



## **Welcome to our January 2024 Recap:**

We are pleased to welcome you to our January 2024 month-end report.

The financial press is in full tilt earnings mode. The cacophony of who made earnings and who missed is hard to escape. The effect on equity index skew has been to depress (it would seem) puts, or, more correctly, relatively depress puts to calls. Skew is flat. The interest rate picture is again a sea of tranquility. How long it remains this way in light of the looming commercial mortgage debacle and the US government's profligate spending is anyone's guess. They've been kicking the can down the road for the past 40 years. It is hard to bet against the can going down the road for a little bit longer, though we all know reality steps in when you least want it or expect it.

The ags picture is again relative calm and quietude. It is wrong to say that there are no overhangs here. The Russian-Ukrainian-NATO war is still rolling on. The fall of the Black Sea into complete Russian control would concentrate a lot of the grain and corn trade into Russian hands. It is remarkable that they have gone from massive grain importers to massive grain and seeds exporters. There is always some spoiling action that Ukrainian or NATO forces can mount on shipping in the Black Sea and through the Dardanelles. Either outcome should be driving some fear going forward. Again, though inflation has slowed down, price levels are up. One would think that there might be a bit more hedging of raw materials for the food sector.

The ever alluring metals complex is a fast train to nowhere.

Unlike the fire and brimstone of early last year, the fx markets are quiet. The exception continues to be crypto which is a wild ride. First we had the purported FTX liquidations and forced selling into the future market. Then we had the rebound after that subsided. Vol had been bid up and then came off.

Energy is probably the most enigmatic part of this hard to understand puzzle. On the one hand, there are claims that the US economy is blossoming through a great period of economic activity (best economy in 40 years!). On the other hand, we have the long shadow of the war in Europe and the real possibility of a major war in the Middle East closing off very important straits. The response in crude oil has been a big yawn. Vol is not bothered. This could be the fortuitous effect of the shale oil. We believe that participation in the market is astonishingly light. Outside of the WTI Crude market, the trade in other options (heating oil, rbob, etc) is light to almost non-existent. Risk management never seems like a good bet until you are bitten by the market. It will take a

big bite and outsized trading profits to lure people back in. The prevailing trend of last year was sell vol.

We now proceed to our dive into the different market segments and our observations.

## **Forex**

Both ETH and BTC futures were up 2 and 3%, respectively on the 30th. As we finish this up on the 31st, BTC ended up 0.8% while ETH was negative. More importantly, vol was destroyed in both. It was down 27 vol points (2700 bps) in ETH and slightly more in BTC. The FTX overhang is gone, it would seem. Vol was uniformly offered in conventional currencies as well, except the New Zealand Dollar. The Dollar has rallied against everything outside of cryptos. Perhaps it is the vaunted flight to safety-both militarily and economically. The Yen was the most down against the Dollar. Asking Google's Bard (<https://bard.google.com/>) about economic activity in Japan gives the expected answer, more services and less manufacturing coupled with global recessionary pressures. The other prevailing wisdom is that the Fed is being more careful and hawkish with policy, thus driving the Dollar up. We continue to believe this is a sideshow. Inflation is the government's friend.

[Foreign Exchange ATM](#)

[Bitcoin Detail](#)

[Ethereum Detail](#)

[Yen Detail](#)

[Pound Detail](#)

## **Rates**

The interest rate picture got a smallish dose of cold water thrown at it on the last day of the month. Fed Chairman Powell dashed hopes for quick rate cuts. This sent equities down, but resulted in some relief in the US government futures markets (yesterday). Over the past month in total, it looks like futures declined more or less with the tenor of the underlying-perhaps driven by convexity. The spastic expectation changes for rate policy might cause you to believe implied vol is spiking. That would be incorrect. Implied vol is offered across the board. Perhaps the relief rally of the tail end of last year was all the flash the market needed, or economic conditions are not as rosy as believed and the real money's expectations are unchanged.

[Interest Rates ATM](#)

[30 Year Detail](#)

[Ultrabond Detail](#)

## **Equity Indexes**

Benjamin Graham and his most widely recognized acolyte, Warren Buffett, often make the case that in the short run, equity markets are popularity contests, while in the long run they are scales which measure economic value. A youngster who entered equity markets after 2008 should be wondering when this long run kicks in. As even a bird on the wire can attest, equity markets were up again this month. The only remarkable observation to be made is that vol did not completely crumple. It was mostly unchanged. The ATM E-Mini SP500 vol was unchanged, but somehow VIX ended up by 1.2%. The

earnings that are rolling in are good so far, on average. It does seem like the AI/GPU craze hit its crescendo sometime last year. Corporate layoffs are increasing, which is not typically a good omen. The general consensus is that the soft landing is behind the economy and it is upwards and onwards (except for what energy and metal markets are saying).

[EquityIndex ATM](#)

[SP500 Detail](#)

[Russell Detail](#)

[VIX Detail](#)

## **Metals**

In our end of year missive, we called this sector the zombie sector. January felt like the zombie movement continued. Copper was up slightly. Gold was down slightly. Platinum and palladium, which should be affected by Russian sanctions, were down sharply. There were many hashtags referencing a silver squeeze, and, just like all the subsequent ones, the squeeze ended with a splat. Vol was down in everything. Again, there are definite economic slowdown concerns. There are also rumblings of more Chinese tariffs if Mr. Trump is elected. In general, the interruption of trade patterns from the initial Trump presidency as well as COVID is probably still being felt. The restriction of traffic via the Suez is also not helping things.

[Metals ATM](#)

[Gold Detail](#)

[Palladium Detail](#)

[Copper Detail](#)

## **Ags**

Looking at the agricultural commodity complex, the meats were the winners this month. This isn't unusual. They were the winners last year. There is news that the US cattle herd is the smallest it has been in decades. This likely explains the rally in prices, but it doesn't explain the plummeting vol. With the exception of Rough Rice, the other seeds (wheat, corn, the bean complex, rapeseed and so on) were down. A good deal of the blame is placed on the atmospheric condition known as el Nino. However, the overhang from the Ukrainian War is largely absent. It is hardly a good thing for consumers if more grain and corn are concentrated in a few hands. As in all of the commodities and raw materials, Chinese demand is a huge factor and it seems like China is not yet past what ails her. Corn and beans were the only two markets that showed any appreciable interest in vol. Everything was varying degrees of falling.

[Ags ATM](#)

[Feeder Cattle Detail](#)

[Live Cattle Detail](#)

[Corn Detail](#)

[Soybean Detail](#)

[Ags Details](#)

## **Energy**

What to say about energy? This sector is acting more and more aimlessly (ala our

zombie metals). There is an ongoing war in Europe with pipeline sabotage and bombing of refiners and terminals. There is a major military operation in the Middle East. There are closures of the Bab El Mandeb. Finally, we have the wildcard of US action in response to the attack on US bases in the region (some legal, some less so). The net result of this a pop in futures prices of 4-6%, but no follow through in vol. The situation feels as if vol would selloff on anything less than a full US war on Iran. Vol has come off for almost the entirety of the energy complex-a hasty retreat for a set of products which thrive on discontent. We hinted in our previous missives that volumes are down in the option products. While this is broadly true across the entirety of the futures options space, it is most noticeable in energies. There is chatter that banks are marketing vol strategies to pensions, endowments, widows and orphans. Either those strategies are driven by OTC products or they are in credit, not in any of the sectors we follow. One wonders if the capital requirements post the negative oil price episode have crippled the product permanently. Natural gas took a solid drubbing as the storms were more manageable than expected and the Biden administration put the brakes on plans to export US natural gas to Europe. In past missives we have posited the theory that the US will extract every bit of surplus from trade with Europe. Shipping natural gas to Europe was one way that could happen. The curtailment in US deliveries could be a spark which ignites more European manufacturing in the US, taking advantage of lower energy costs and the greater efficiency in shipping finished goods across the oceans.

[Energy ATM](#)

[US Natty Gas Detail](#)

[WTI Crude Detail](#)

[Details Energy](#)

As always, we welcome you to visit our website and hope to help you manage risk!

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## **At The Money Roundup of Products**

## Forex

exch/prod	desc	futures chng [%]	vol chng [%]
CME/ADU	AUDUSD 2pmfix	-0.023 [-3.3%]	-0.023 [-18.9%]
CME/BTC	Bitcoin	+330.000 [+0.8%]	-0.212 [-33.0%]
CME/CAU	CADUSD 2pmfix	-0.010 [-1.3%]	-0.022 [-28.1%]
CME/CHU	CHFUSD 2pmfix	-0.030 [-2.5%]	-0.044 [-35.0%]
CME/ETH	Ethereum	-39.000 [-1.7%]	-0.269 [-38.1%]
CME/EUU	EURUSD 2pmfix	-0.021 [-1.9%]	-0.021 [-22.7%]
CME/GBU	GBPUSD 2pmfix	-0.004 [-0.3%]	-0.014 [-15.7%]
CME/JPU	JPYUSD 2pmfix	-0.000 [-4.1%]	-0.019 [-16.6%]
CME/MP	Mexican Peso	-0.000 [-0.2%]	-0.010 [-9.2%]
CME/NE	New Zealand	-0.011 [-1.7%]	+0.004 [+4.0%]

exch/prod	desc	futures chng [%]	vol chng [%]
CME/DK	Class IV Milk	-0.240 [-1.2%]	-0.090 [-43.5%]
CBT/C	Corn	-0.230 [-4.9%]	+0.007 [+4.0%]
CME/62	Feeder Cattle	+17.850 [+8.0%]	-0.021 [-13.7%]
CBT/KW	KC HRW Wheat	-0.200 [-3.1%]	-0.008 [-3.2%]
CME/LN	Lean Hog	+8.375 [+12.3%]	-0.128 [-52.5%]
CME/48	Live Cattle	+12.200 [+7.2%]	-0.079 [-42.6%]
CME/NF	Nonfat Dry Milk	+0.775 [+0.6%]	-0.043 [-35.6%]
CBT/O	Oats	-0.032 [-0.8%]	-0.108 [-23.8%]
ENXT_COM/OCO	Rapeseed	-7.250 [-1.7%]	-0.027 [-12.4%]
CBT/14	Rough Rice	+0.345 [+2.0%]	-0.002 [-1.3%]
CBT/S	Soybean	-0.758 [-5.8%]	+0.025 [+16.3%]
CBT/06	Soybean Meal	-17.700 [-4.6%]	-0.020 [-7.7%]
CBT/07	Soybean Oil	-2.160 [-4.5%]	-0.026 [-9.4%]
CBT/W	Wheat	-0.328 [-5.2%]	-0.012 [-4.6%]

## Energy

exch/prod	desc	futures chng [%]	vol chng [%]
NYMEX/BZO	Brent Crude Oil Margin	+3.510 [+4.6%]	-0.040 [-11.7%]
NYMEX/CVR	Chicago Ethanol(platts) Average Price	+0.058 [+3.6%]	-0.026 [-13.9%]
NYMEX/LO	Crude Oil	+4.200 [+5.9%]	-0.023 [-6.4%]
NYMEX/LN	European Natural Gas	-0.414 [-16.5%]	-0.140 [-18.4%]
NYMEX/E7	Henry Hub Financial Last Day	-0.414 [-16.5%]	-0.202 [-24.5%]
NYMEX/ON	Natural Gas	-0.414 [-16.5%]	-0.139 [-18.2%]
NYMEX/OH	NY Harbor ULSD	+0.256 [+10.1%]	-0.046 [-12.2%]
NYMEX/OB	RBOB	+0.136 [+6.5%]	-0.075 [-20.0%]

## EquityIndex

exch/prod	desc	futures chng [%]	vol chng [%]
CBT/YM	E-Mini Dow	+287.000 [+0.8%]	-0.013 [-11.0%]
CME/NQ	E-Mini Nasdaq	+218.750 [+1.3%]	+0.004 [+2.7%]
CME/RTO	E-Mini Russell 2000	-91.800 [-4.5%]	+0.002 [+1.1%]
CME/RTM	E-Mini Russell EOM	-91.800 [-4.5%]	+0.003 [+1.4%]
CME/ES	E-Mini S&P 500	+50.500 [+1.0%]	+0.001 [+0.7%]
CBOE/VIX	VIX Volatility Index	+1.150 [+8.7%]	+0.160 [+23.9%]

## Metals

exch/prod	desc	futures chng [%]	vol chng [%]
COMEX/HX	Copper	+0.016 [+0.4%]	-0.027 [-13.9%]
COMEX/OG	Gold	-4.400 [-0.2%]	-0.025 [-17.9%]
NYMEX/PAO	Palladium	-112.500 [-10.1%]	-0.030 [-7.2%]
NYMEX/PO	Platinum	-76.600 [-7.6%]	-0.002 [-0.8%]
COMEX/SO	Silver	-0.917 [-3.8%]	-0.024 [-9.8%]

## InterestRates

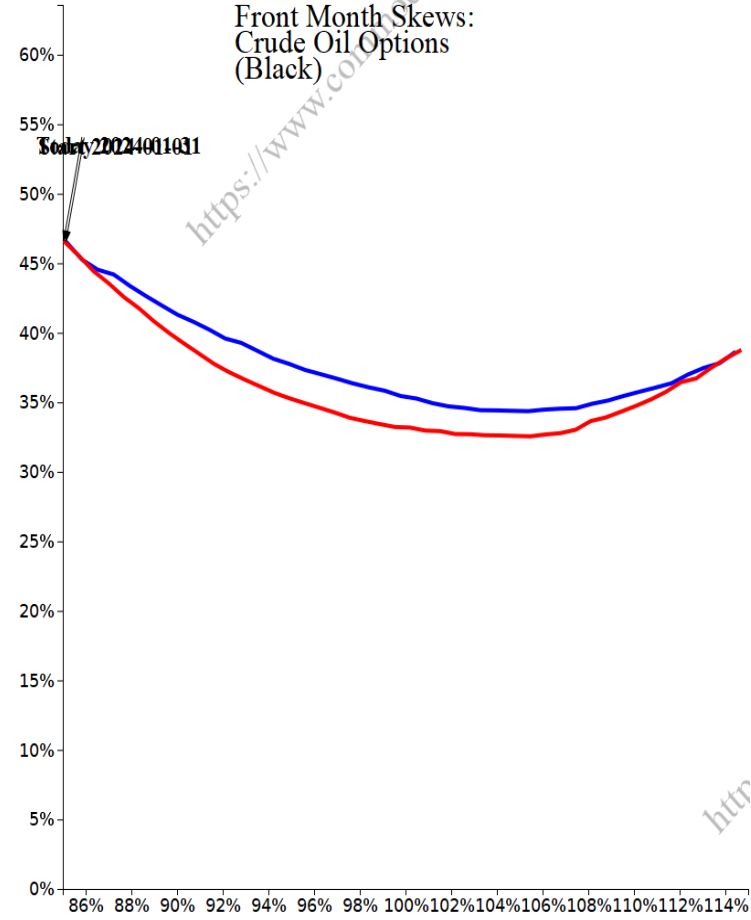
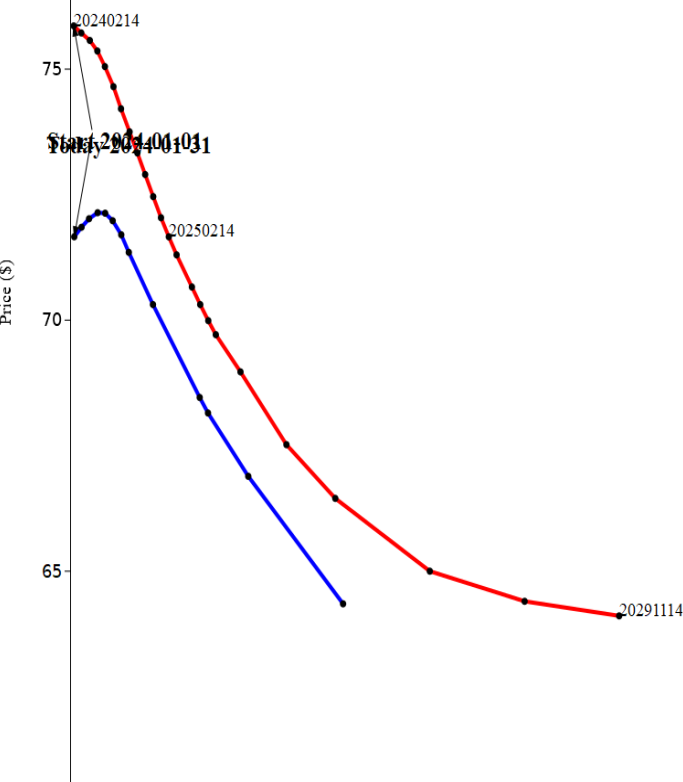
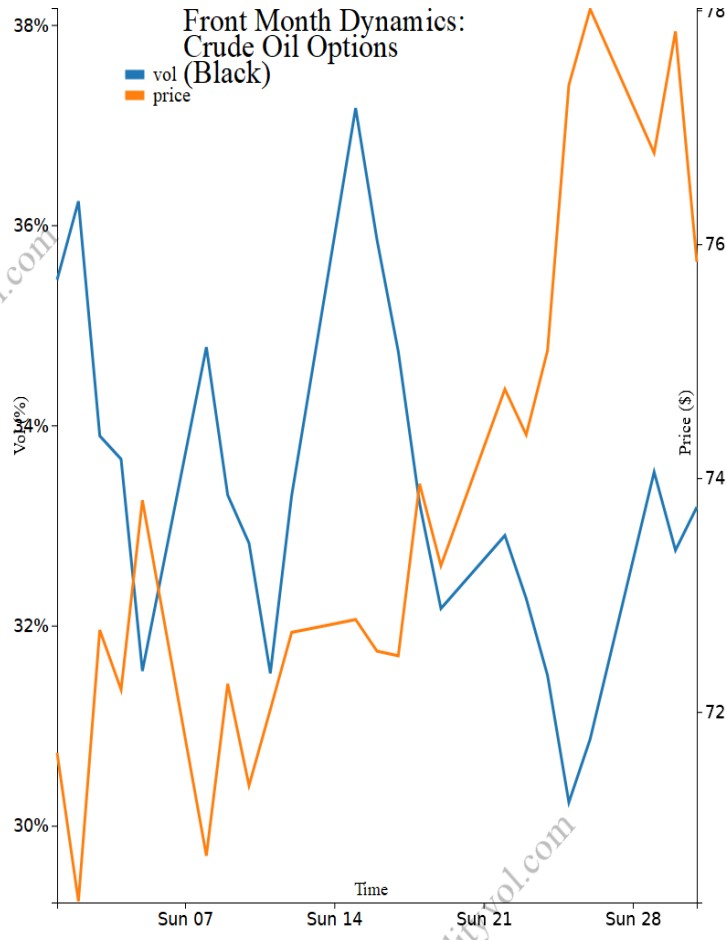
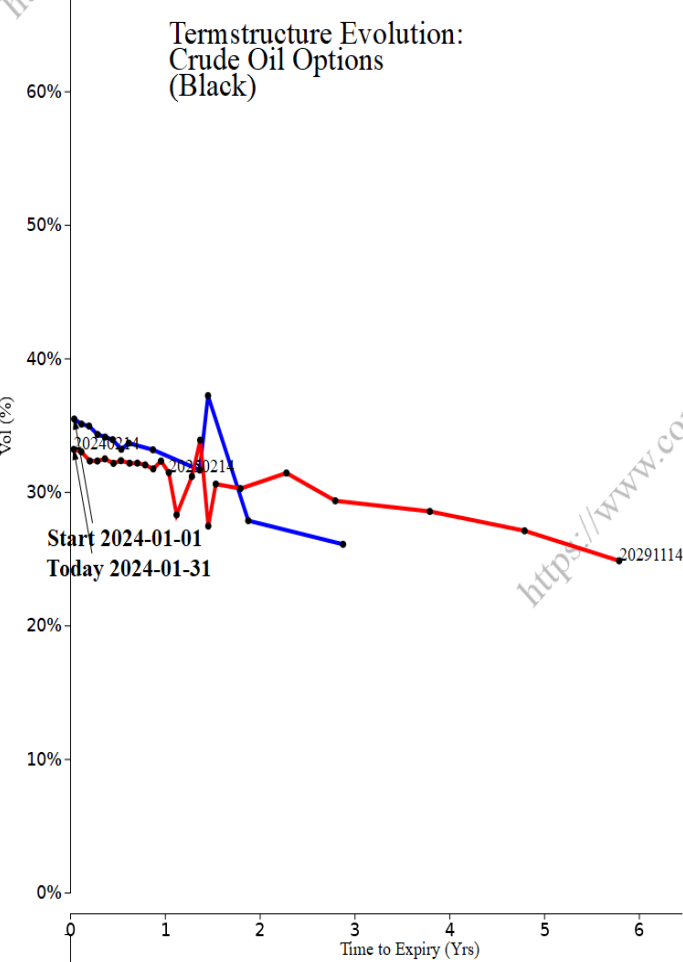
exch/prod	desc	futures chng [%]	vol chng [%]
CBT/26	2 YR US Treasury Note	-0.129 [-0.1%]	-0.003 [-12.2%]
CBT/25	5 YR US Treasury Note	-0.383 [-0.4%]	-0.007 [-12.9%]
CBT/21	10 YR US Treasury Note	-0.563 [-0.5%]	-0.013 [-16.7%]
CBT/17	30 YR US Treasury Bond	-2.594 [-2.1%]	-0.021 [-15.0%]
CBT/UBE	Long Term US Treasury Bond	-4.375 [-3.3%]	-0.019 [-11.4%]
CME/S0	One-year Mid-curve Three-month SOFR	-0.120 [-0.1%]	-0.003 [-15.6%]
CME/SR3	Three-month SOFR	-0.100 [-0.1%]	-0.003 [-29.8%]
CME/S3	Three-year Mid-curve Three-month SOFR	-0.160 [-0.2%]	-0.002 [-14.4%]
CME/S2	Two-year Mid-curve Three-month SOFR	-0.145 [-0.1%]	+0.001 [+4.6%]

