to get that job done. Early identification of open and late-bred cows allows producers greater flexibility in managing those females moving forward. With cheap feed and an incredibly strong cattle market, it may be difficult to make a bad decision, and perhaps there is less pressure to identify open and late-bred cows early compared to normal. However, even in this market, it can be advantageous to have the knowledge to make informed decisions. And once this information is obtained, what should be done with open and late-bred cows? There are many variables, and although the best answer will not be the same for everyone, here are a few options to consider for various scenarios.

1. Open heifers exposed this summer for spring calving are still young enough to easily transition into the market animal channels.

These females could be marketed for placement in feedlots or fattened to be sold as fed cattle.

2. Open cows exposed this summer for spring calving hold great value as cull/market animals, but there are other options.

These females could be bred this winter to calve next fall. In reality, that seems to be how many fall-calving herds in Iowa began … bull failure, heat stress, fescue toxicosis, etc., lead to more opens than a producer wants to part with, and they simply breed them back for the fall as opposed to selling or feeding for an entire year without a product.

Fall-calving herds have their advantages. Weather challenges are usually less than those during spring calving. Depending on exactly when a producer chooses to calve during the fall, there can be some heat, dust, flies, or perhaps some cold stress, but rarely the extreme mud or wintry conditions that we sometimes experience in the spring. Fall-born calves often have lighter weaning weights than spring-born counterparts, and of course, producers must feed lactating cows during the winter, but the calf crop is ready for market at a different time of year. This spreads out income, and because calf supply is relatively low at market time, demand is often relatively high. Fall herds can also spread out the workload for producers, bulls, calving facilities, etc.

Even for producers who would rather not have fall-calving herds, these females could be bred and managed to be marketed later as bred females. Once confirmed pregnant, they could be marketed at any point based on the market and other factors. Considering the current market for bred females, national cow herd inventory, and the bovine life cycle, there is reason to believe the market will remain strong, and these females will be valuable next fall. Of course, this involves risk. My optimism is based simply on supply and demand, but it should be noted that unexpected things can happen. Policy changes, foreign conflicts, natural disasters, weather events, disease outbreaks, droughts, and other such surprises are always possible and may have big impacts on markets.

3. Late-bred females exposed this summer for spring calving should be evaluated for fetal age/stage of gestation.

These females could then be grouped and sold as bred females. Their late breeding and calving dates may not be ideal for current owners, but may work just fine for someone else. Again, once confirmed pregnant and grouped based on fetal age/stage of gestation, these females could be sold at any time depending on numerous factors. Producers can keep an eye on feed inventory, available space, bred cow market, etc., and market whenever they choose. Considering current demand for bred females, someone will be willing to calve them out as late spring or summer calvers, and it might be surprising what they are worth this winter.

4. What about open fall-calving females?

Maybe a producer did not pregnancy check the fall herd, and some of the cows don't seem to be bellying down as expected. It may be beneficial to evaluate for pregnancy to determine the best plan moving forward. For open fall-calving females, producers must weigh their options carefully. At this point, they have already been fed and managed for a significant period of time, and it will soon be approaching rebreeding time. Generally, if a cow does not settle, she needs to be replaced by a female that will do her job better. But having already fed her through the last nine months and knowing it won't be cheap to replace her, one has to carefully weigh her cull/market value versus replacement cost. Of course, other factors should be considered, such as why she might be open (is it her fault), attitude, historical productivity, age, soundness, udder and teat confirmation, etc. In many cases, though, with recent market strength, the undesirable cows have already been marketed. Culling deeper may cut into the overall size of the herd, and without replacement, it will mean less ability to produce and take advantage of the strong calf market moving forward.

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

5. What about late-bred fall-calving females?

Again, fall-calving cows that are not bellying down as expected and let's now assume we find them to be late-bred rather than open? Late-bred fall-calving cows could still be very valuable right now. Although they may be late for one producer's desired calving window, they may work well for someone else. And very late fall-calving females might wind up being due for winter or early spring, making them prime candidates to be sold this winter in what I expect will be a very hot bred female market.

