

## **STOCKER OPERATOR PANEL**

**Mr. Sidney Riley**

Riley Cattle Co.

Bluff City, TN

Riley Cattle is a backgrounding operation located in upper East Tennessee by Sidney Riley and one full time employee. The farm has 300 acres with corn used for silage grown on 130 acres. Most of the remainder is in pasture with some woodland. Some hay is harvested on strips between corn, but the majority of hay is from nearly land either rented or on a share basis comprising 100-150 more acres. Corn land is seeded in small grain in the fall to provide supplemental winter grazing for some of the cattle and to help preserve soil structure from corn each year. This pasture is especially valuable to start smaller calves and help manage problem cattle.

Most cattle are purchased by Sidney Riley from Kingsport Livestock Auction and some from feeder sales at Tri State Livestock. A few come from order buyers in local Virginia scales and Kentucky at times. Also, cattle have come from Hodge livestock network sale, and several came from repeat customers direct from area farms. Steers and bulls are purchased at mainly 500-650 pounds to utilize the high silage ration used, but individuals lighter or heavier maybe purchased based on their estimated potential to upgrade and fit into loads.

Cattle are vaccinated with modified live IBR,BVD complex vaccines and wormed on arrival. About 5 days later, they are castrated as needed, implanted, given a vitamin supplement, and an antibiotic injection. They are boosted at 14-20 days and given 7 way Blackleg at this time.

Most cattle are grown on a corn silage-corn gluten growing ration with hay fed in rings to 750-850 pounds before merchandising. In the summer, approximately 500 are grazed on area farms on a poundage basis with them being responsible for monitoring health and cattle. Also 150-200 annually are grazed and wintered on hay on a partnership agreement going from 500 to 850 rounds on a farm in Carter County.

Steers are sorted at selling into uniform loads of same body type and size and moved in trailer-load lots. They either sell through Hodge livestock Network sale or by private treaty with only real misfits going back through auctions. Some cattle not fitting sorting specifications that will be able to upgrade with feed are fed at times in a commercial lot in Kansas. The last few years about 4000+ calves have been sold annually.

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**Mr. Paul Fugate**

Fugate & Fugate Farms

Tazewell, TN

Paul Fugate is in partnership with his father, David, in a stocker operation in Hancock and Claiborne counties in upper East Tennessee. The annual throughput on their operation averages between 2500 and 3000 head per year. Their calves are purchased by order buyers from 5 to 7 stockyards within 100 miles of their operation. The cattle are fed year round, utilizing corn gluten, pelletized soybean hulls and a variable amount of corn, all of which is bulk purchased and mixed on the farm. The Fugate operation was recently recognized as a State Bicentennial Farm, having been in continuous production for over 200 years in the same family.

Cattle are purchased from 400 to 800 pounds, with the main motivation being to buy healthy animals at undervalued prices. Since cattle are entering and leaving the operation continuously, size restrictions are not as important as price considerations. The incoming cattle are vaccinated within 2 days of arrival with an intranasal IBR/PI3, blackleg and one of several combination vaccines for IBR, BRD, Pasturella and BVD. They are also metaphylactically dosed with either Draxxin, Micotil, Excede or Tetradure to help protect them during recovery from the stresses of marketing and/or weaning. They are then dewormed and put into starter pens where they are fed a hay/haylage/feed ration until they are ready to be castrated, implanted and put out into pastures (usually in 3-4 weeks) where they will be limit fed to supplement their grazing on primarily fescue, orchard grass and clover. Cattle are fattened to 850-950 pounds, then are shipped to Kansas, where they are finished on a 50/50 basis with a large feedlot operation. They are then sold to packers, generally on a live basis, but occasionally on a grade/yield. As with most stocker operations, the vast majority of sick cattle are pulled within the first month of ownership. We are currently treating with Nuflor, Baytril, Draxxin, Flunixin, Tetradure, witch doctors, laying on of hands and anything else that we can think of. The pull rate usually averages less than 25%, with a rolling mortality of 1.5% or less.

The operation consists of 1200 acres of owned land and 800 acres of leased land on 6 different farms, with the largest lots capable of handling about 60 head at a time. Usually, there are between 850 and 1100 head to care for at any given time with up to 500 more owned in Kansas. Caring for the livestock has become much more time consuming as their labor force has declined, both through attrition and with the phasing out of tobacco as a cash crop. Paul and his father currently operate with no employees, but are certainly interested if you know of anyone who is willing to work in adverse conditions, with mediocre equipment, for inadequate compensation in the middle of nowhere. You are welcome to take that as a joke, but obviously, if Paul was a comedian, his hours and working conditions would be better.