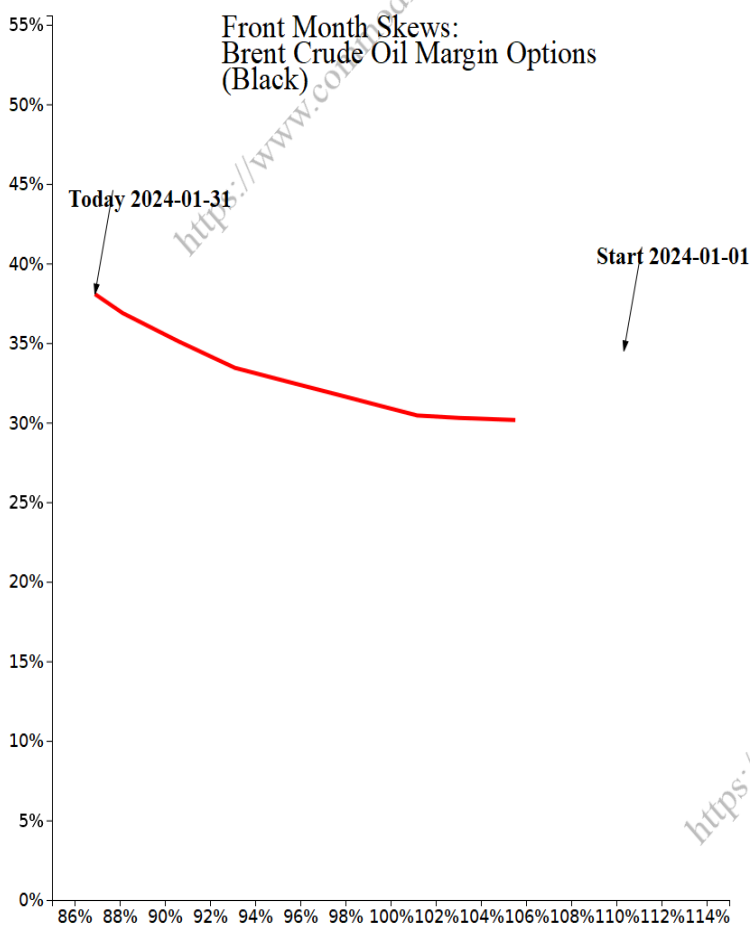
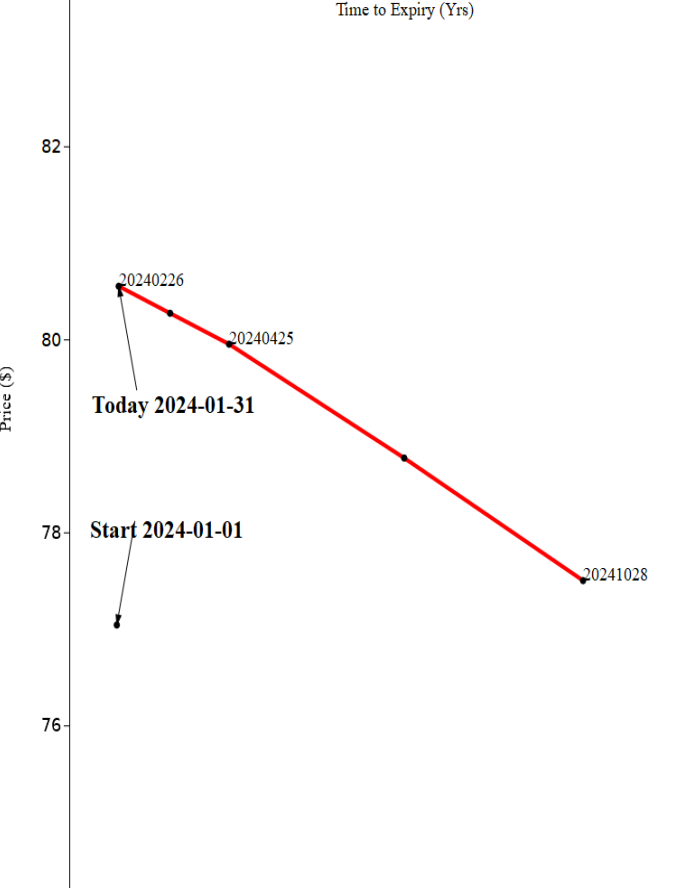
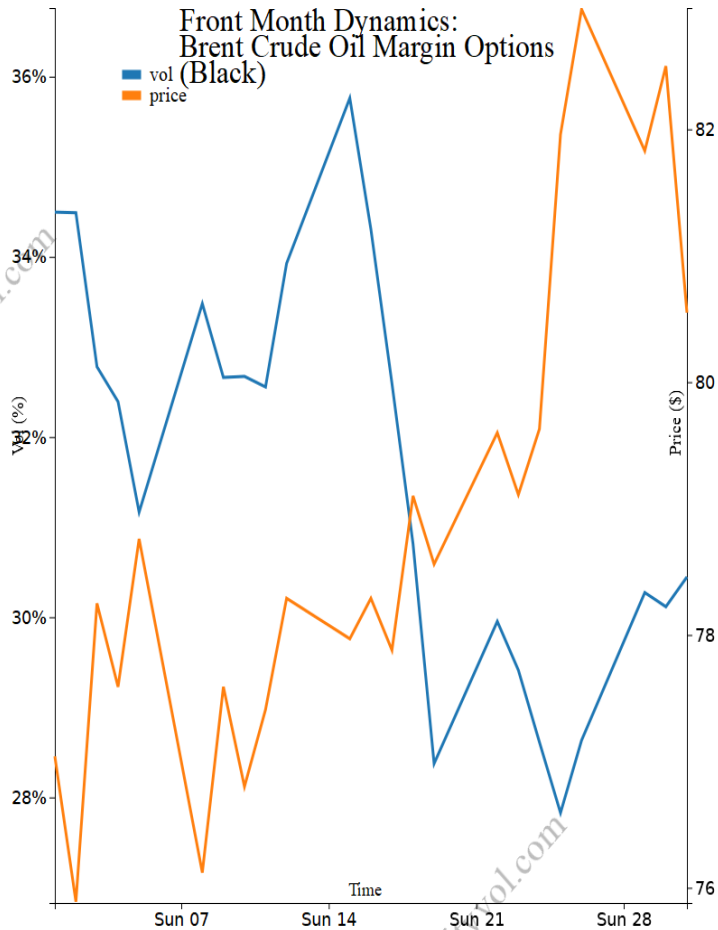
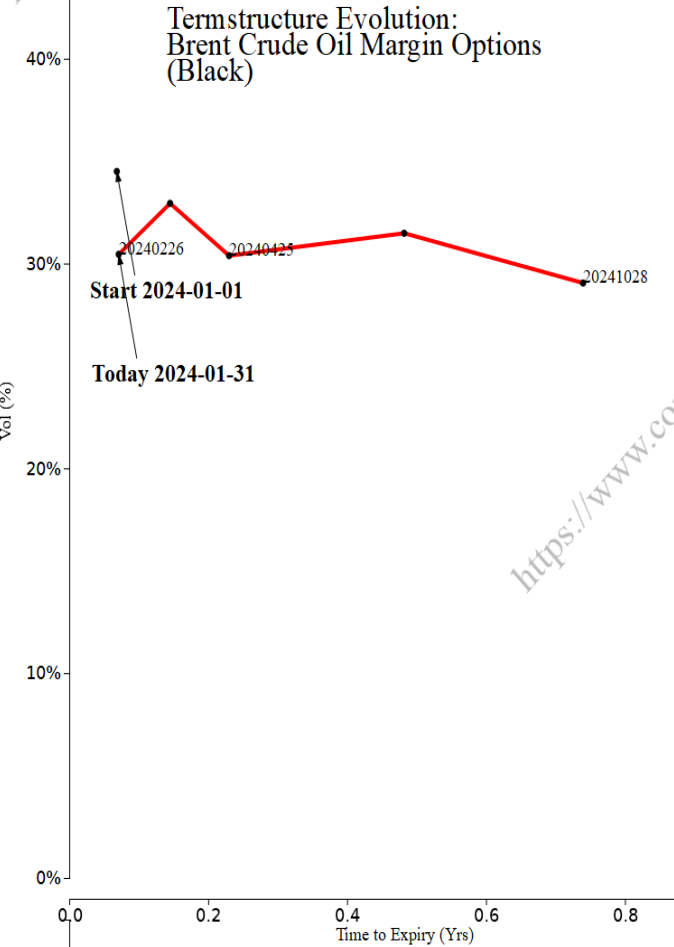


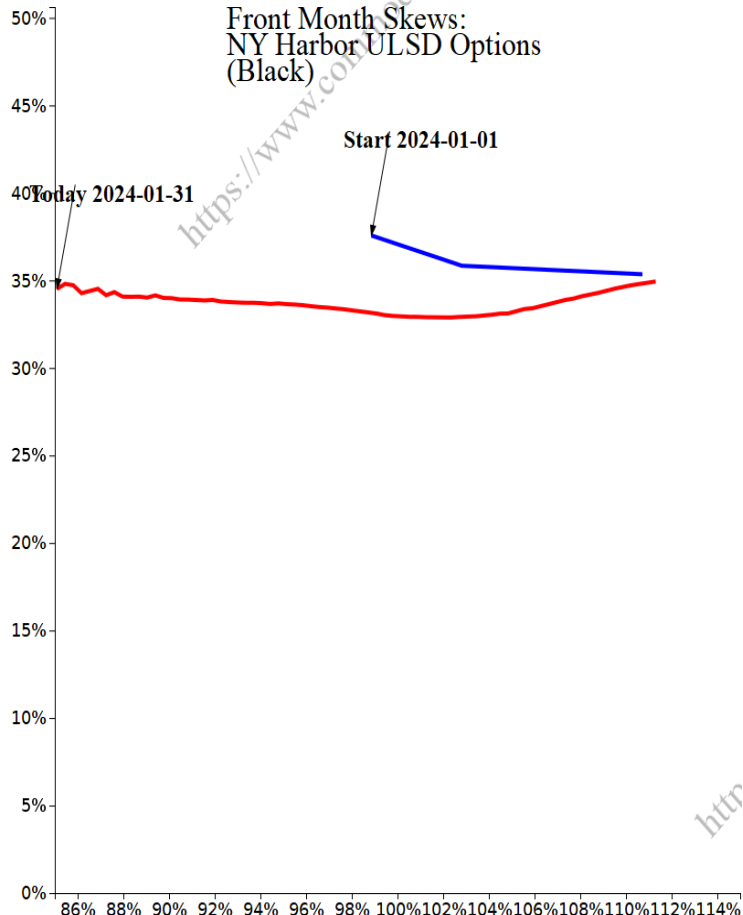
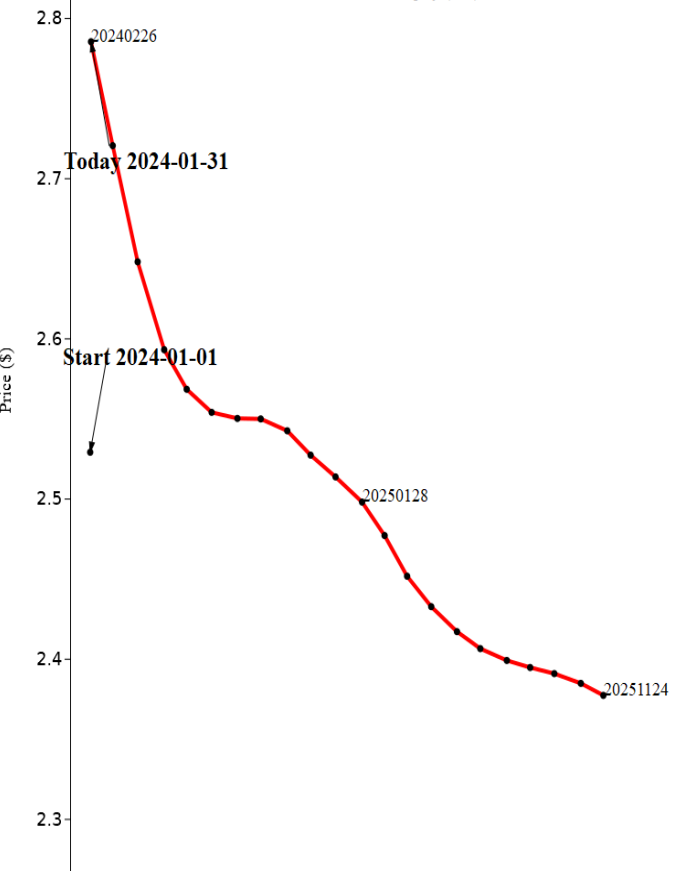
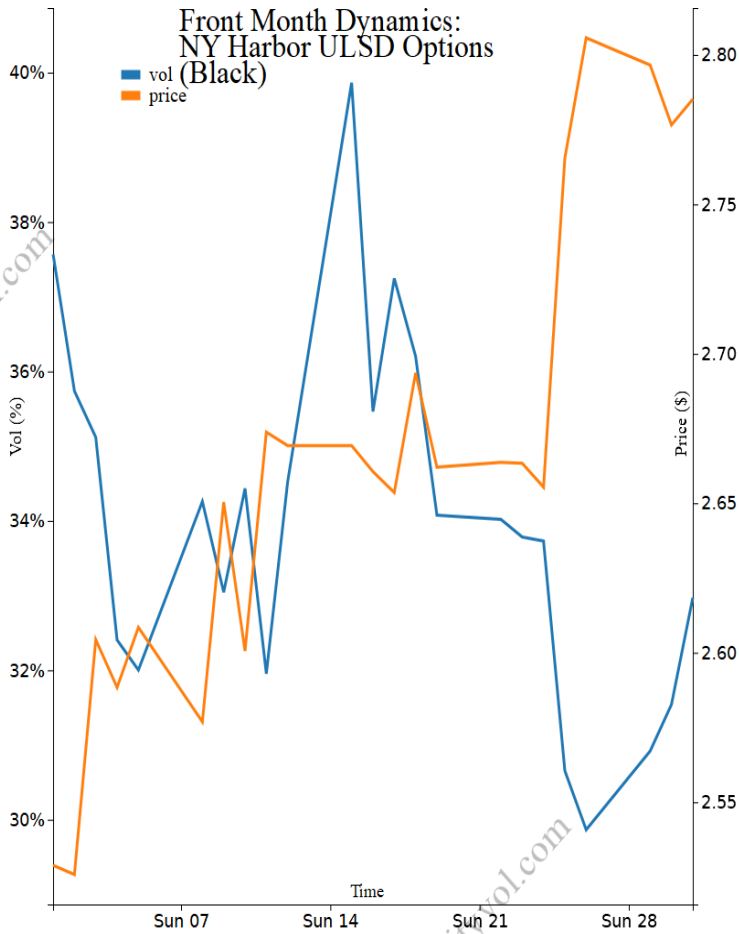
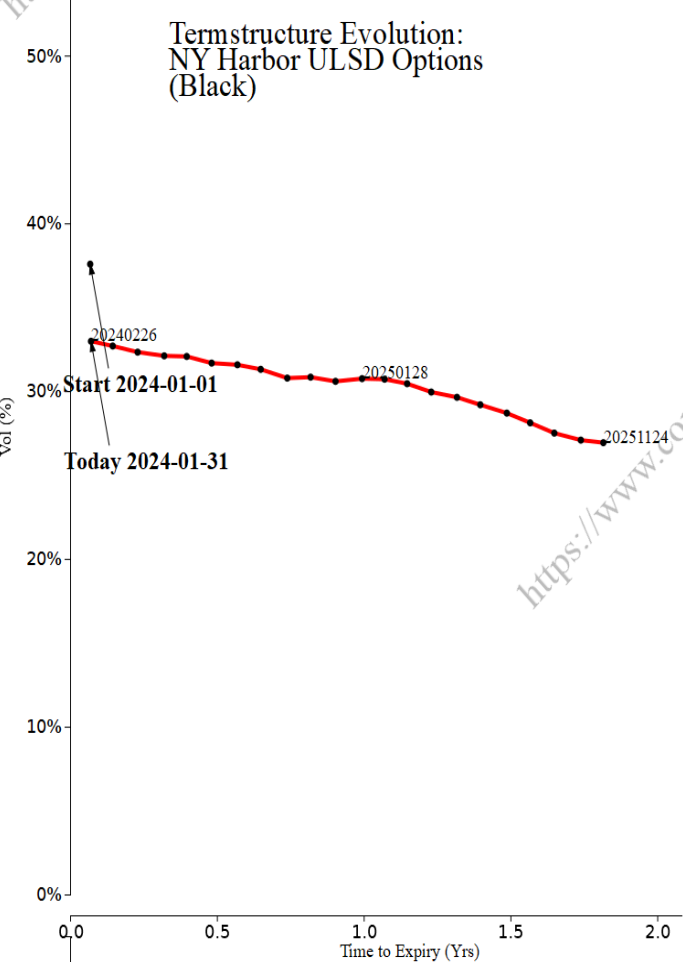


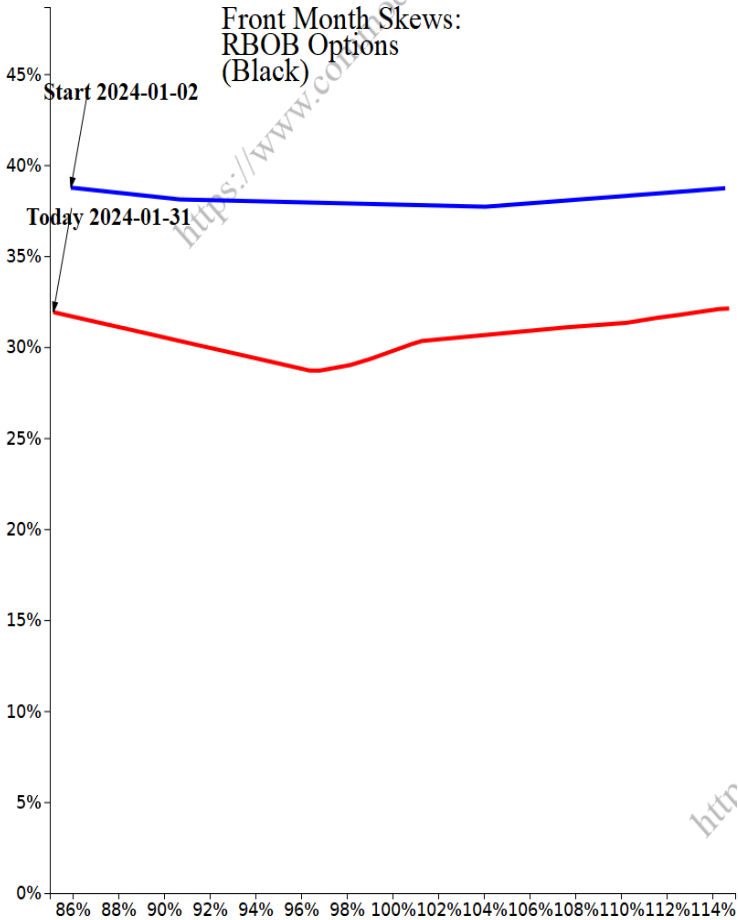
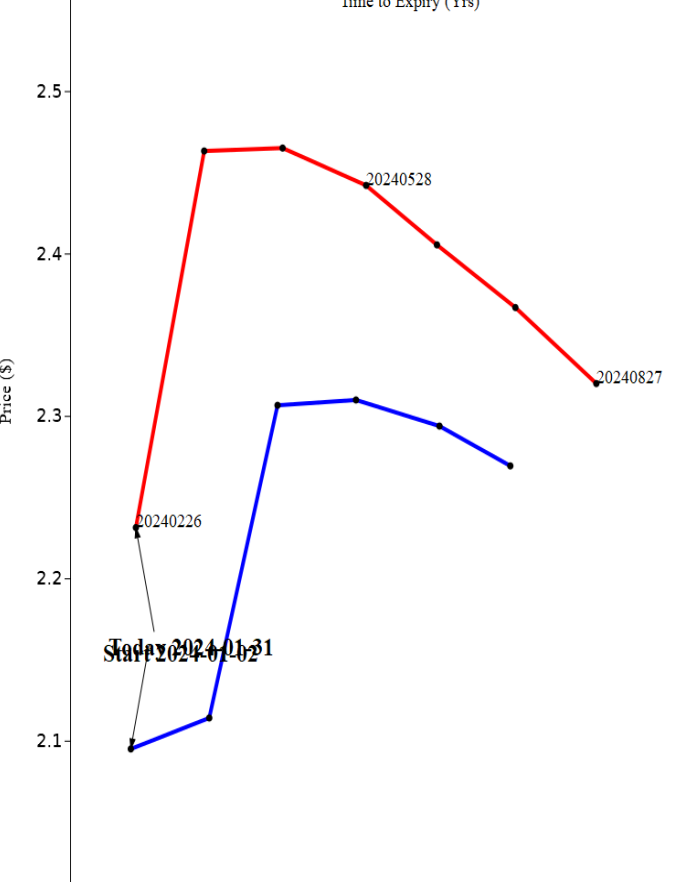
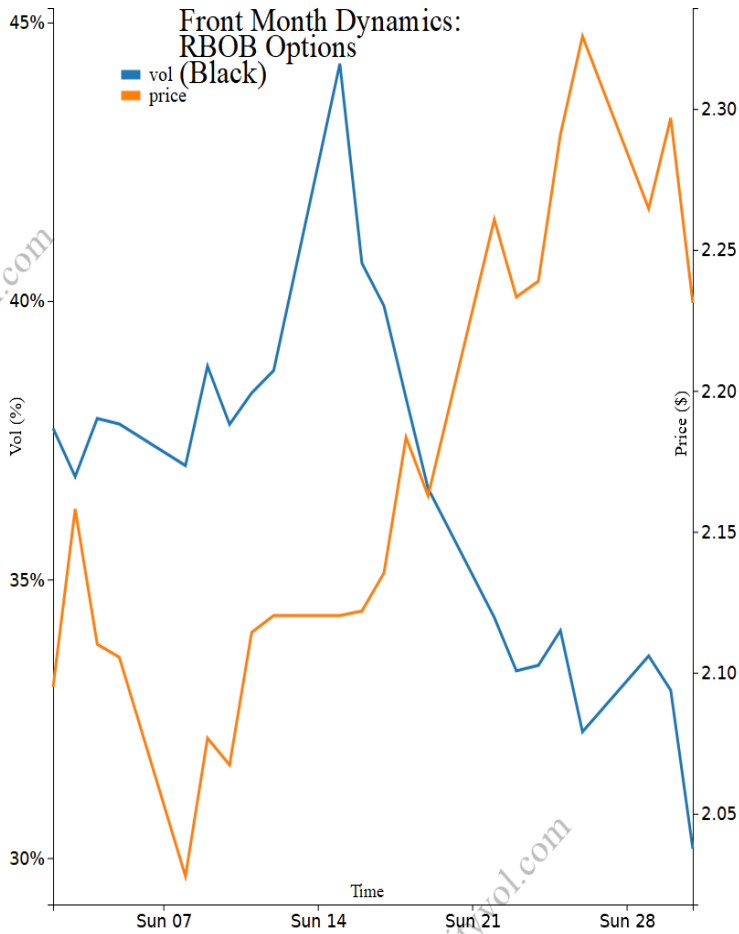
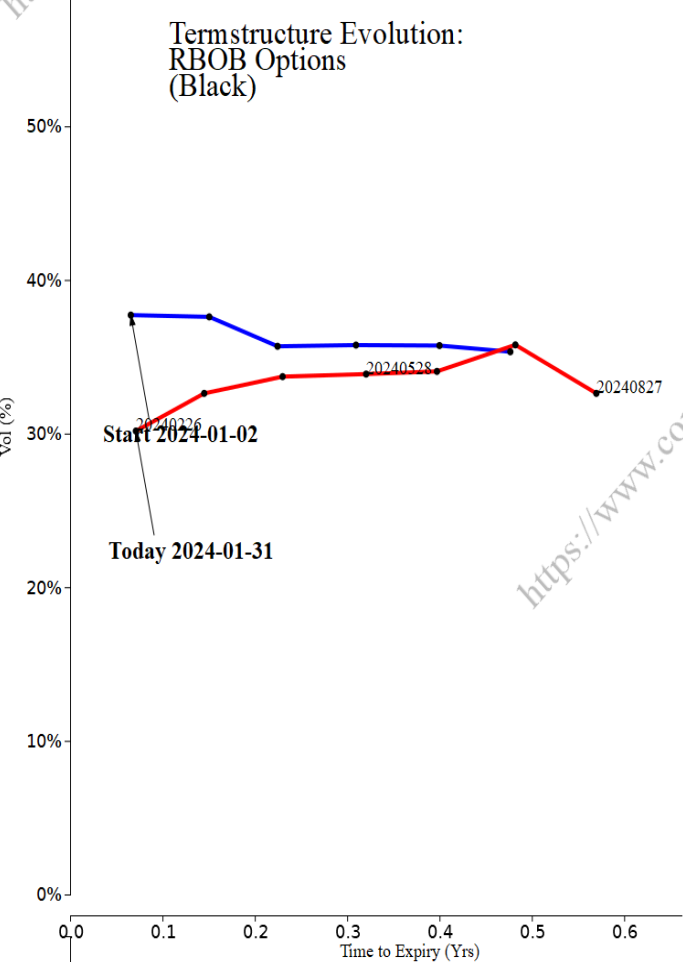
**Skews, Termstructures and more**