The biology and life cycle are no different this year than any other year, but the dollar amount associated with each decision is greater now than ever before. Producers should use pregnancy evaluation data to make informed decisions and should be thoughtful about what to do with those open and late-bred females. It may prove to be well worth the effort.

Beef Magazine

BUY OR DEVELOP? WEIGHING THE TRUE COST OF REPLACEMENT HEIFERS

Three key factors producers should consider when comparing the price of bred heifers to the cost of raising their own.

As we roll through fall, spring-born calves will be weaned and many of those heifer calves will be held for replacement purposes. At the same time, a large number of bred heifers will hit the market and be available for the same purpose. It is not uncommon for someone to comment on how expensive bred heifers are and assume that they can develop their own heifers for much less. While this is true in some cases, I also think it is easy to underestimate some of those costs. The purpose of this article is to briefly highlight three things that are crucial to consider when a cow-calf operator tries to make this comparison. And I would argue these are even more significant given the strength of the current cattle market.

The opportunity cost is the biggest cost

I hope this one is obvious, but the largest cost of developing a heifer is the opportunity cost of that heifer at weaning. High quality weaned heifers, in the 500-600 lb range, are bringing $2,000 and higher across most US markets. Whatever those heifer calves are worth in the marketplace is the first cost of heifer development. By not selling that heifer calf, one is forgoing that income. This cost is huge right now due to the strength of the calf market and higher interest rates, which makes forgoing that income even more significant. While the heifer herself is the easiest opportunity cost to quantify, this applies to all the costs of developing her (feed, pasture, breeding, facilities, labor, etc.).

They won't all make the cut

After the initial cost of not selling the heifer at weaning, another year of expenses will be incurred to get that heifer to the same stage as those bred heifers on the marketplace. She will be carried through a full winter and summer grazing season and be bred to calve the following year. There are significant costs in doing this, but it is also important to understand that not all those heifers are going to end up being kept for breeding. Some will fail to breed, and others will simply not meet the expectations of the farmer. Heifers not kept for breeding will end up being sold as feeders and likely won't cover all those expenses. The "loss" on these heifers becomes an additional cost of the heifers that do enter the cow herd as replacements.

Next year's calf should be very profitable

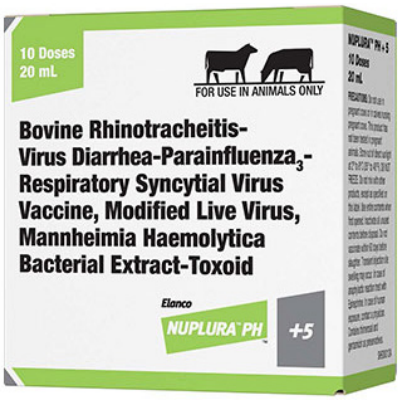
This is another one that doesn't get much attention but really matters in a time like the present. It's easier to think about this one applied to a specific timeline so I will frame it for a heifer born this spring. A heifer calf weaned in the fall 2025, kept for replacement purposes and bred in 2026, won't wean her first calf until fall of 2027. Conversely, those bred heifers on the market in fall of 2025 should wean their first calf in 2026. While nothing is guaranteed in the cattle markets, fundamentals suggest that 2026 should be a profitable year for cow-calf operations. The potential profit on that calf in 2026 becomes capitalized in the value of those bred heifers in 2025. For this reason, comparing the cost of a bred heifer in fall 2025 to the cost of developing a heifer weaned in fall of 2025 can be misleading.

The purpose of this article was not to suggest that either replacement strategy was best. There is merit in both approaches, and it largely comes down to the goals of the operator. While I am an economist, I also recognize that there are a lot of non-economic considerations that come into play. But the economics of the decision is complex, and carefully thinking through all aspects of that decision is likely time well spent.