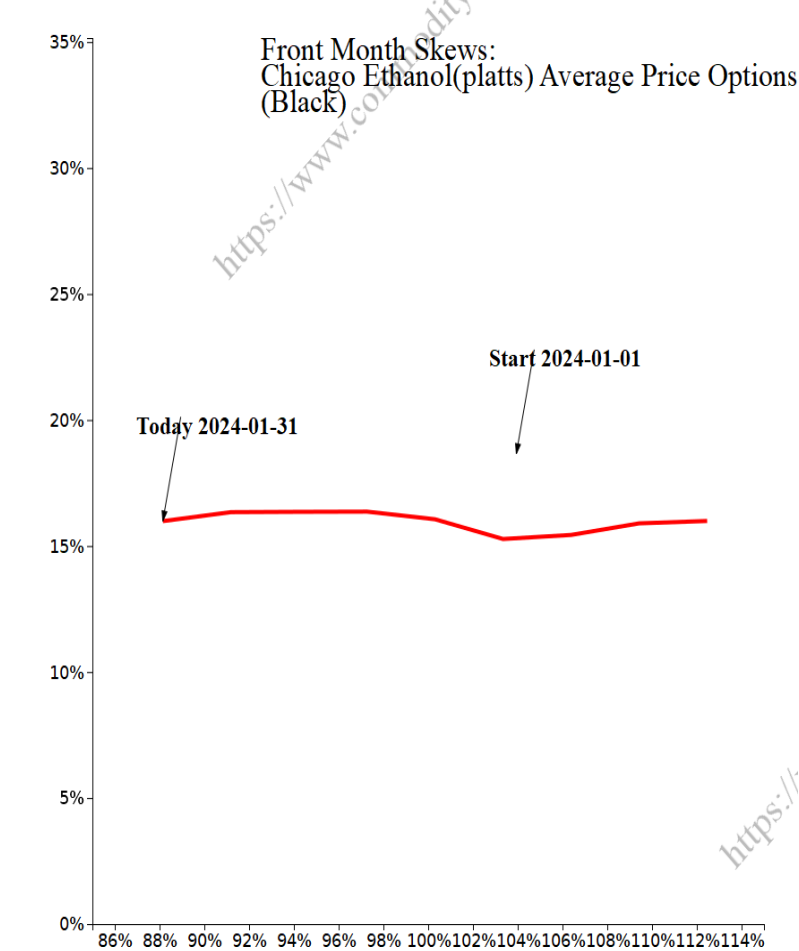
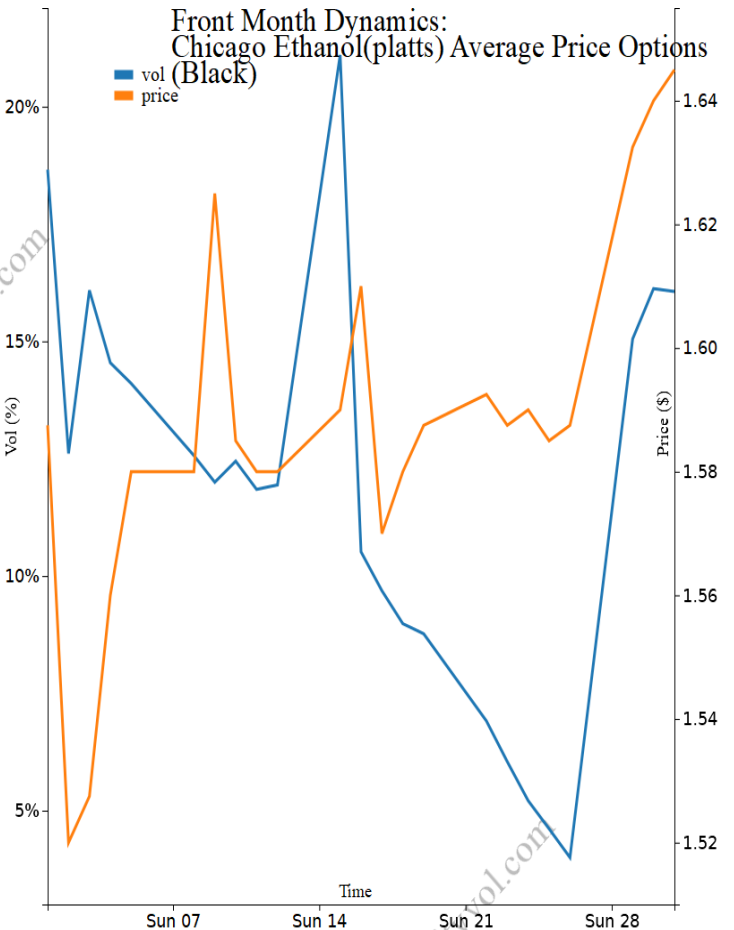
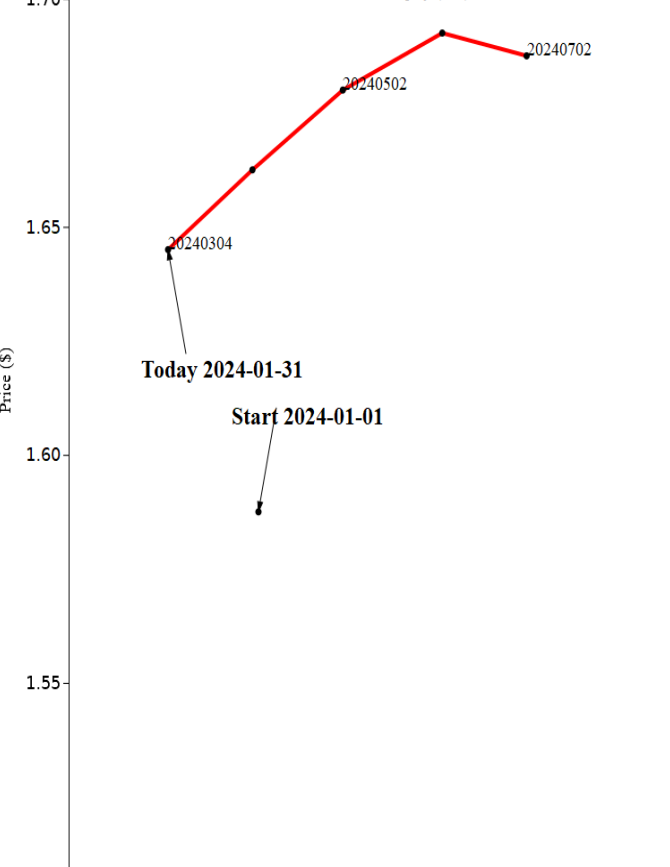
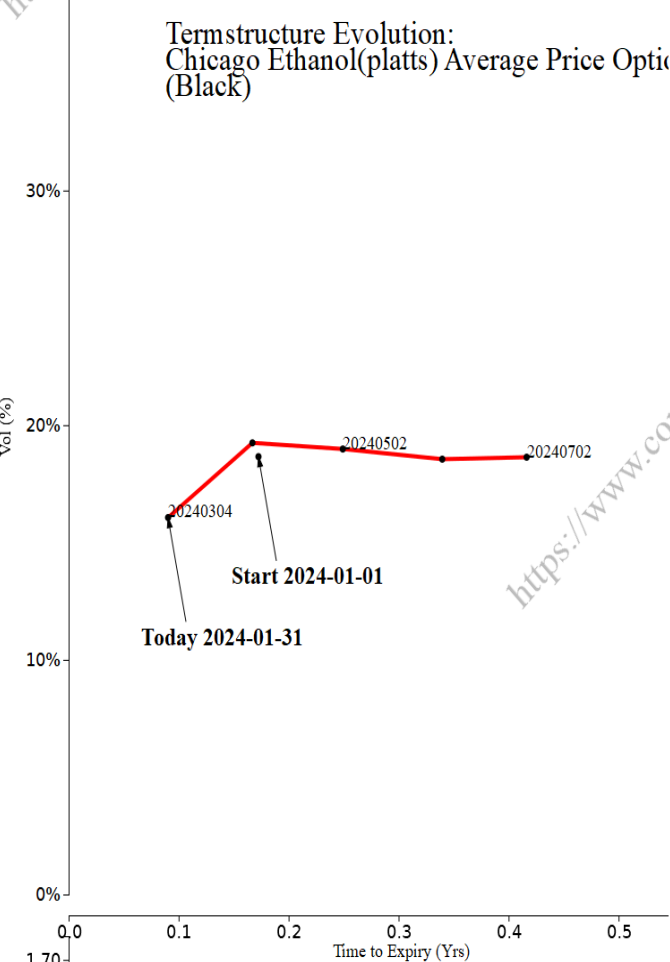
## **Energy: Crude and Derivatives**





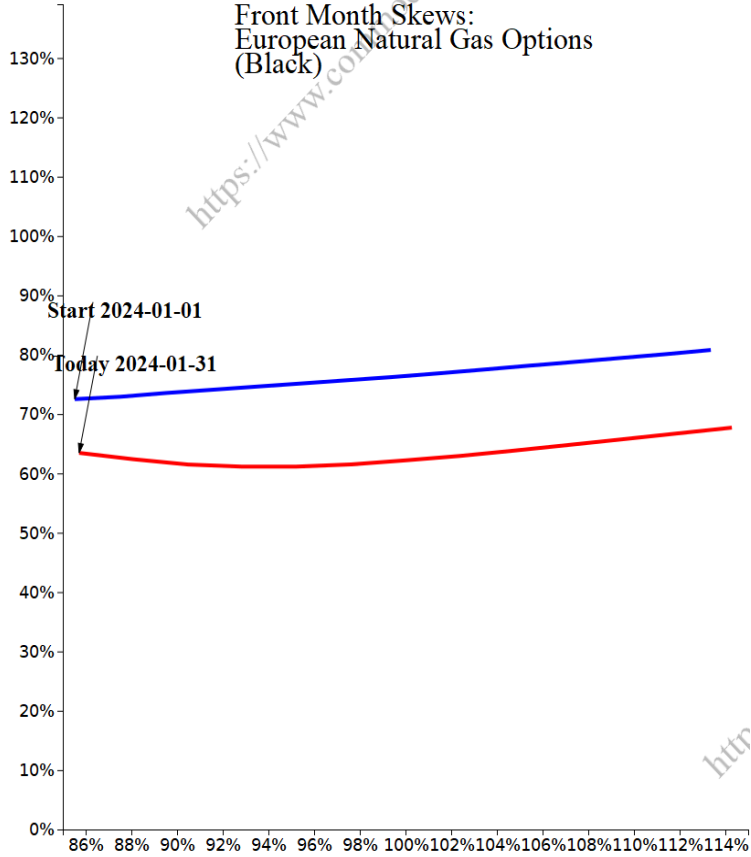
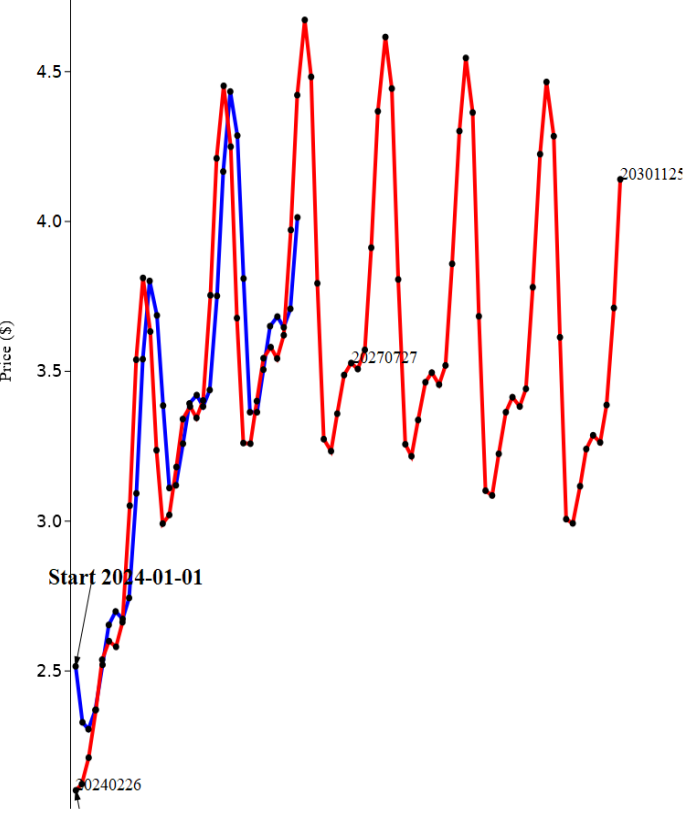
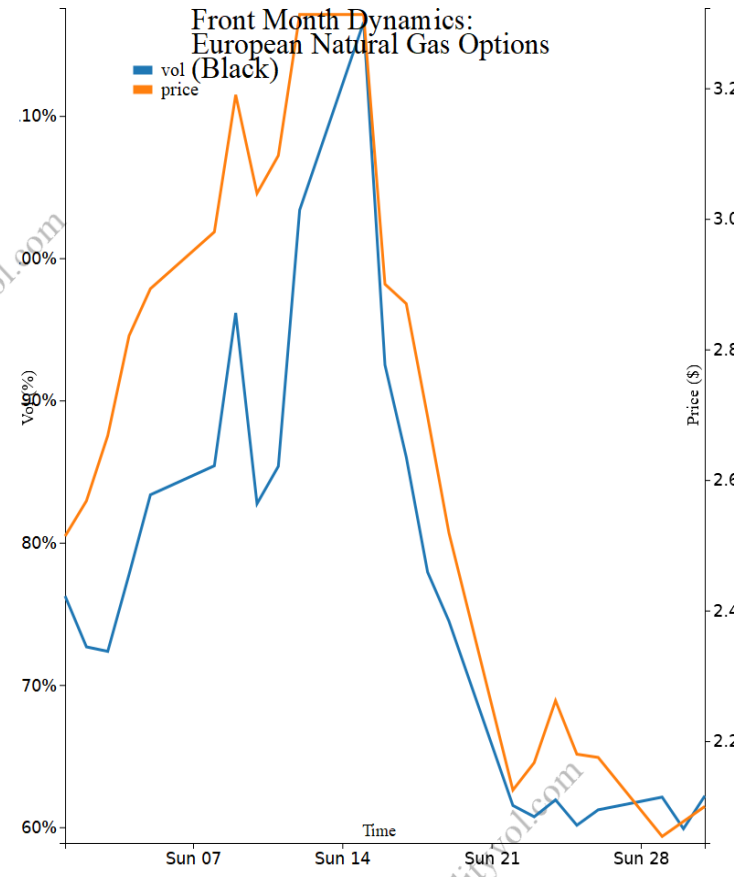
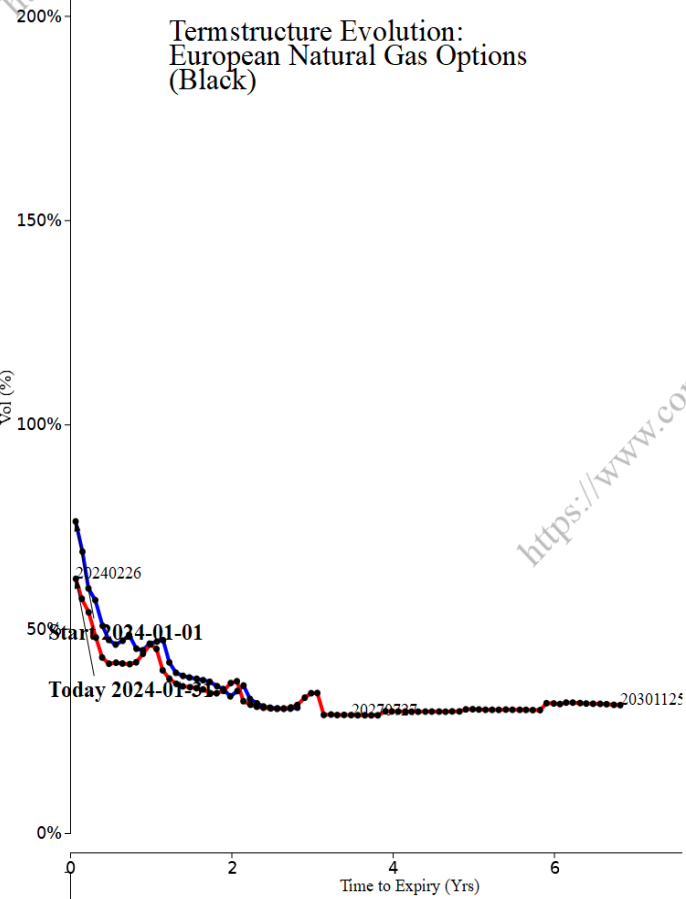


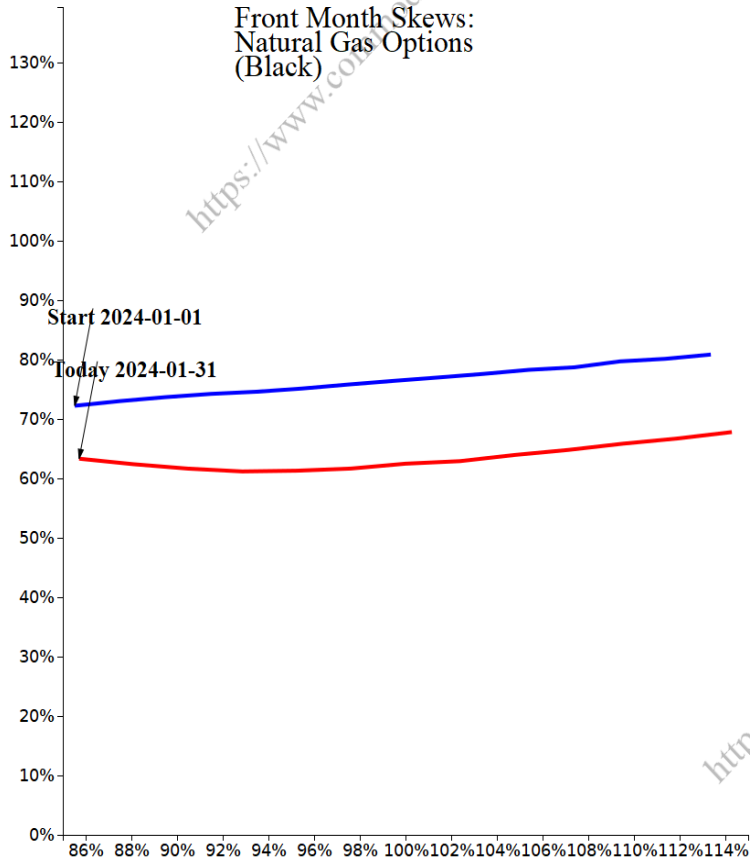
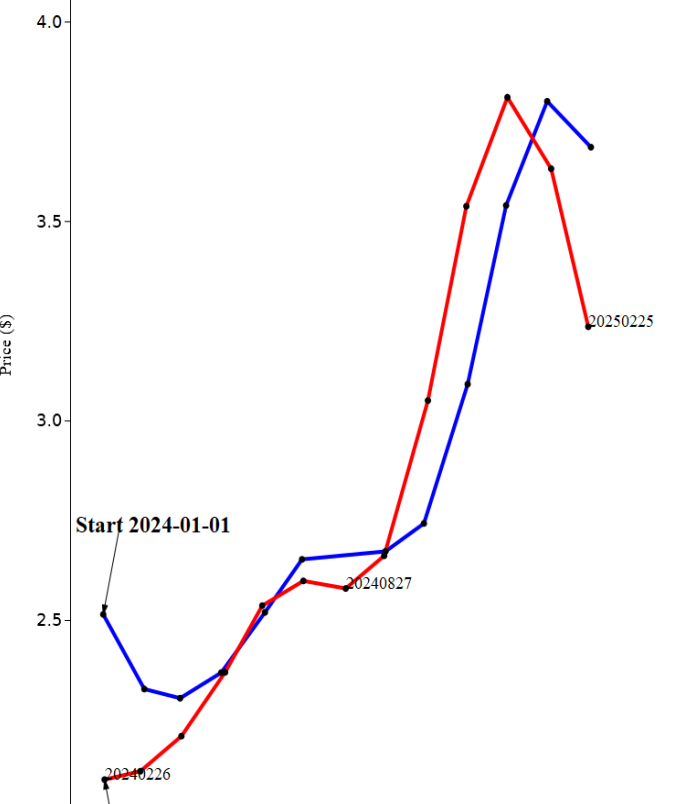
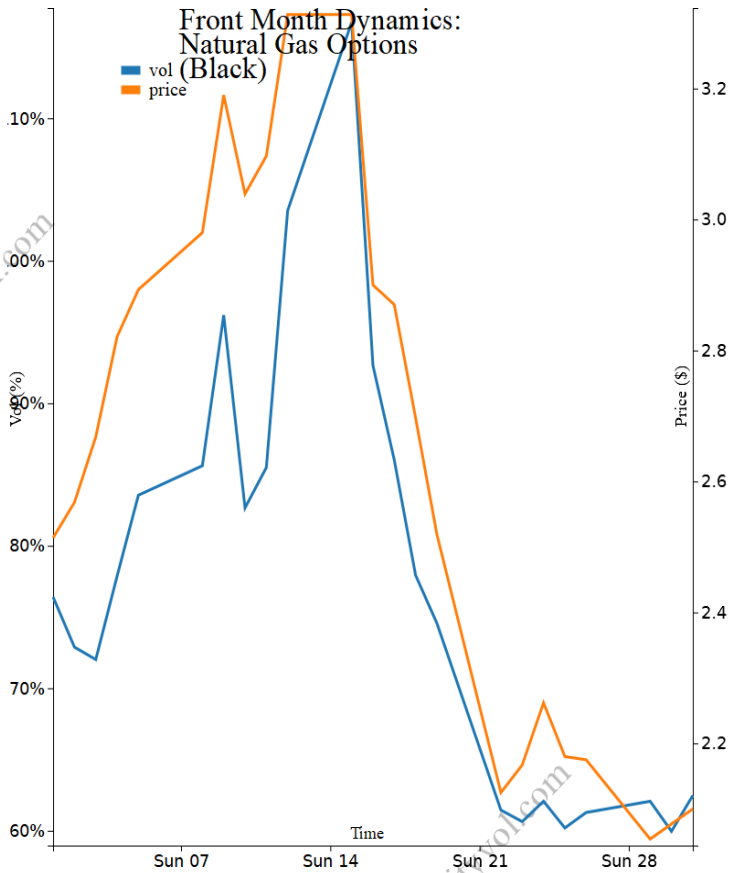
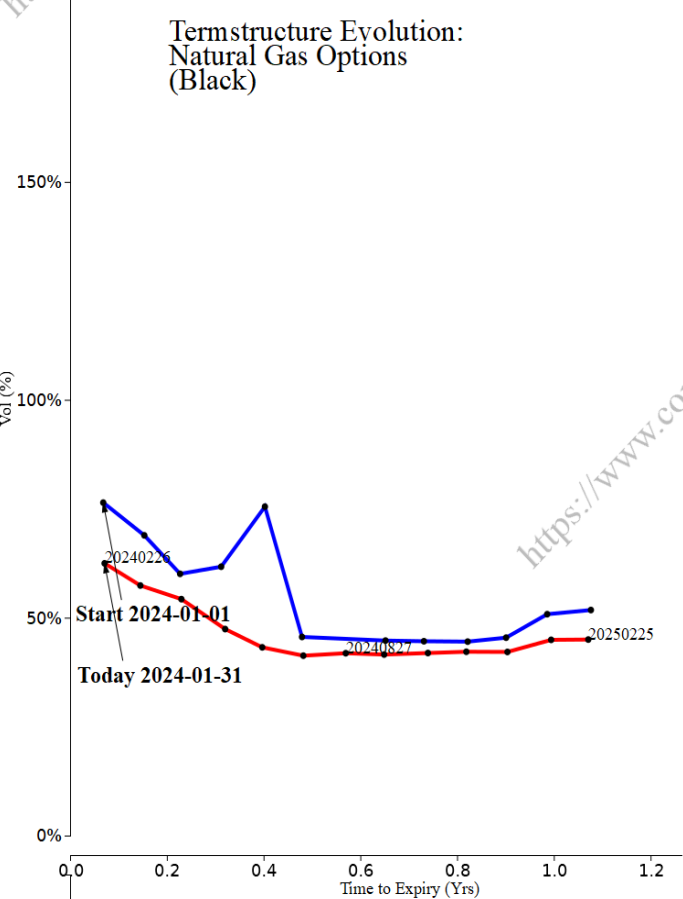


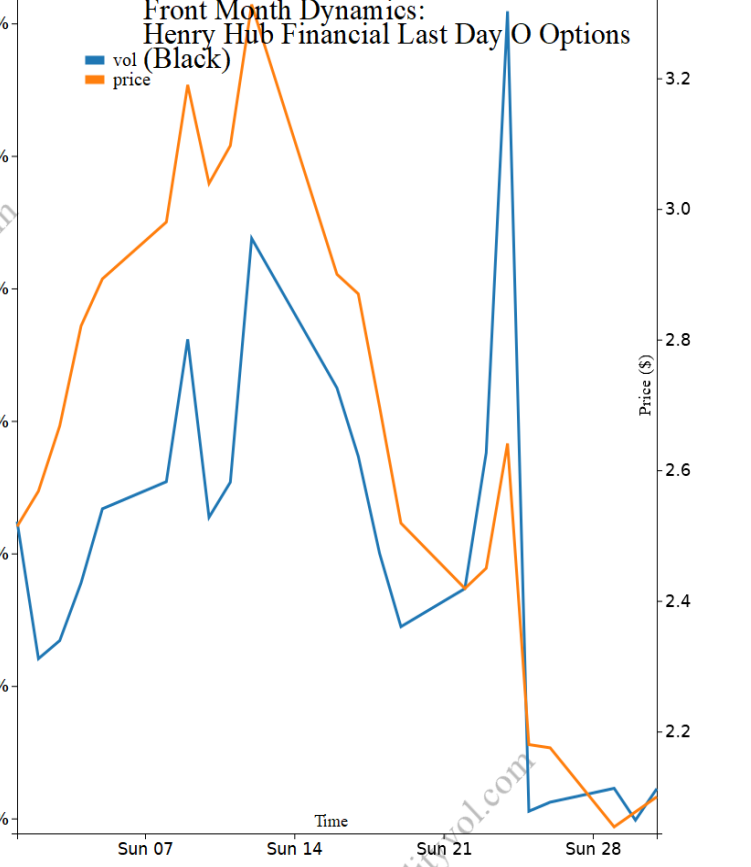
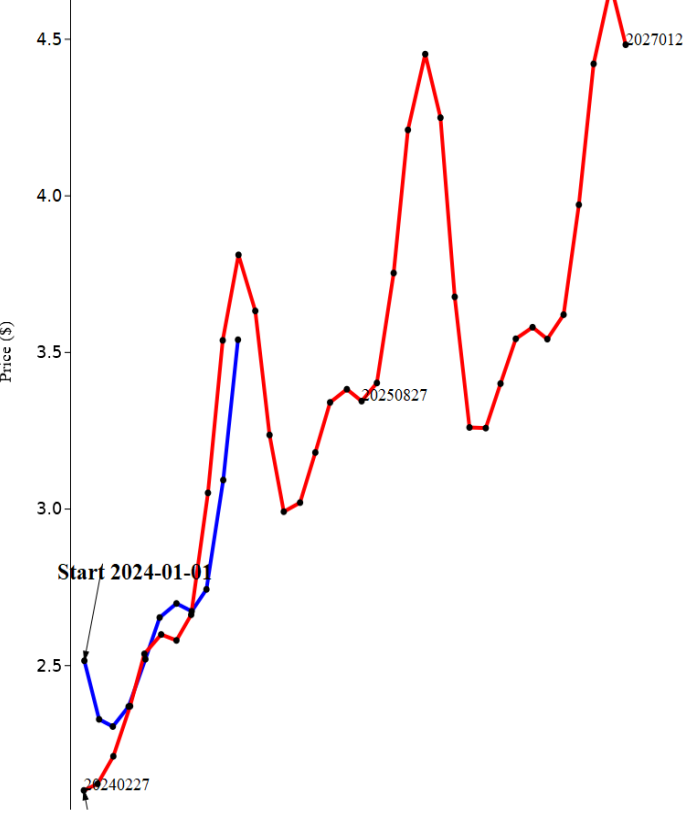
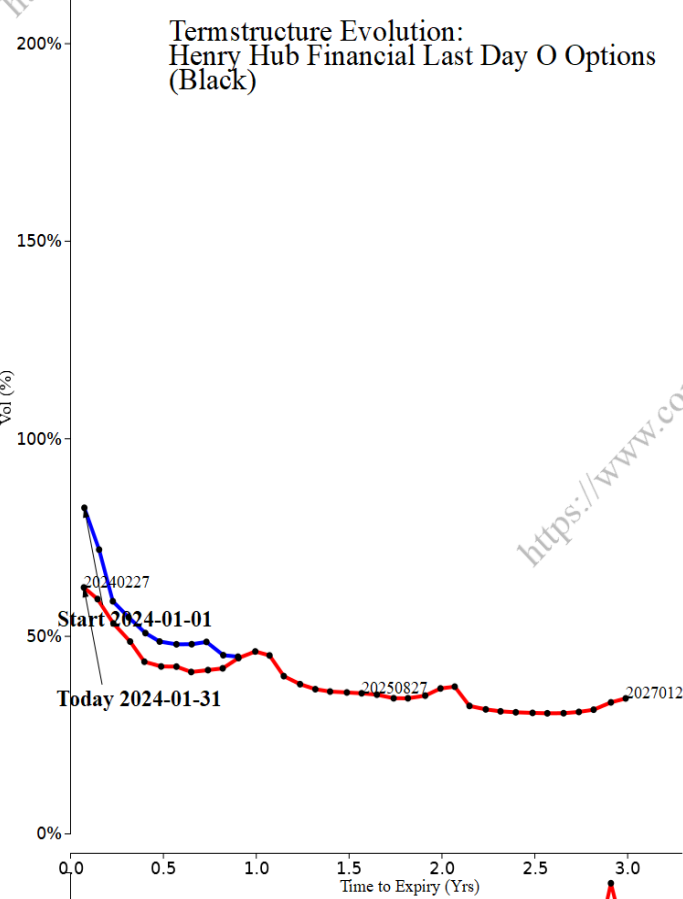


## **Energy: Natural Gas**

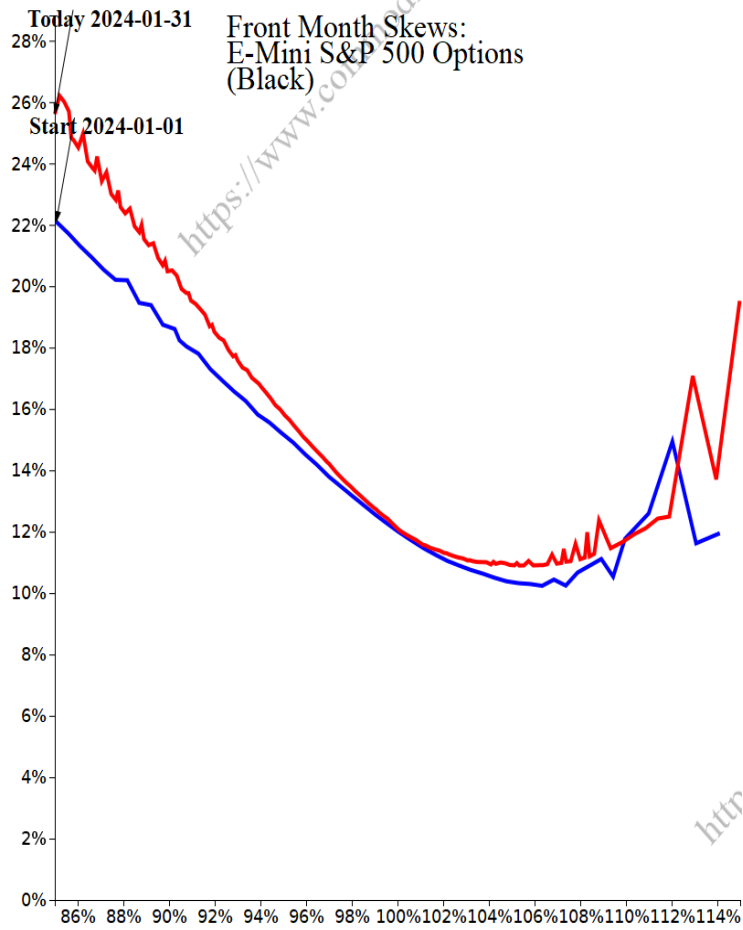
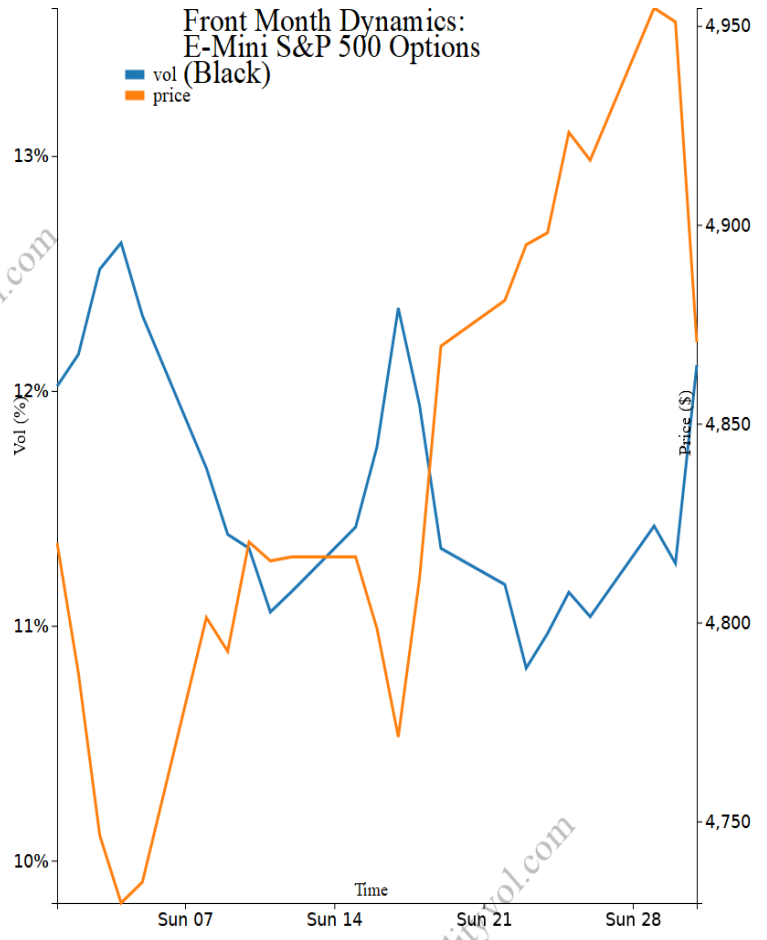
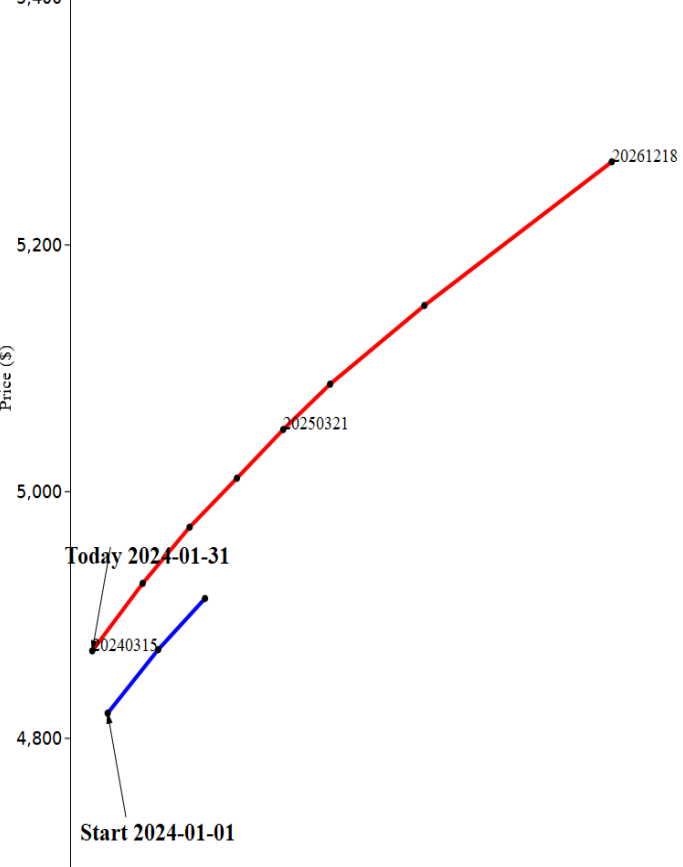
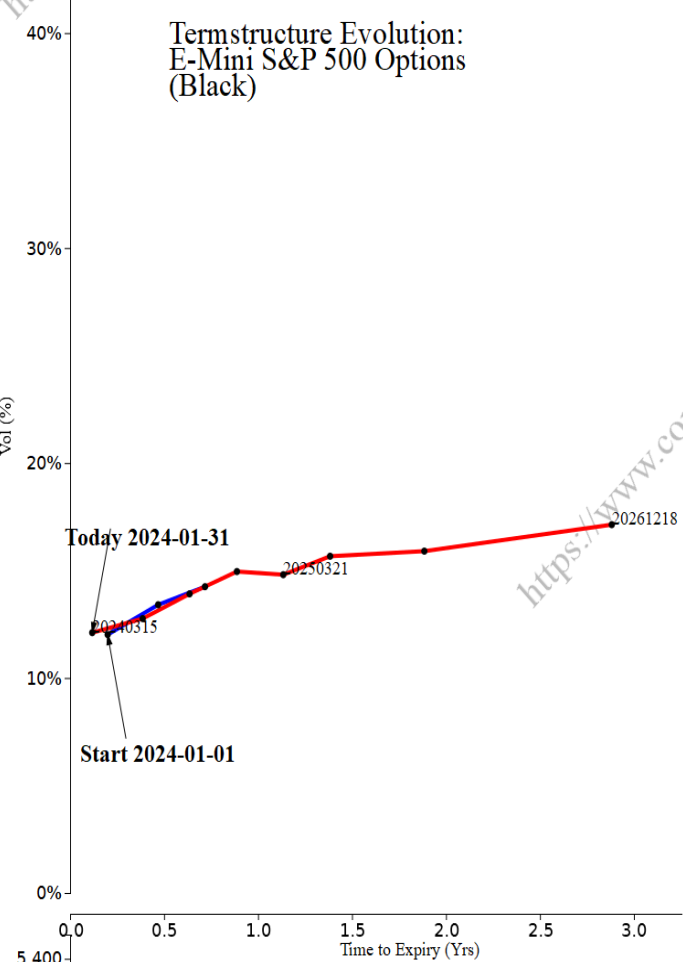


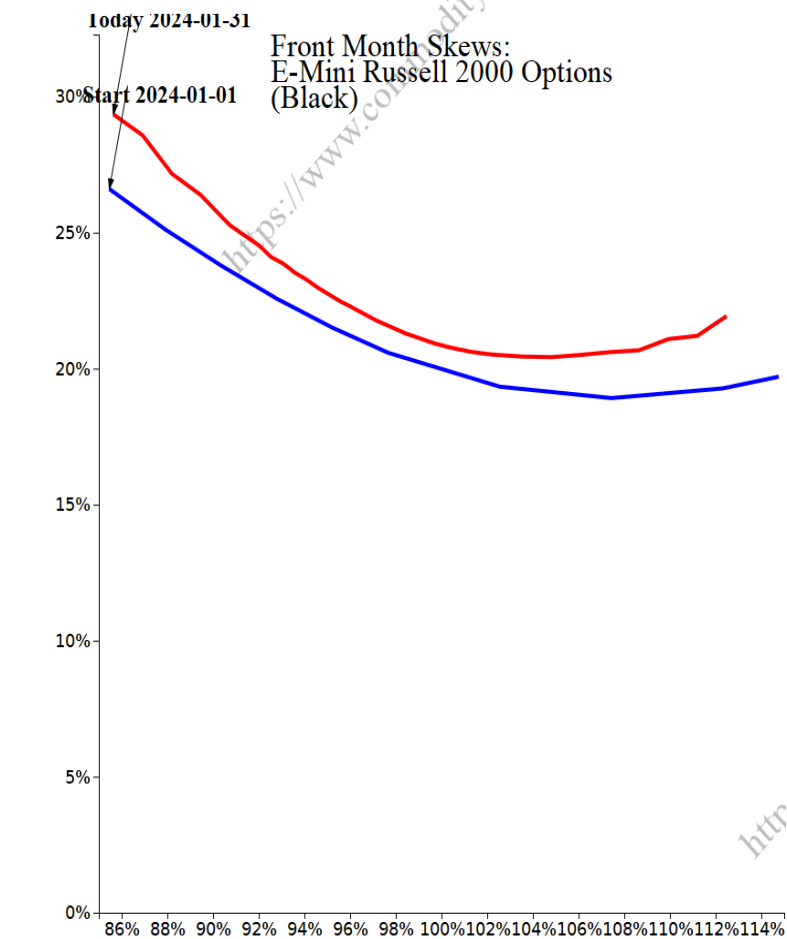
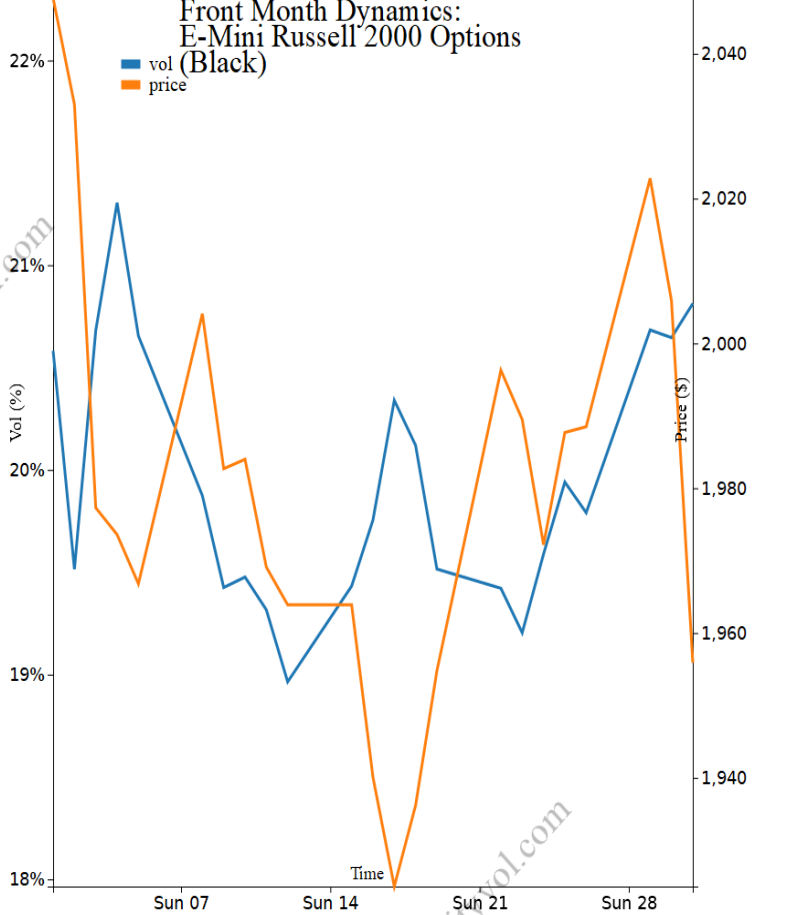
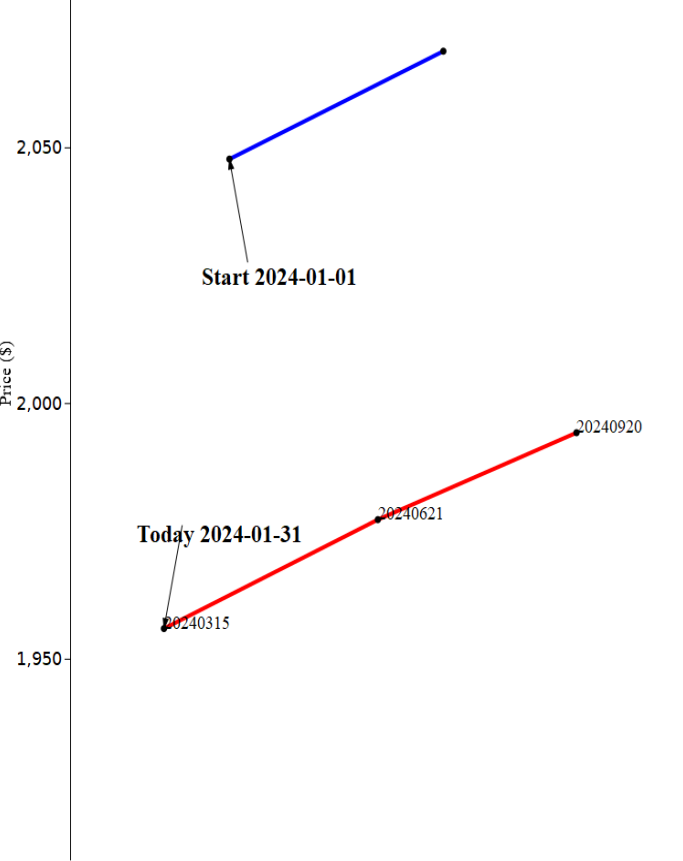
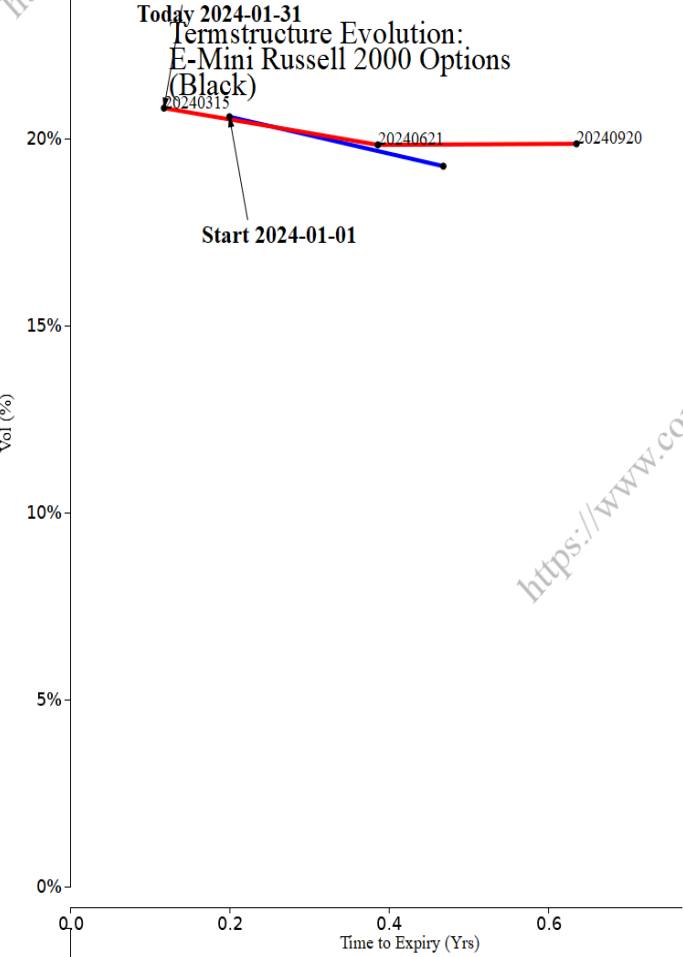