Beef Magazine

NEW ANIMAL HEALTH PRODUCTS AT AUGUSTA CO-OP

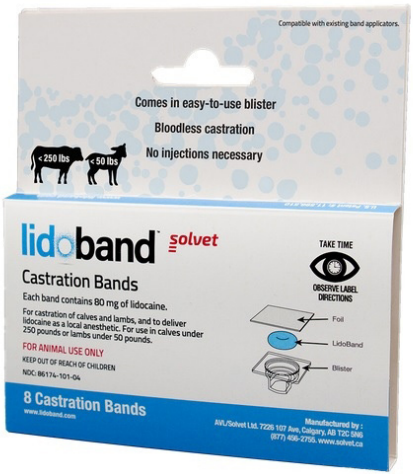
Nuplura® PH+5 Cattle Vaccine



Nuplura® PH+5 Cattle Vaccine delivers rapid, comprehensive protection against major viral and bacterial causes of bovine respiratory disease (BRD). This modified-live vaccine safeguards healthy beef and dairy cattle, including calves as young as 28 days, against Mannheimia haemolytica, IBR, BVD Types 1 and 2, PI3, and BRSV. A single 2 mL subcutaneous dose begins protecting against M. haemolytica in as little as 10 days. Formulated with purified antigens and recombinant leukotoxoid, Nuplura PH+5 reduces endotoxin load and minimizes injection site reactions. Ideal for use before periods of stress such as weaning, transport, or commingling.

- One-shot protection against bacterial and viral BRD pathogens
- Fast immunity—protects against M. haemolytica in just 10 days
- Safe for calves 28 days of age and older
- Smooth formulation with reduced injection site swelling
- Uses advanced recombinant technology for fewer adverse effects

Lidoband for Calves and Lambs



For castration of calves and lambs, and to deliver lidocaine as a local anesthetic. For use in calves under 250 pounds or lambs under 50 pounds. LidoBand is a latex rubber band designed to be placed around the base of the scrotum of calves and lambs for castration. Each castration band is infused with 80 mg of lidocaine, which provides local anesthesia beginning at 2 hours post-application and lasting up to 42 days. U.S. Patent No. 11,596,510

- Ingredient: 80 mg of lidocaine

THE SLOW CATTLE CYCLE TIMELINE

Lack of heifer retention thus far means no significant herd growth is possible in 2026 and is also likely to be limited in 2027.

Increasingly, cattle producers, consumers and policymakers are asking how high cattle prices will go, when they will reach a peak and what happens after the peak.

Questions about the cyclical peak in cattle prices and the trajectory of prices past the peak depend on factors that are still unknown at this time. We do not yet have any definitive indication of a cyclical bottom in cattle inventories – let alone the path of herd rebuilding to follow. The timeline of prices to the top has yet to be established, and therefore, speculation about the path of prices after the peak is widely variable at this point.

Three-quarters of 2025 has passed with no solid indication of heifer retention. The only direct data was the U.S. Department of Agriculture's midyear Cattle report, which showed the lowest beef replacement heifer inventory in the history of that particular dataset. The 2025 U.S. calf crop is projected to be the lowest since 1941, leading to the July estimate of feeder cattle supplies outside of feedlots that is the lowest ever for that dataset.

Industry response to rising cattle prices has been uncharacteristically slow to this point. The sharp decrease in beef cow slaughter (down roughly 40 percent since 2022) is enough to stabilize the cow herd at the current low level. The beef cow inventory could be fractionally larger in 2026. However, the small beef replacement heifer inventory (down about 27 percent from the cyclical peak in 2017) means that prospects for herd growth in 2026 are very limited. Unless heifer retention accelerates late in 2025, herd growth in 2027 will also be limited.

The beef cattle industry appears to be on a slow path of rebuilding. Prices are expected to peak some months after heifer retention begins and, at this point, are projected to move higher into 2026 (depending on the pace of heifer retention) and perhaps beyond. A sharp peak followed by a pronounced drop seems unlikely at this point. Prices are likely to remain elevated for much of the remainder of the decade, with a gentle peak somewhere along the way. However, the front end of the process has not yet started, so the path is subject to change and must be monitored for new developments.