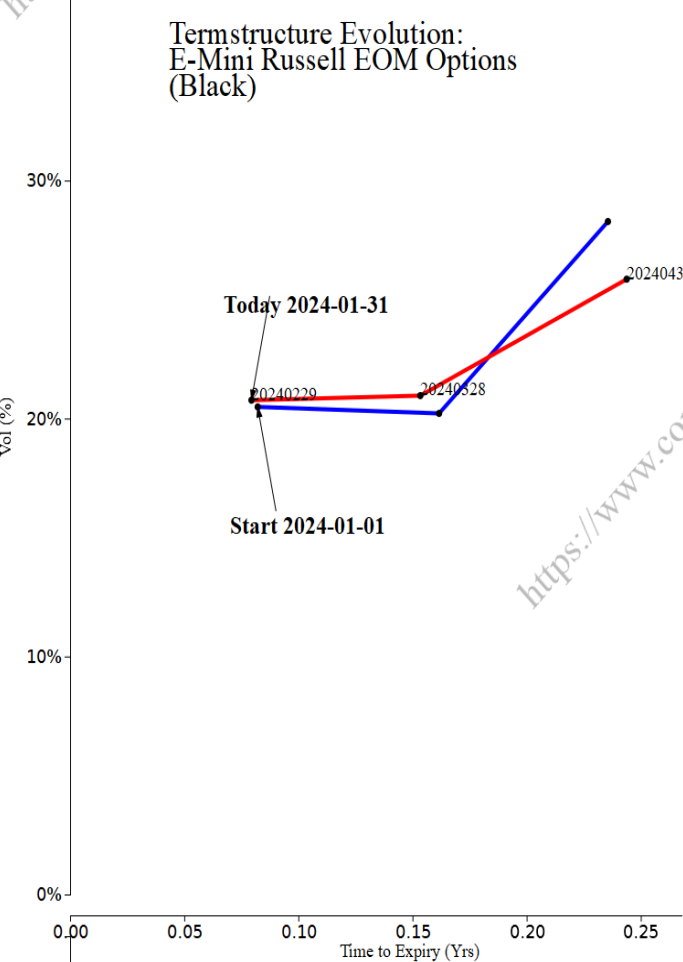


**EquityIndex**

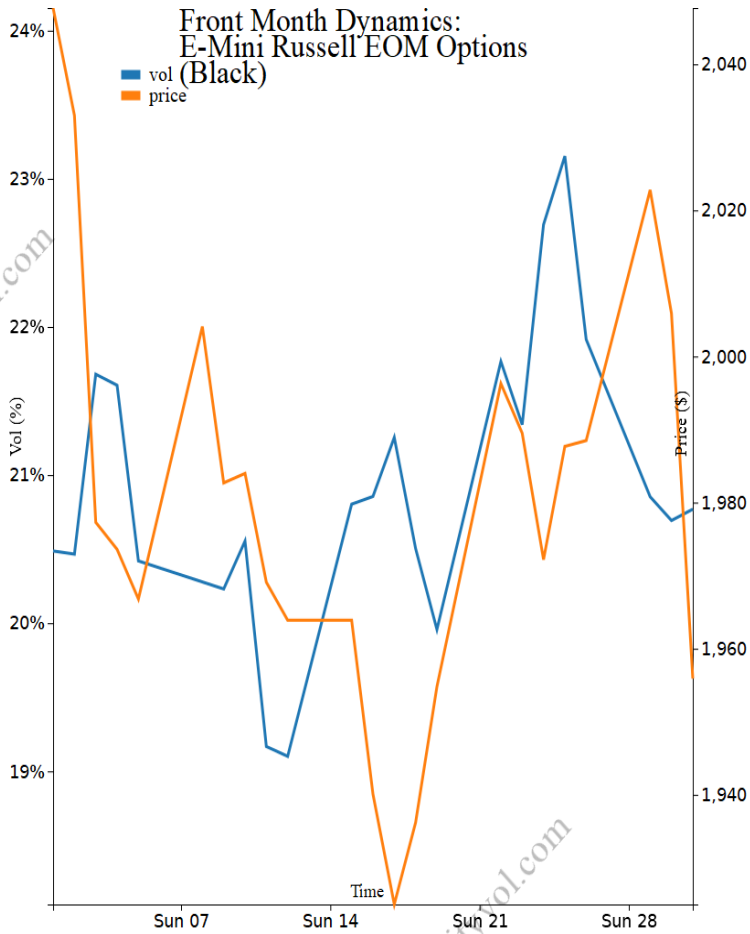




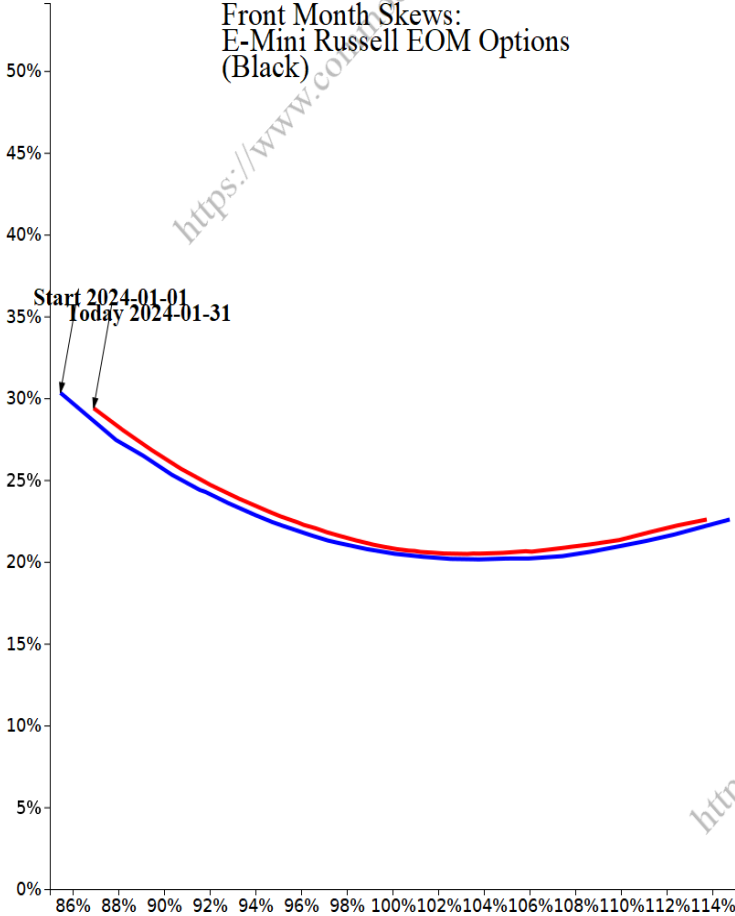
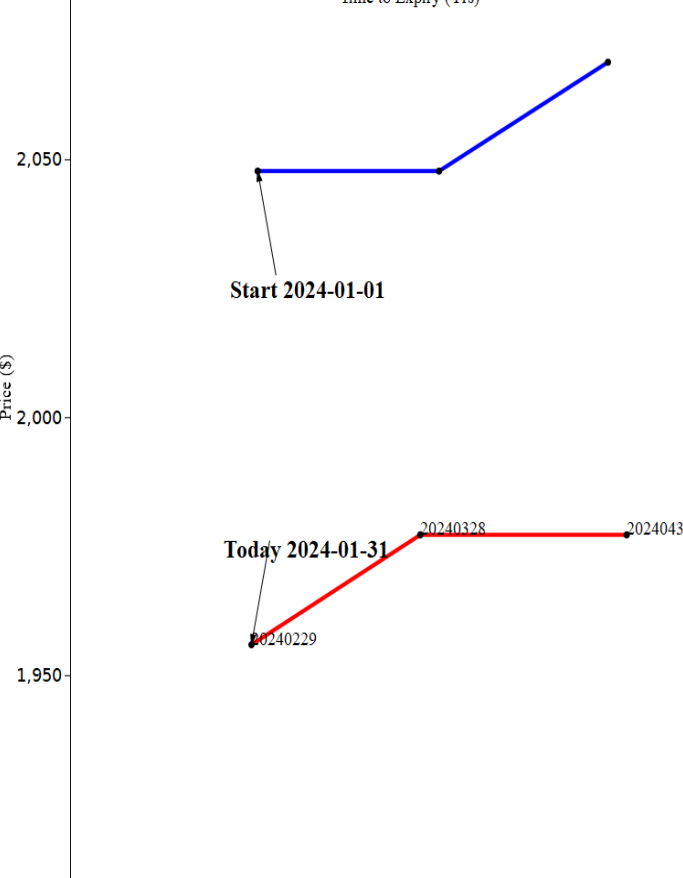
Termstructure Evolution:  
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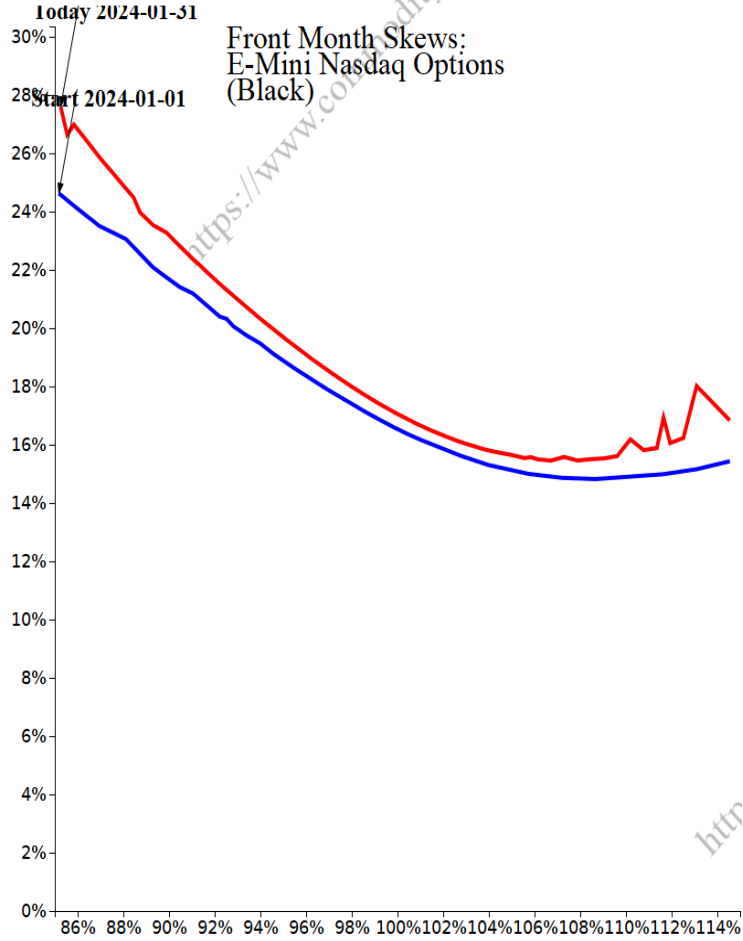
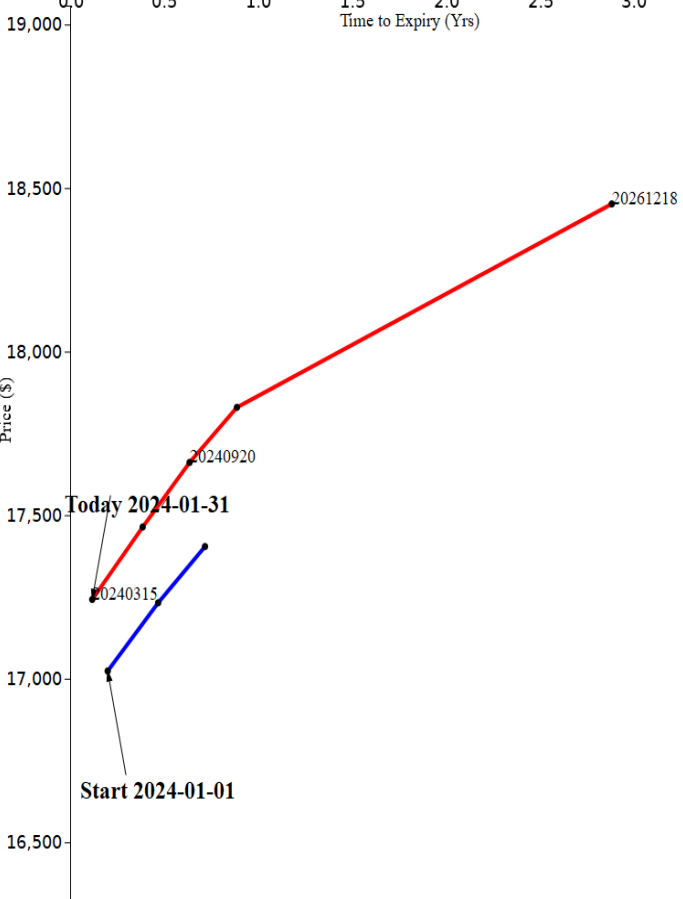
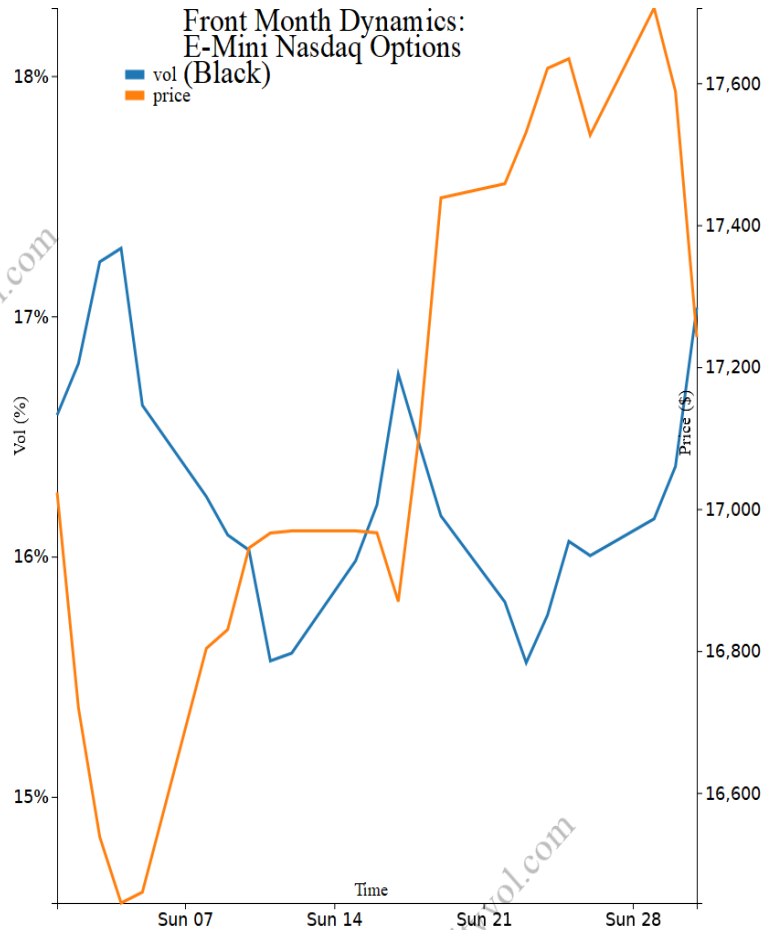
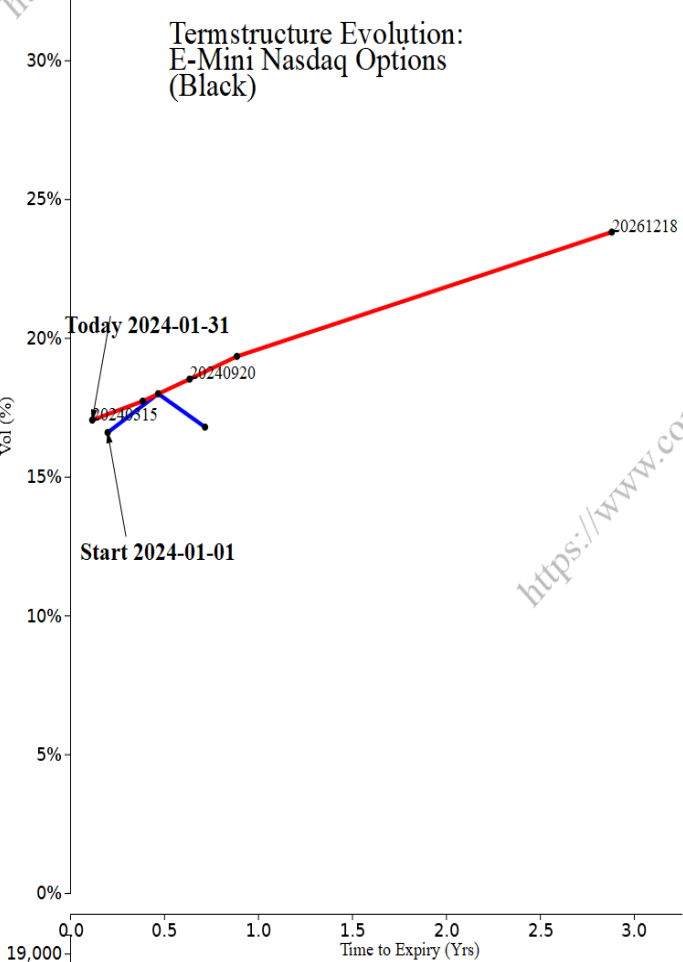


Front Month Dynamics:  
E-Mini Russell EOM Options  
(Black)

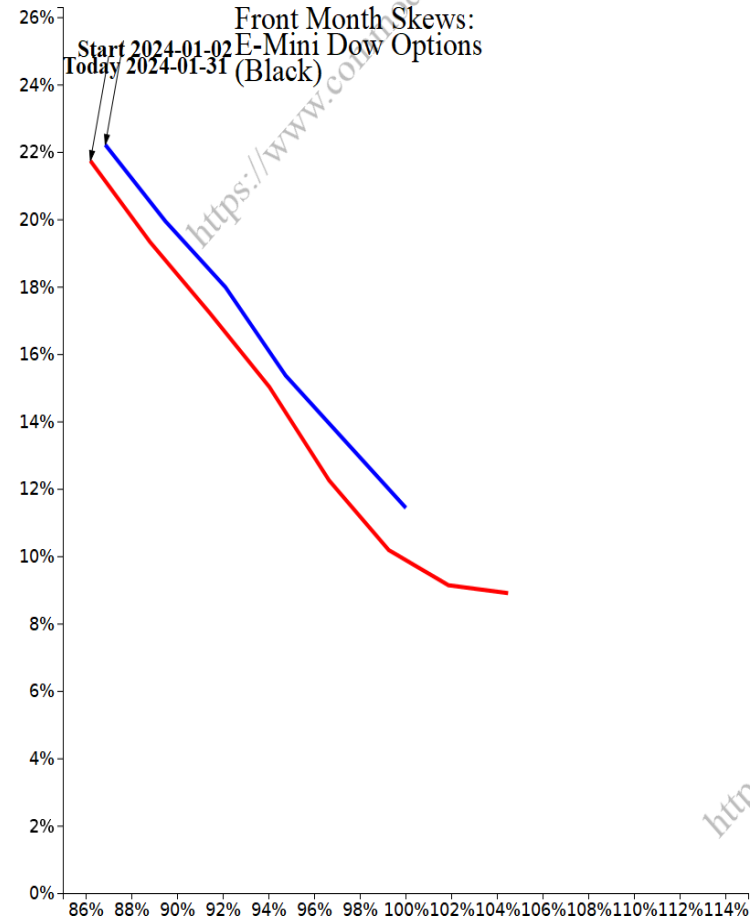
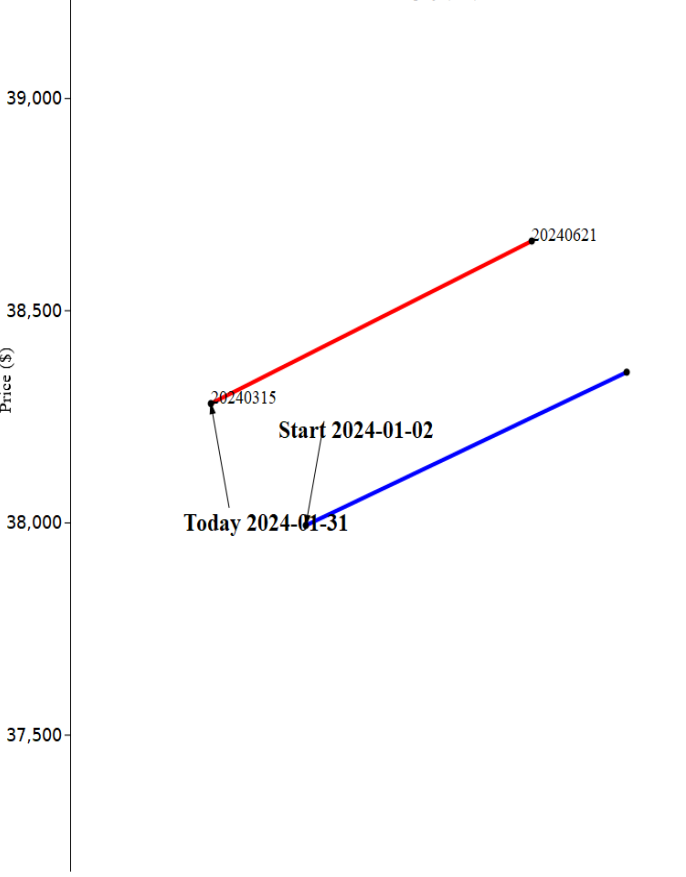
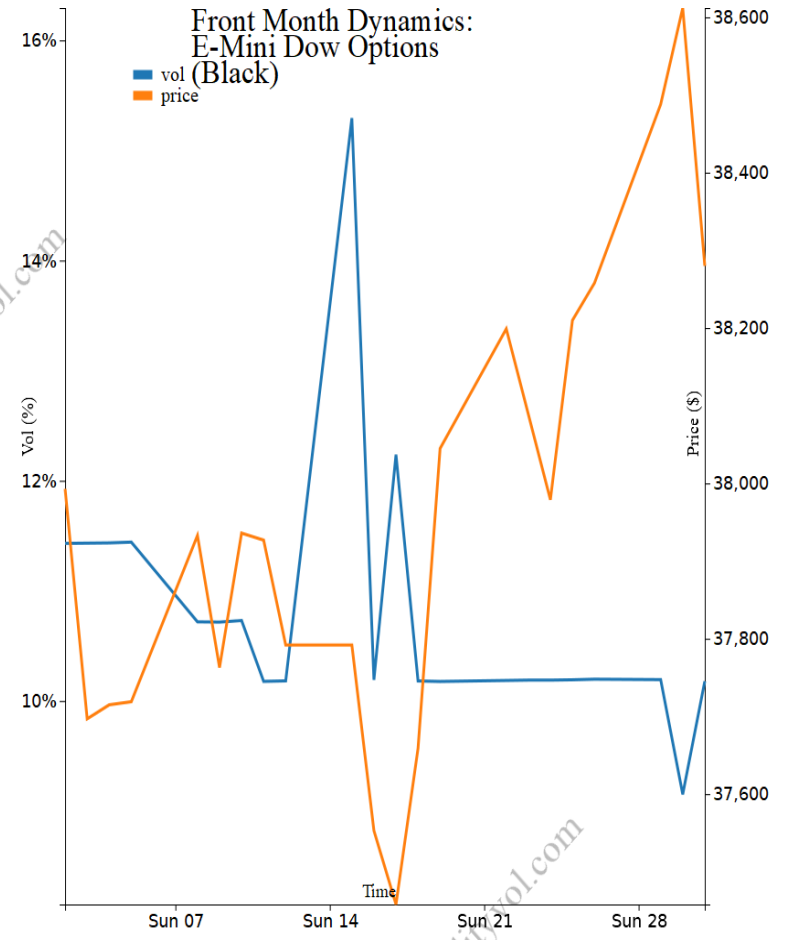
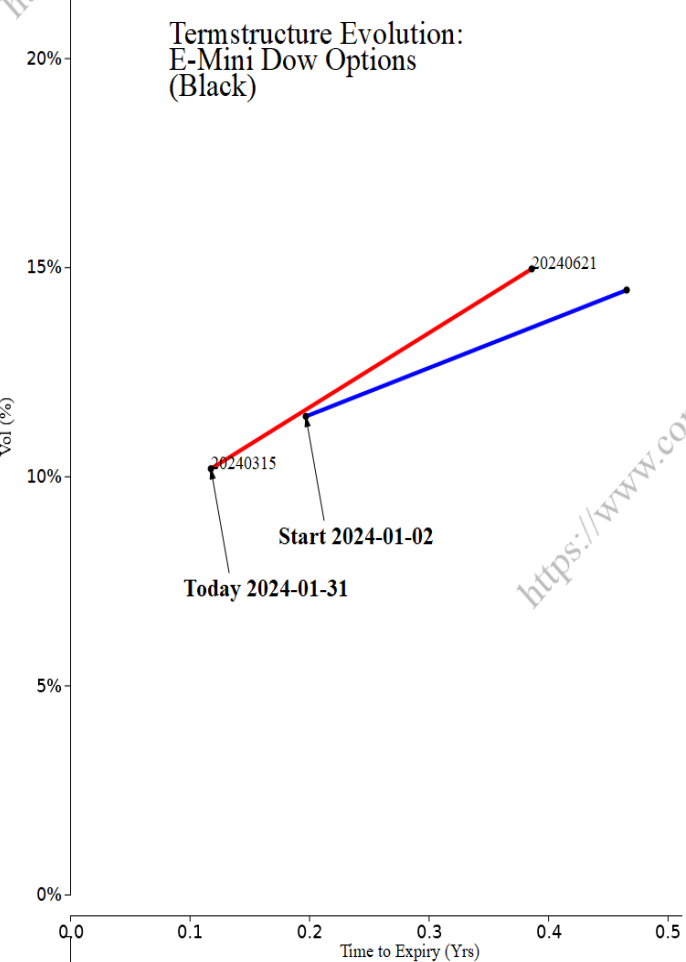


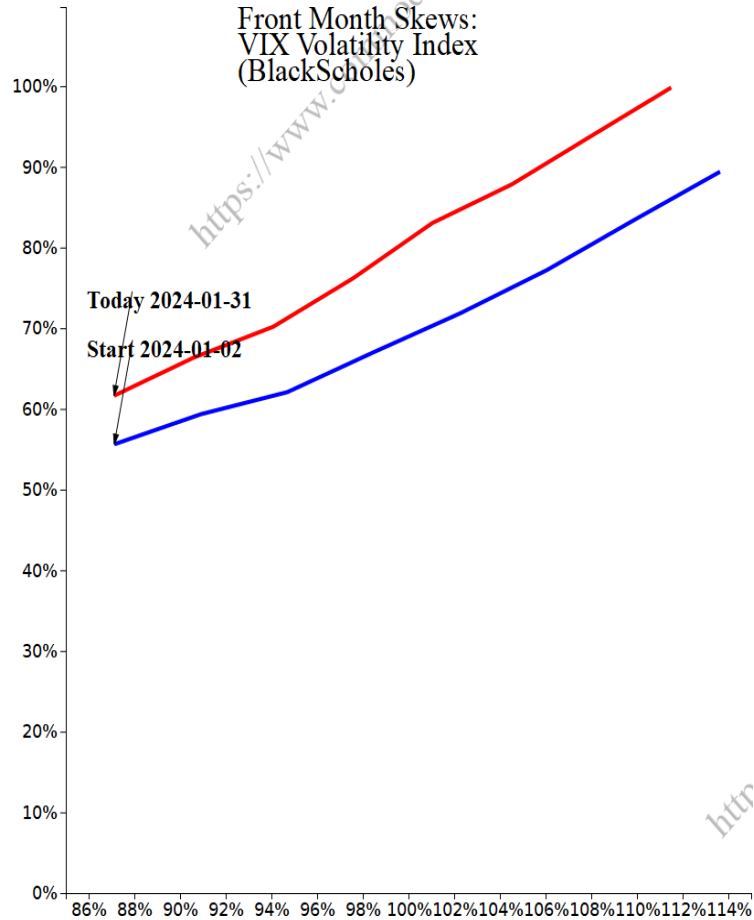
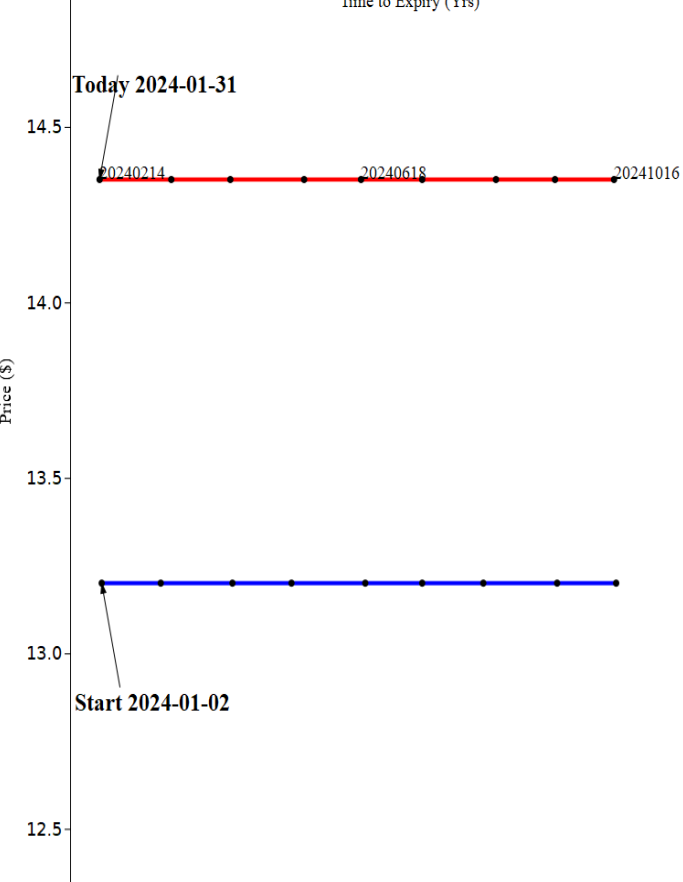
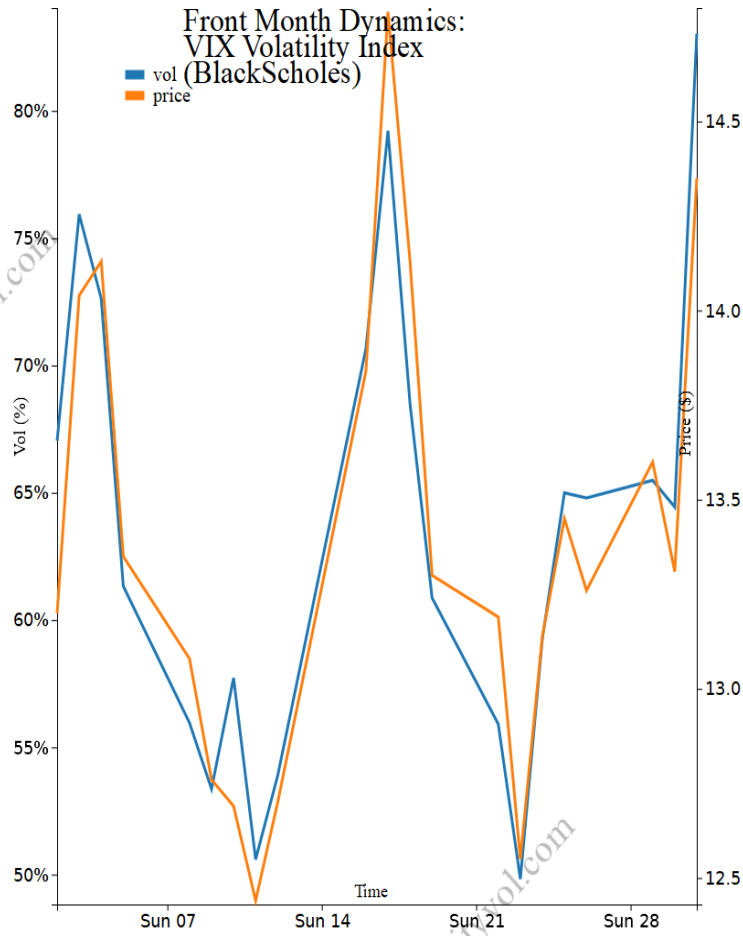
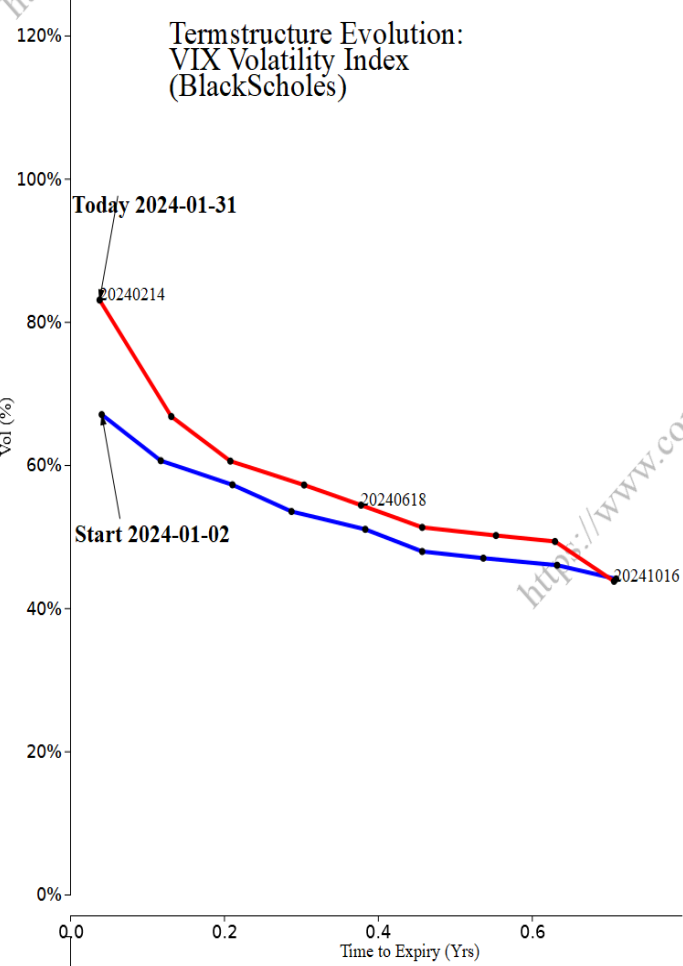
Front Month Skews:  
E-Mini Russell EOM Options  
(Black)



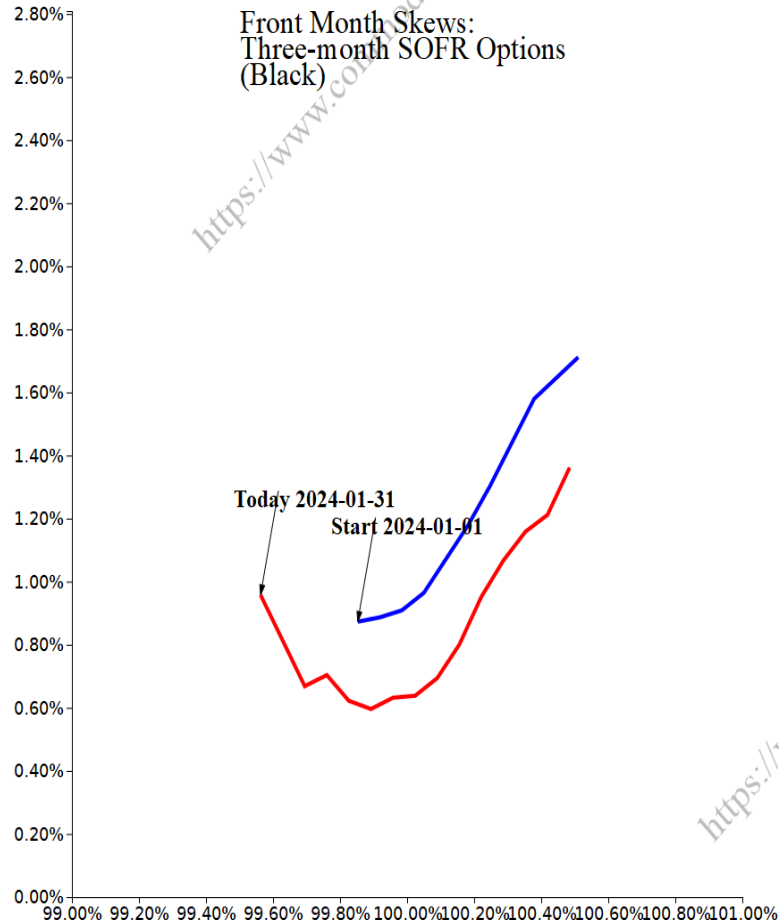
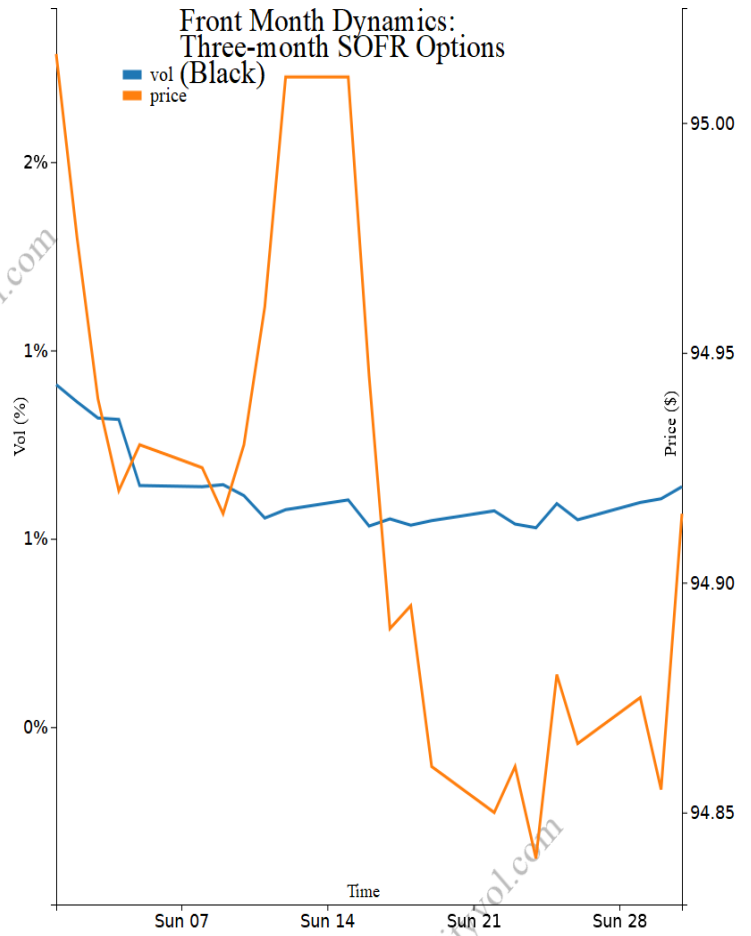
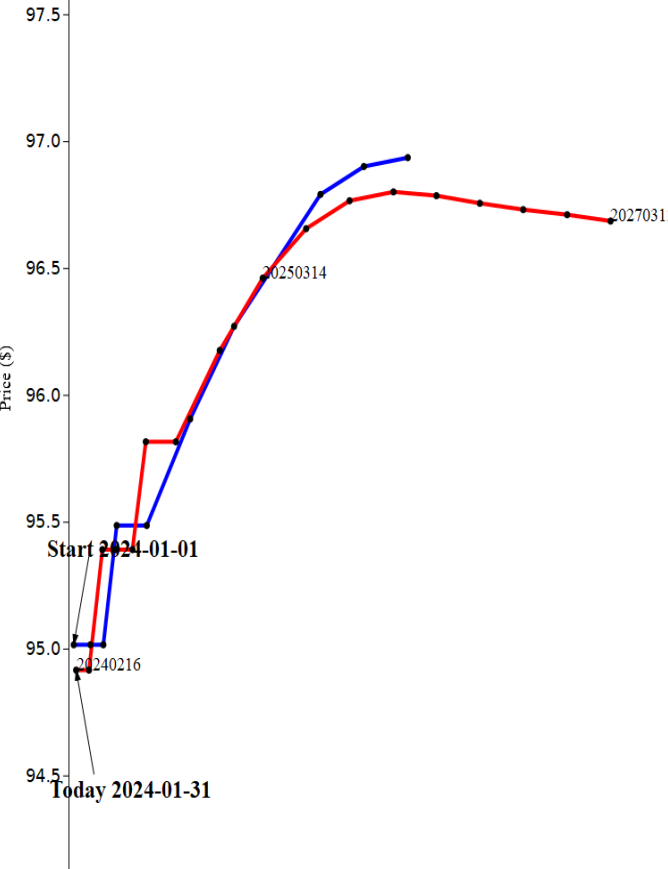
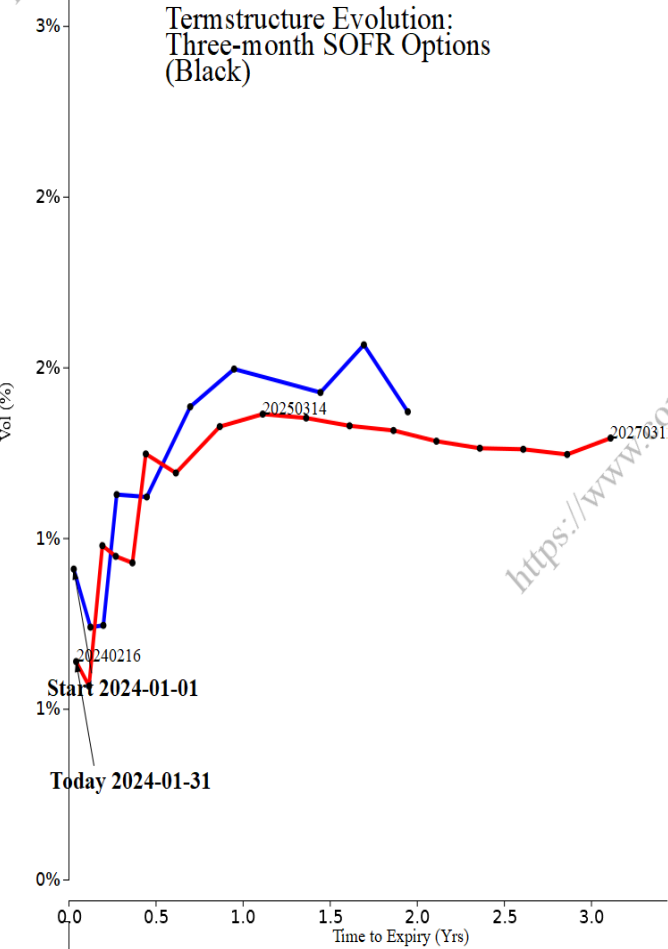


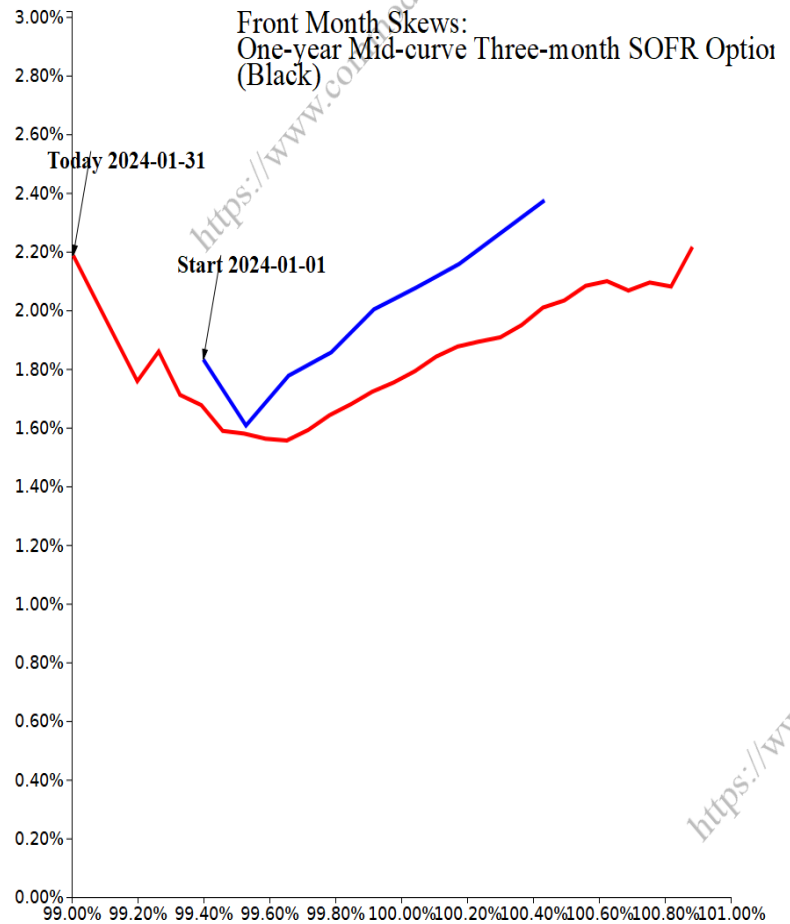
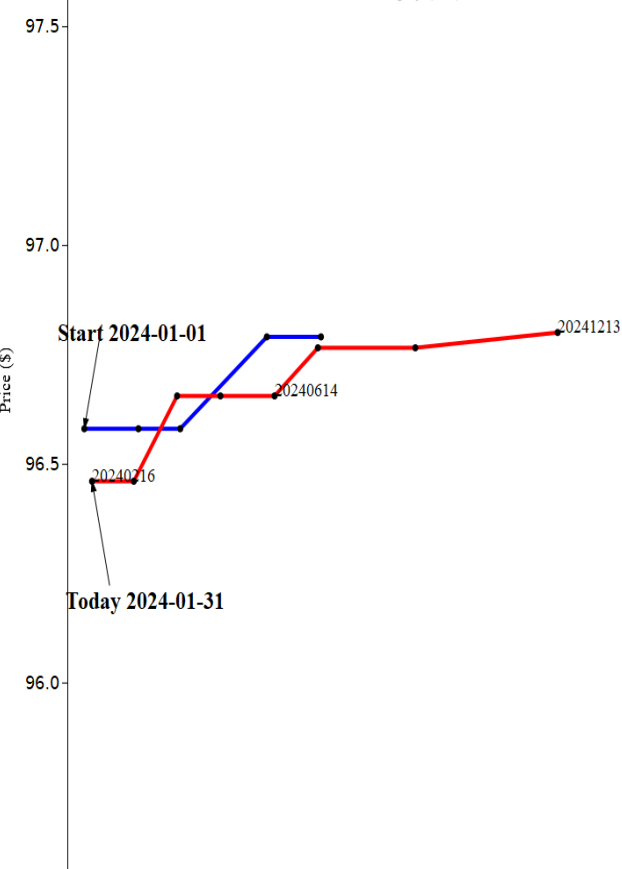
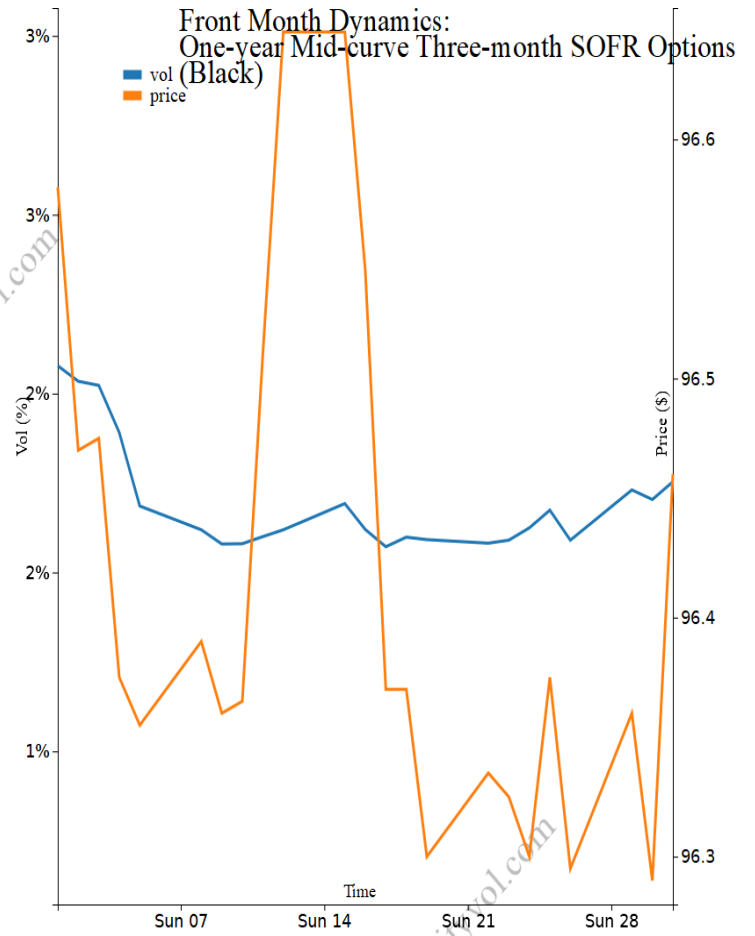
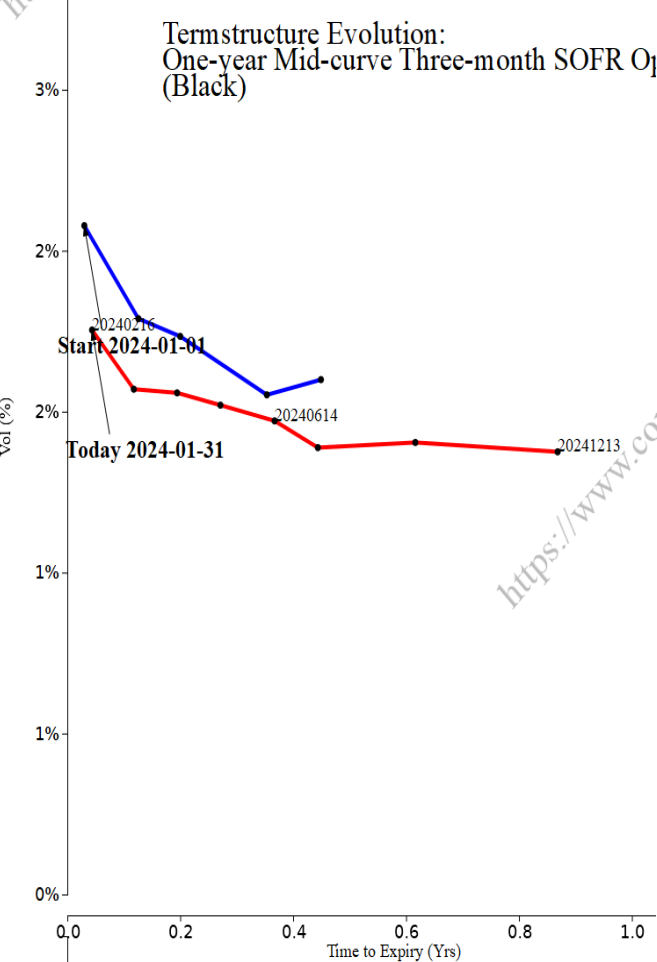