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

Despite some anecdotal indications of heifer retention, there is no data yet to confirm that producers are collectively retaining enough heifers to initiate herd rebuilding. Beef cow slaughter has dropped enough in 2025, in addition to decreases in the previous two years, to likely show a slight increase in beef cow inventories going into 2026. While that would make 2025 the cyclical low in inventory, the lack of heifer retention thus far means that no significant herd growth is possible in 2026.

Unless data from the final quarter shows significant heifer retention, the prospects for herd growth in 2027 will likewise be limited. Without heifer retention, the clock does not start on the timeline to anticipate the peak in prices and the duration of elevated prices. It looks increasingly like that peak is being pushed into the last part of the decade.

Beef Magazine

WHY SHOULD CATTLE PRODUCERS CARE ABOUT RUMEN MICROBES?

Forage can be the cheapest and most efficient way to feed cattle. Rumen microbes allow cattle to digest forage by fermenting it in the rumen to create volatile fatty acids, which are then converted into energy. Additionally, rumen microbes are an excellent protein source, containing more than 50% protein. As rumen microbes multiply inside the rumen, they increase fermentation and digest more forage, which creates additional available protein and energy.

Performance matters

Maintaining the rumen microbes with a balanced diet helps keep cows in good body condition. Body condition drives reproduction because if cows don't have the proper body condition, they often won't cycle, settle or breed. When cows stay in optimal body condition, they can remain healthier and productive for longer.

If the microbes aren't properly fed, they can't do their job of fermentation feed, which may result in lower forage intake and potentially impact cow performance. You can supplement cows without forage or with very limited forage, but it's often a costly way to maintain them and this feeding strategy should only be utilized in drought situations with low forage availability.

Variety is key

The rumen is a complex environment home to billions of different microbes that have a variety of functions in the fermentation process. Some microbes only digest complex carbohydrates, like forage. On the other hand, some microbes only digest simple sugars and starches, like grain.

What you feed your cows helps determine which type of microbes grow. An all-forage diet will primarily develop the forage-digesting microbes. However, if you feed a mixed diet of forage and supplements, a variety of microbe types can thrive and grow. Having a diversity of rumen microbes allows for more feedstuffs to be fully utilized and help optimize cattle performance.

Feed the rumen

Like most producers, you likely feed some hay throughout the winter. It is important to ensure the rumen microbes are fed appropriately during this time with supplementation of protein, fat and mineral.

Rumen microbes require phosphorus to function correctly and increase their fermentation. It doesn't matter how much supplemental protein and energy you offer; if the diet is low on minerals or you're not feeding mineral at all, then rumen microbes may not perform at a level to optimize those resources. Purina® Wind and Rain® mineral is formulated for consistent intake and is balanced for the phosphorus needs of cattle based on the area in which it is sold.

After establishing mineral consumption, determine what supplementation type makes sense for your herd to provide enough energy to rumen microbes. Tubs, blocks or liquid supplements are free-choice options that may help, depending on your environment. These supplements contain a balance of protein and energy sources designed to feed rumen microbes to help maximize forage utilization. Purina® RangeLand® protein tubs and Purina® Accuration® (available in all three forms) are great options to help you optimize your forages by feeding the rumen microbes.

Stay consistent with the amount of nutrition you provide daily to help keep the rumen microbes functioning. If you feed one day and nothing the next, it can negatively impact the rumen because the microbes are bouncing from digesting a lot of starch to forage and back and forth. Keeping your feeding schedule as consistent as possible will help maintain a healthy balance of microbes and support digestion.

By caring for rumen microbes, you're helping ensure the herd stays in optimal health and supporting productivity.

Purina Mills

AUGUSTA CO-OP A1 BEEF MINERAL

Consistent mineral intake is critical to supply your cattle with daily nutrition of key elements to help meet nutrient requirements year-round. Augusta Co-op A1 minerals provide consistent mineral intake that ensures bioavailability, palatability, predictability and weatherability.

A1 "Basic" Mineral

The 'Basic' tier has basic weatherization to help prevent mineral from clumping. Contains a blend of oxide and sulfate mineral sources.