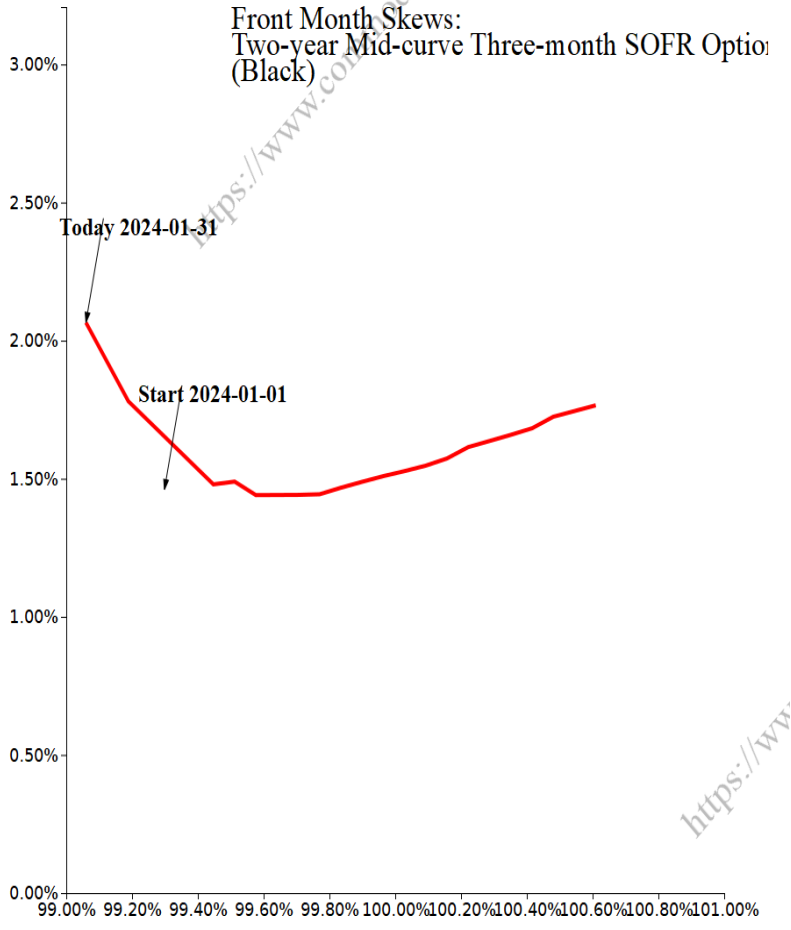
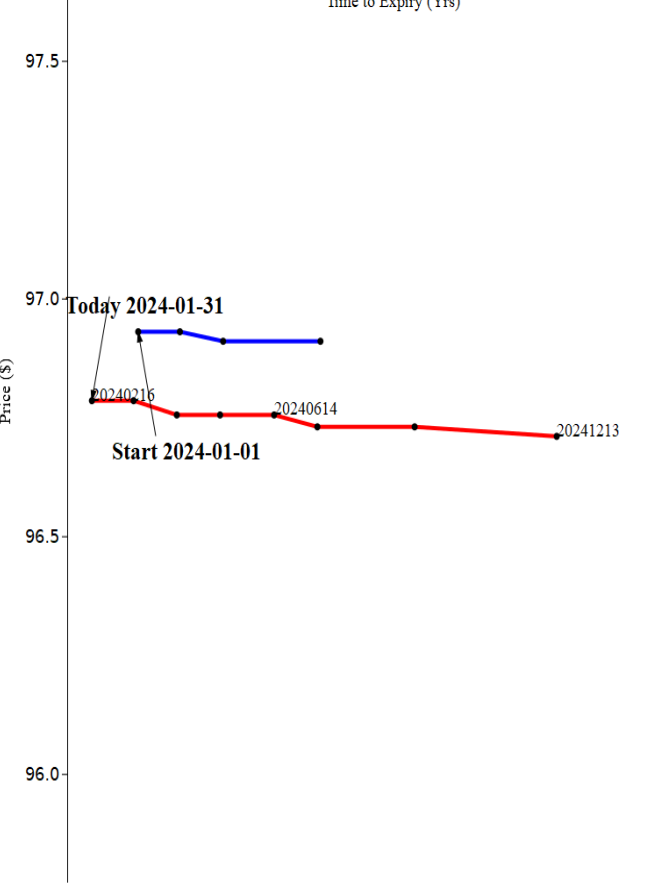
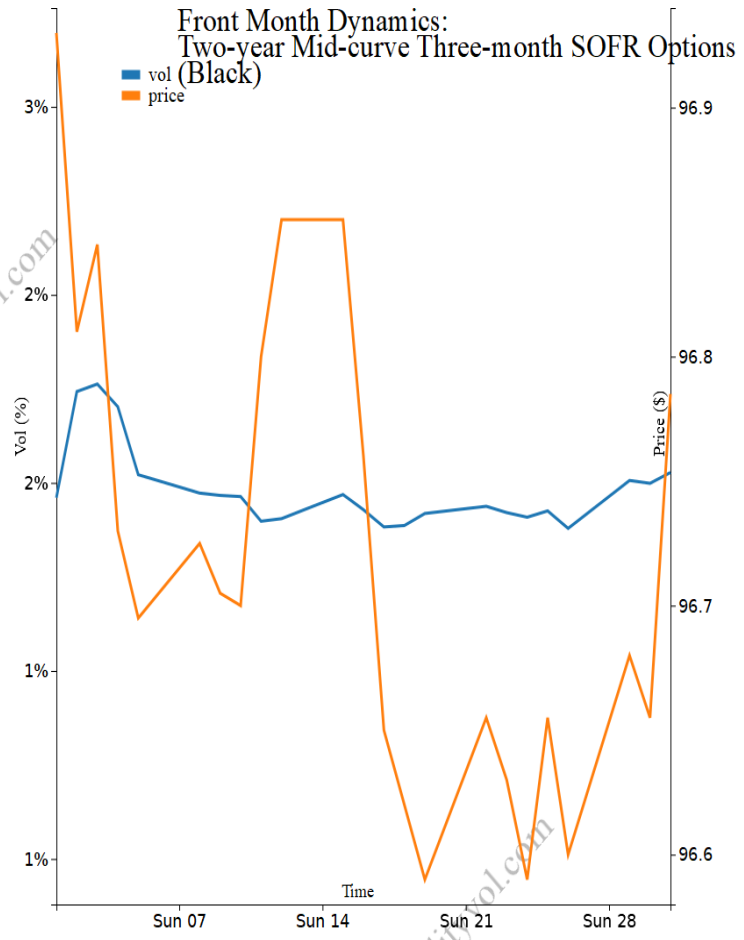
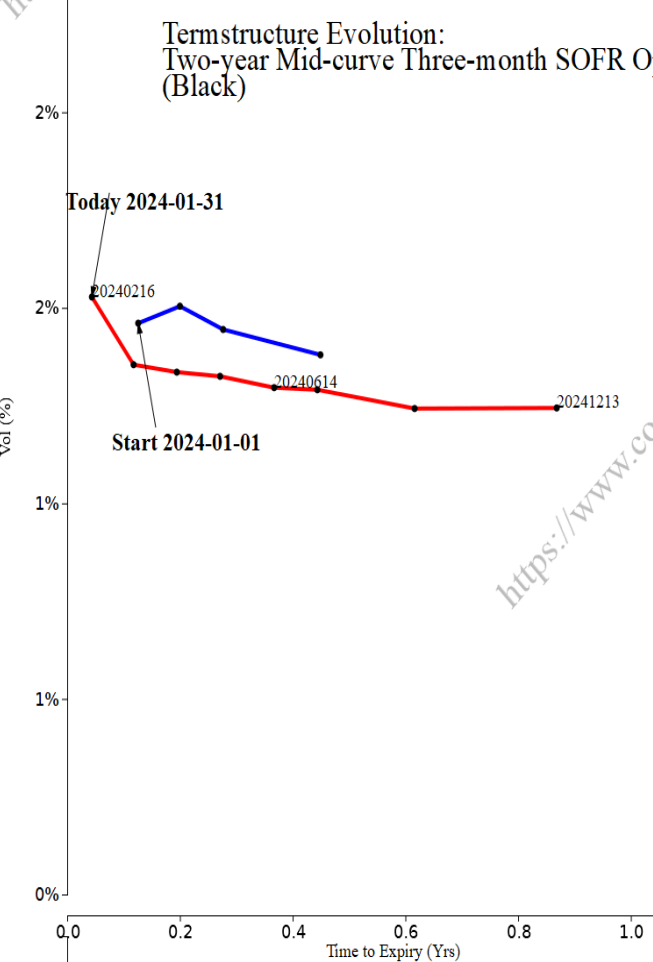


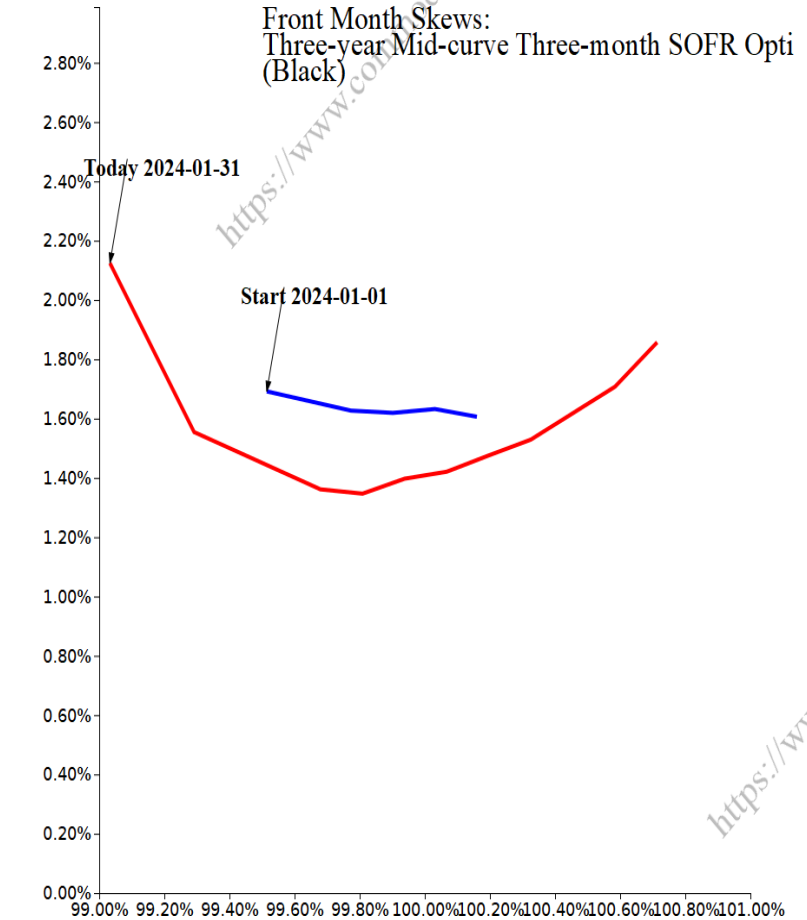
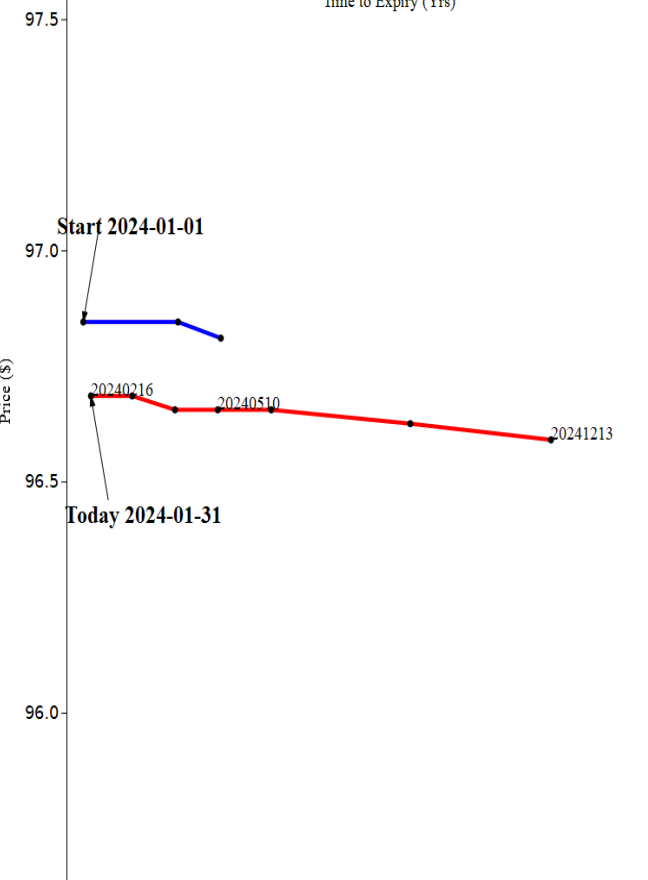
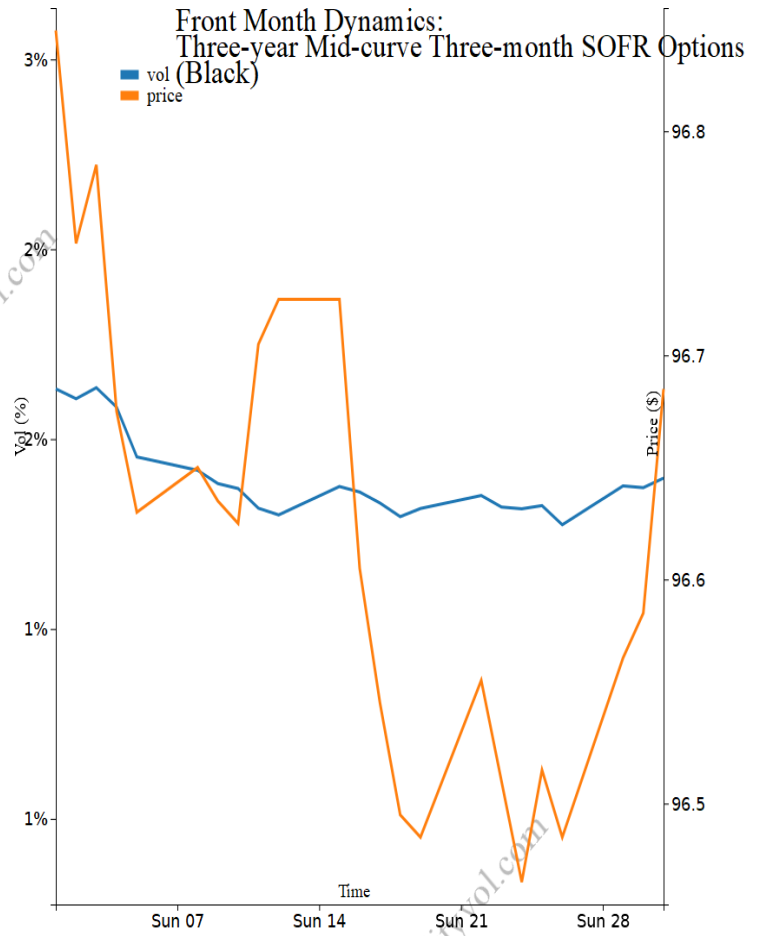
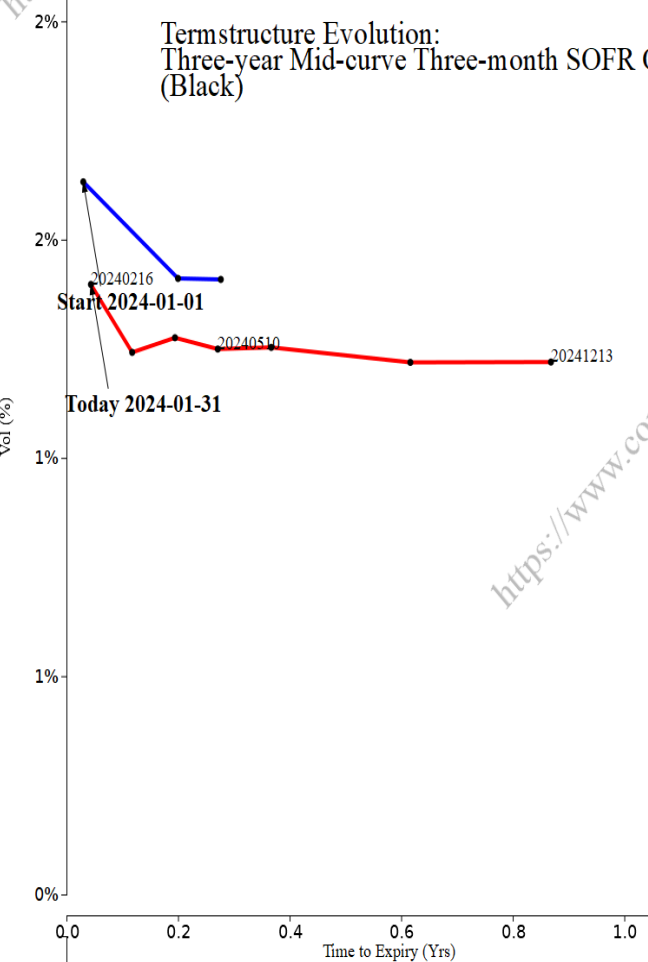


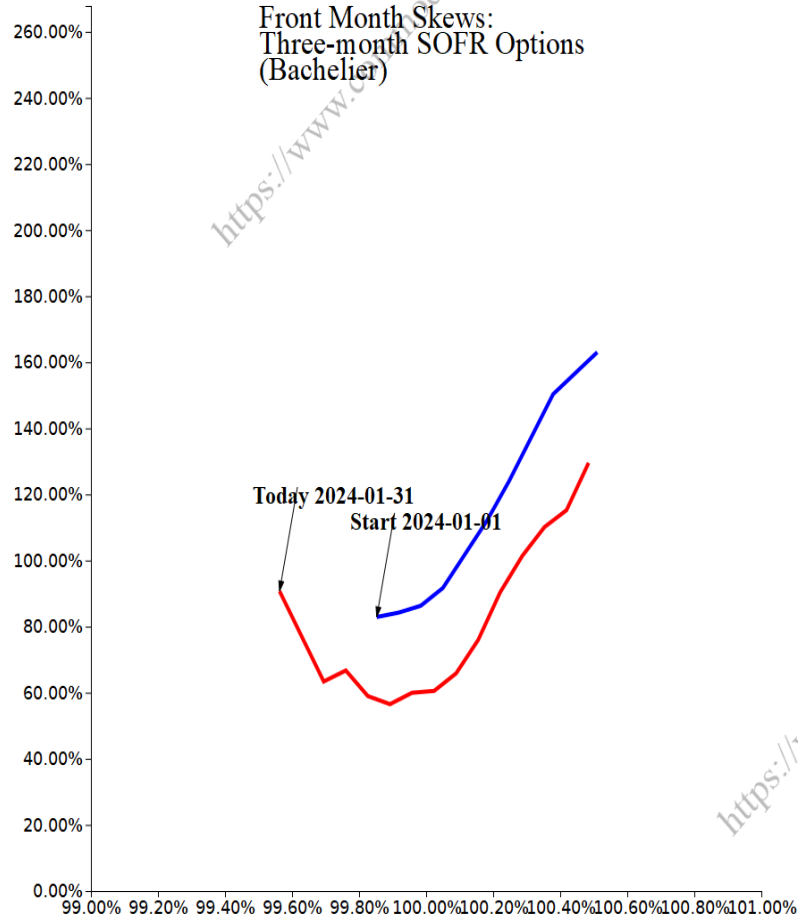
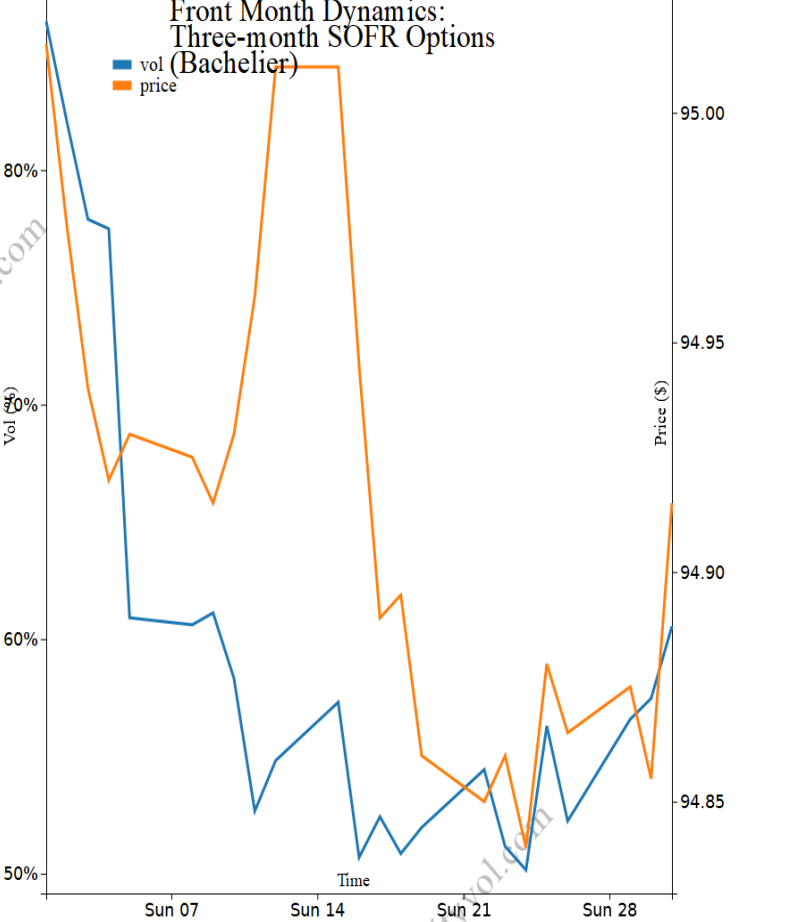
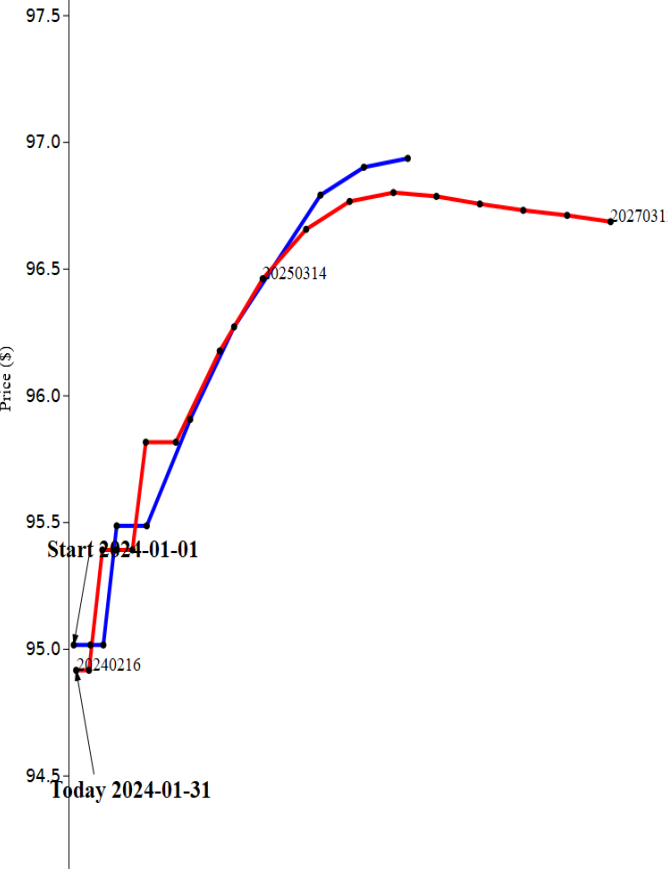
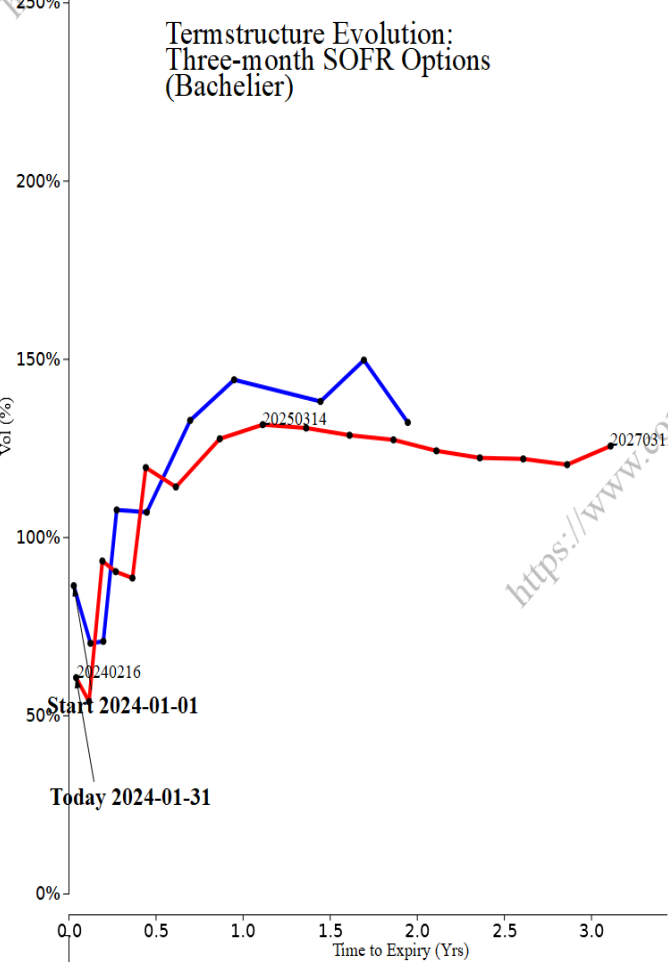
## **InterestRates: Fixed Income and STIRS**