- A1-9448 Hi Mag
- A1-9449 "Stocker" option
- A1-9450 w/Rumensin – Use for grinding in feed on farm. Rumensin for coccidiosis control and feed efficiency.
- A1-9451 w/Garlic – Garlic as a fly control option.

A1 "Choice" Mineral

The 'Choice' tier has improved weatherization to help prevent mineral from clumping. 50% organic selenium, 50/50 blend of sulfate and Intellibond mineral sources.

- A1-9452 Hi Mag
- A1-9453 Hi Mag w/Clarifly for fly control

A1 "Prime" Mineral

The 'Prime' tier provides the best weatherization to help prevent mineral from clumping, 100% organic selenium, 50/50 blend of sulfate and organic mineral sources.

- A1-9454 Hi Mag
- A1-9455 Hi Mag w/Clarifly for fly control

											Mineral Sources					Fly Control		Medicated?	
Product Name	SKU	Ca %	P %	Salt %	Mg %	Vit A IU/lb	Vit E IU/lb	Cu (ppm)	Zn (ppm)	Se (ppm)	Oxides	Sulfates	Intellibonds	Organics	Organic Se Source?	Garlic	Clarifly	Rumensin	Weatherization?
A1 Basic Hi Mag	A1-9448	13.5-16.2	2 (min)	20.2-24.2	10	150,000	50	500	2500	26	+	+							Good
A1 Basic	A1-9449	12.6-15.1	4 (min)	21.6-25.9	5	154,300	50	500	2500	26	+	+							Good
A1 Basic w/ Rumensin	A1-9450	12.6-15.1	4 (min)	21.6-25.9	5	154,300	50	500	2500	26	+	+						+	Good
A1 Basic w/ Garlic	A1-9451	13.3-15.9	2 (min)	20.2-24.24	10	150,000	50	500	2500	26	+	+				+			Good
A1 Choice Hi Mag	A1-9452	12.6-15.1	2 (min)	18.0-21.6	12	204,300	100	1000	3500	26		+	+		50%				Better
A1 Choice Hi Mag w/ Clarifly	A1-9453	12.5-15.0	2 (min)	18.0-19.6	12	200,000	100	1000	3500	26		+	+		50%		+		Better
A1 Prime Hi Mag	A1-9454	10.8-12.9	3 (min)	17.1-20.5	12	250,000	200	1500	3500	26		+		+	100%				Best
A1 Prime Hi Mag w/ Clarifly	A1-9455	10.8-12.9	3 (min)	17.1-20.5	12	250,000	200	1500	3500	26		+		+	100%		+		Best

NOVEMBER 6TH

5:30 – 8:00 PM *(after store hours)*

FRIENDS & FAMILY SALE

40% OFF ALL BOOTS & CLOTHING

All Brands

EXCLUSIVE AUGUSTA CO-OP MEMBER EVENT

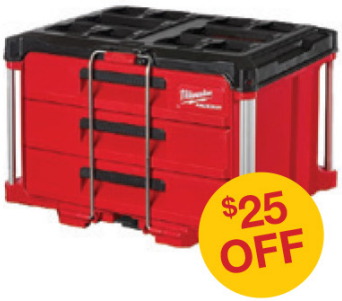
If you are a current member you are invited to this event!

PLUS DEALS THROUGHOUT THE STORE:
PET, MILWAUKEE, YETI, WILD BIRD SEED, & MORE! **STAUNTON LOCATION ONLY.**

Milwaukee®

$37.99

23PC SHOCKWAVE™ Impact Duty RED HELIX™ Titanium Drill Bit Set #48-89-4631



$174.99

PACKOUT™ 3-Drawer Tool Box
#48-22-8443

$14.99

18PC SHOCKWAVE™ Impact Duty Driver Bit Set
#48-32-4403

In-store savings on select products

EVENTS / CALENDAR

FRIENDS & FAMILY SALE (AFTER HOURS)
November 6 • 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm

Staunton location only.
40% off all boots & clothing. Plus deals throughout the store. Member only event.

Scan to view event details

BLACK FRIDAY SALE
November 7-8

Staunton location only.
40% off all boots & clothing. Open to the public.