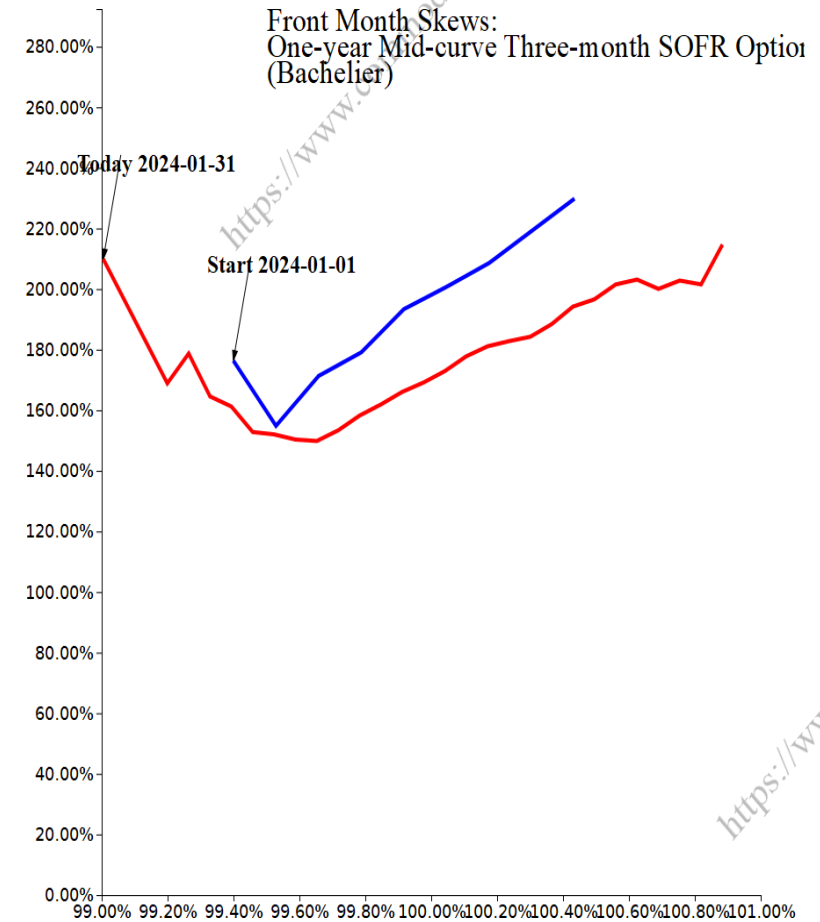
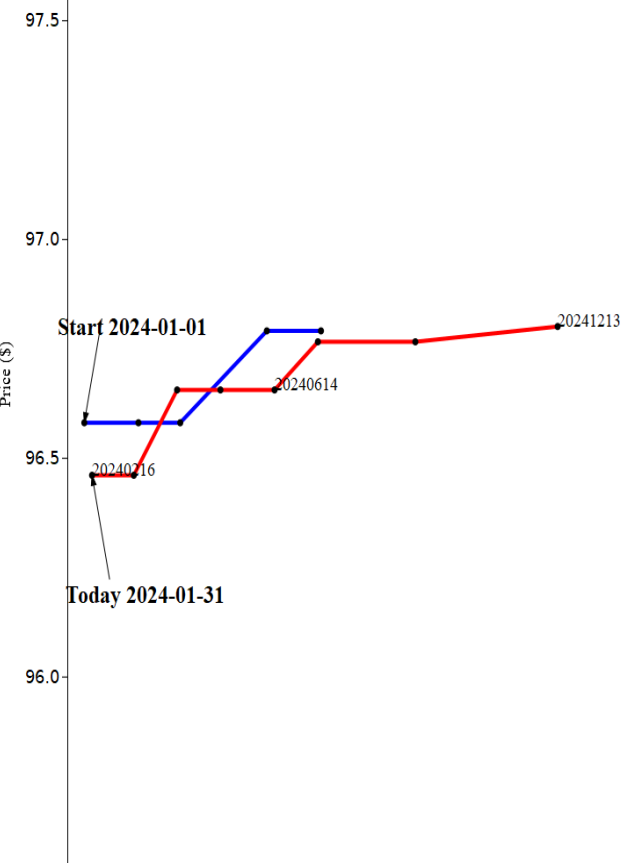
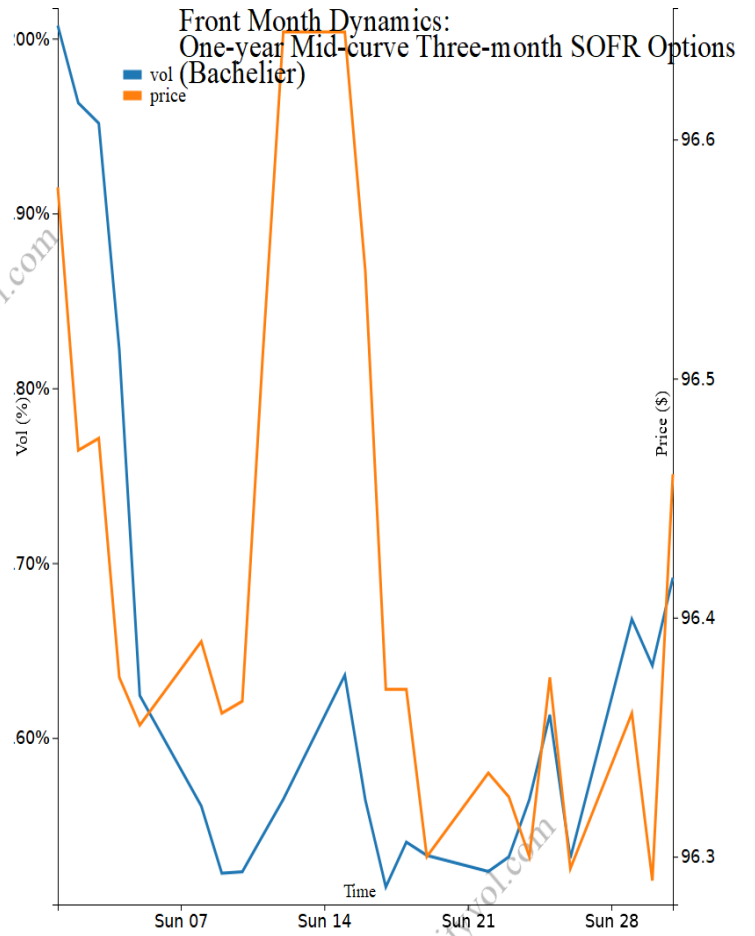
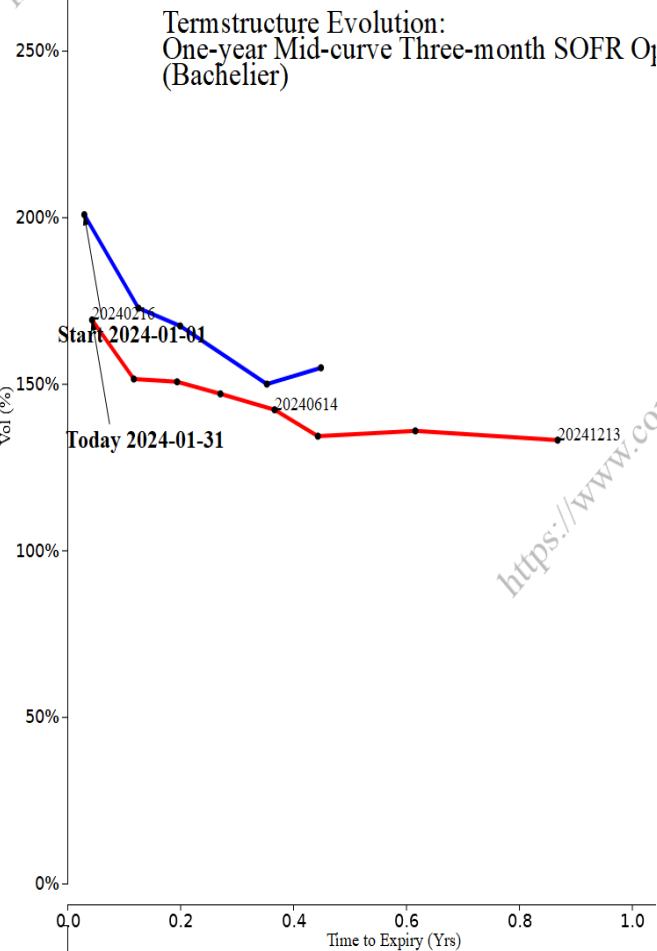


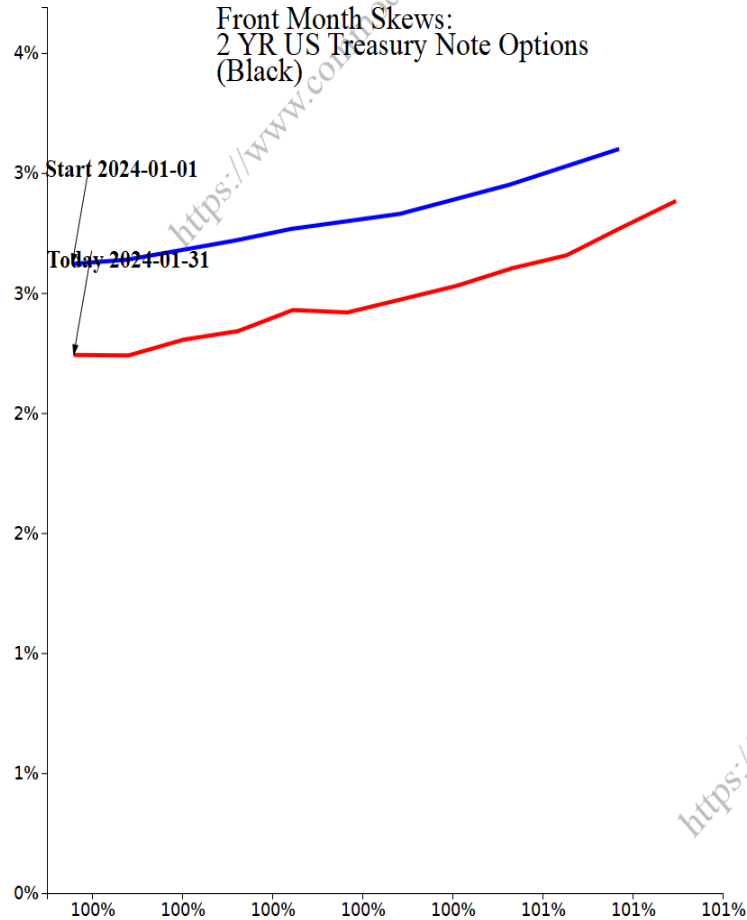
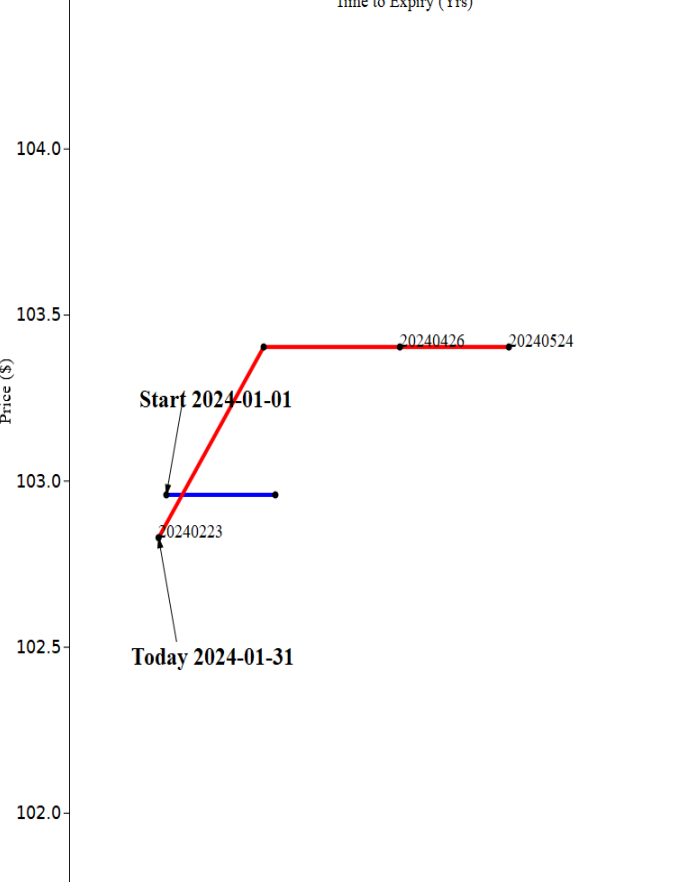
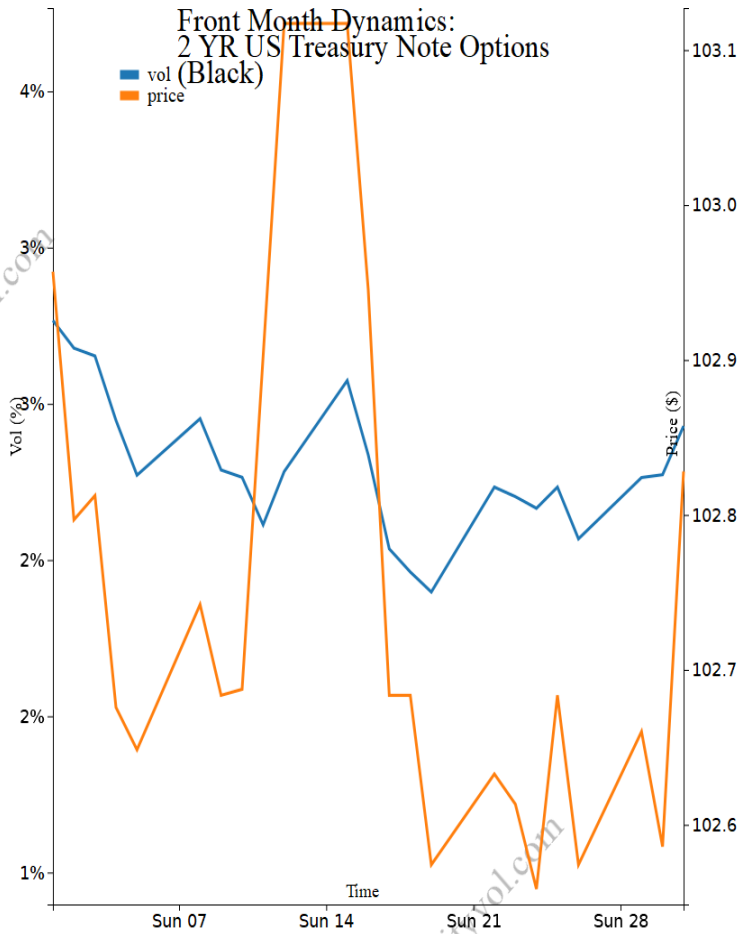
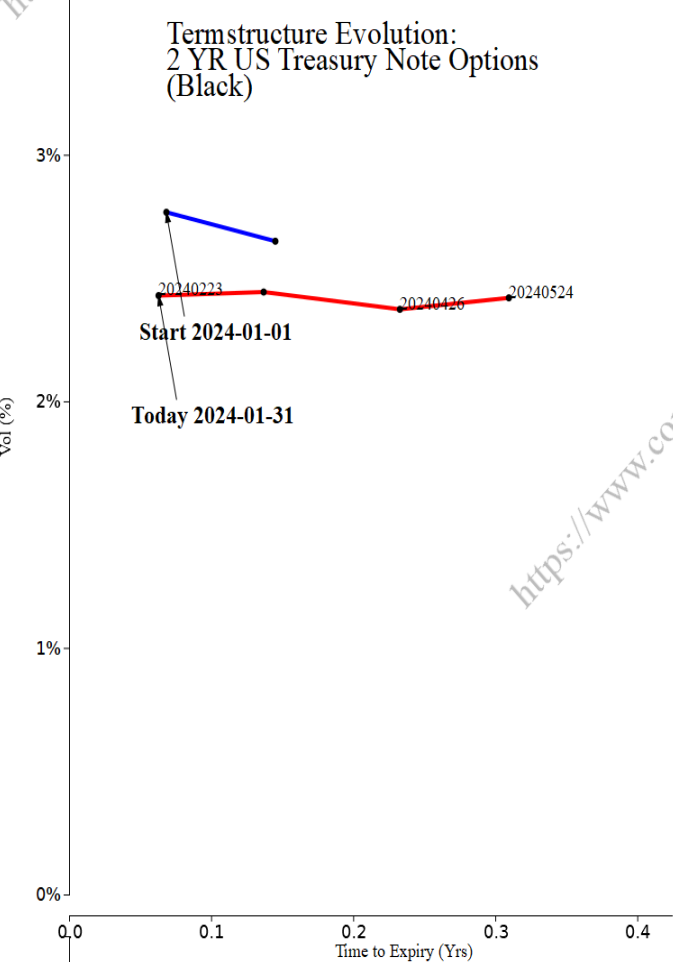


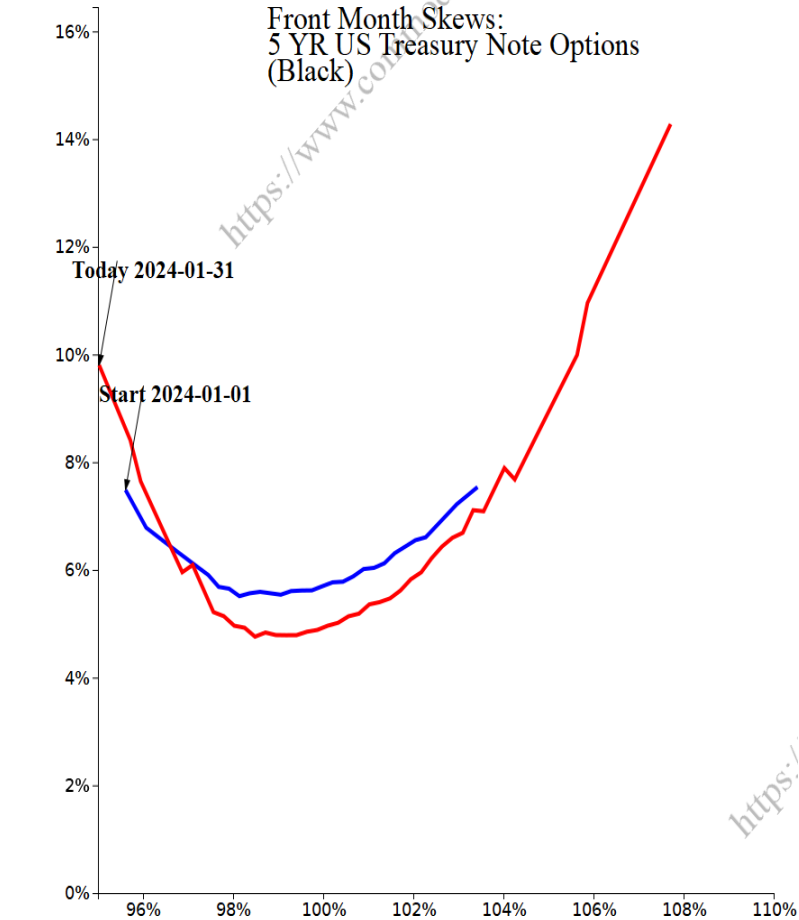
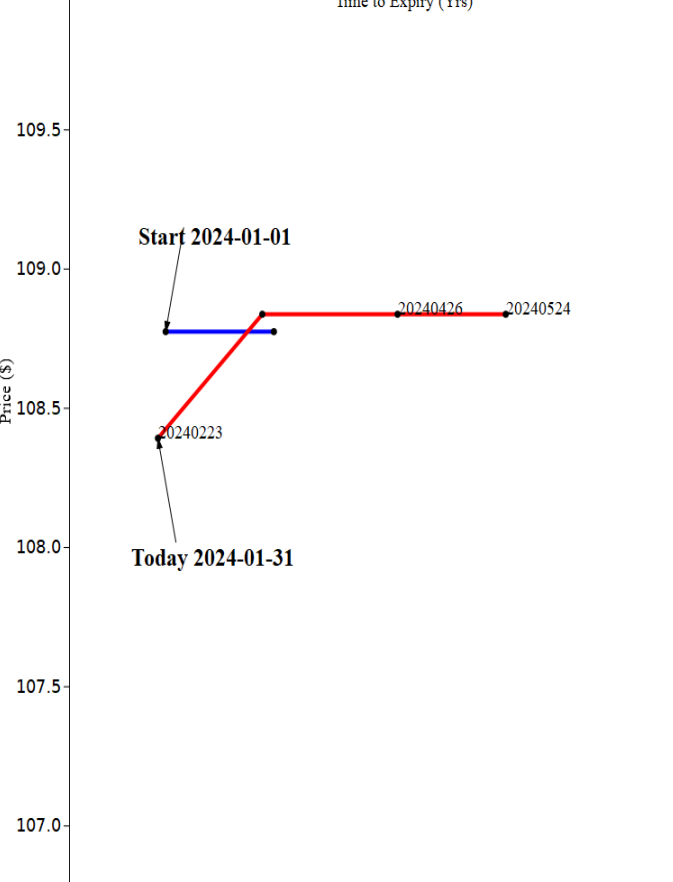
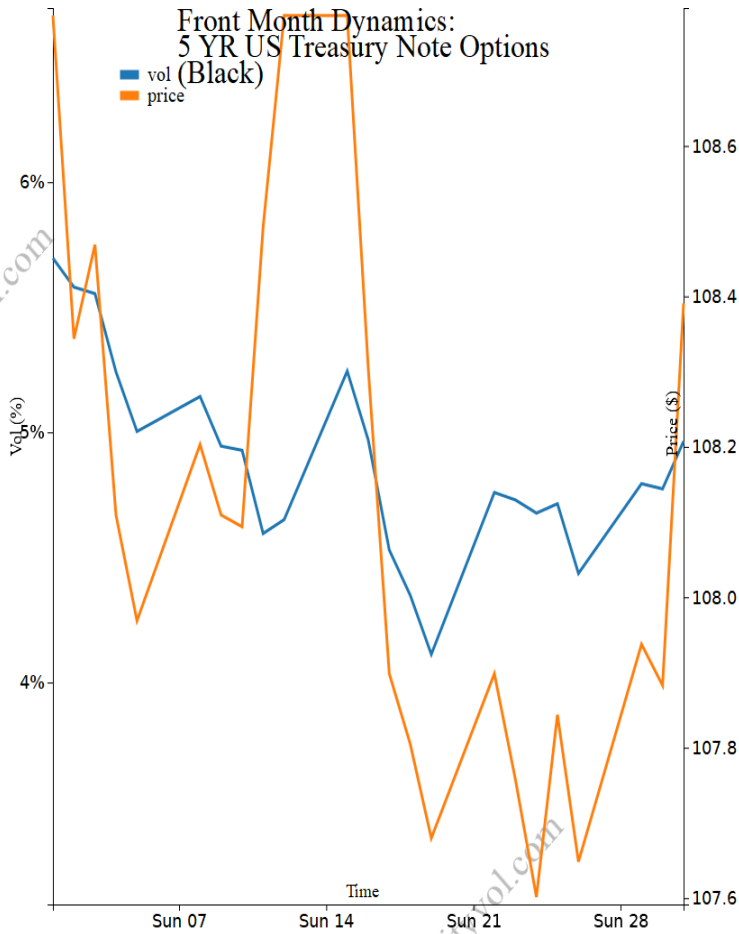
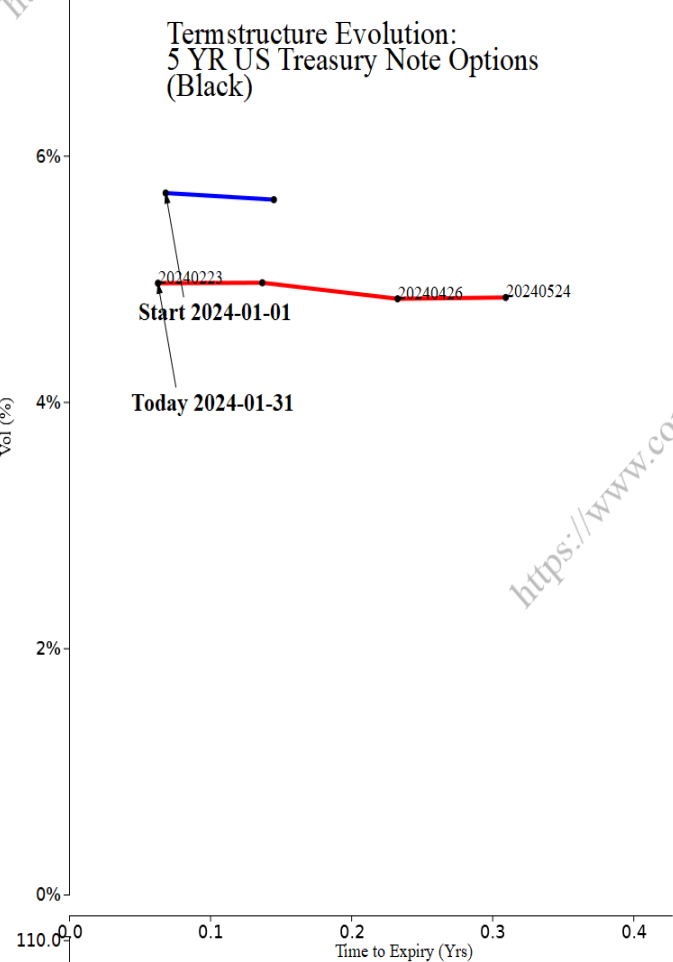


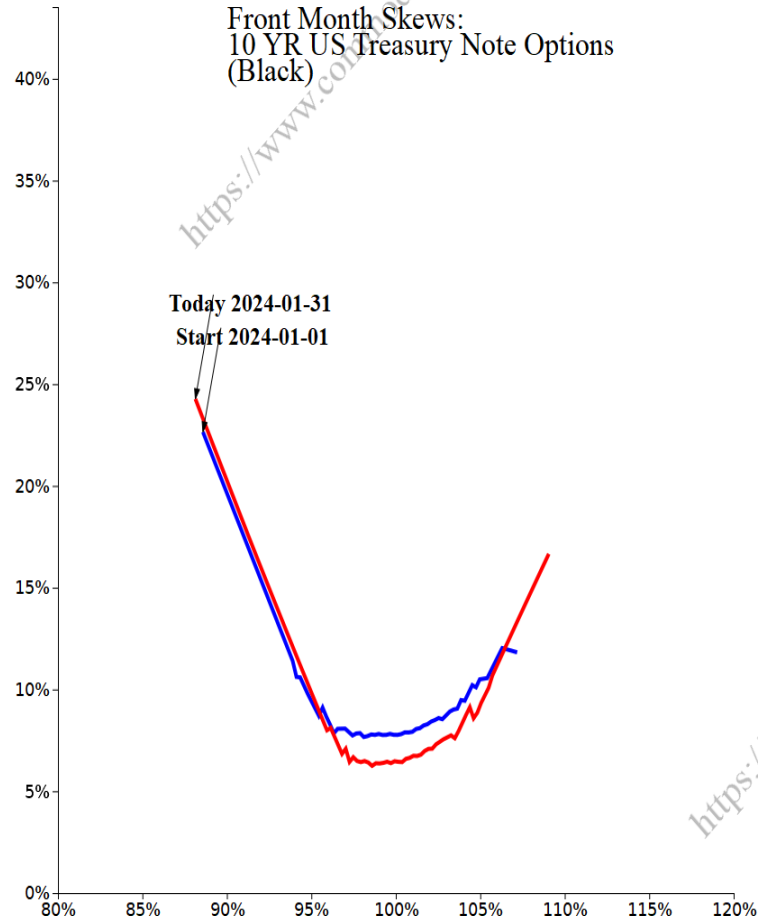
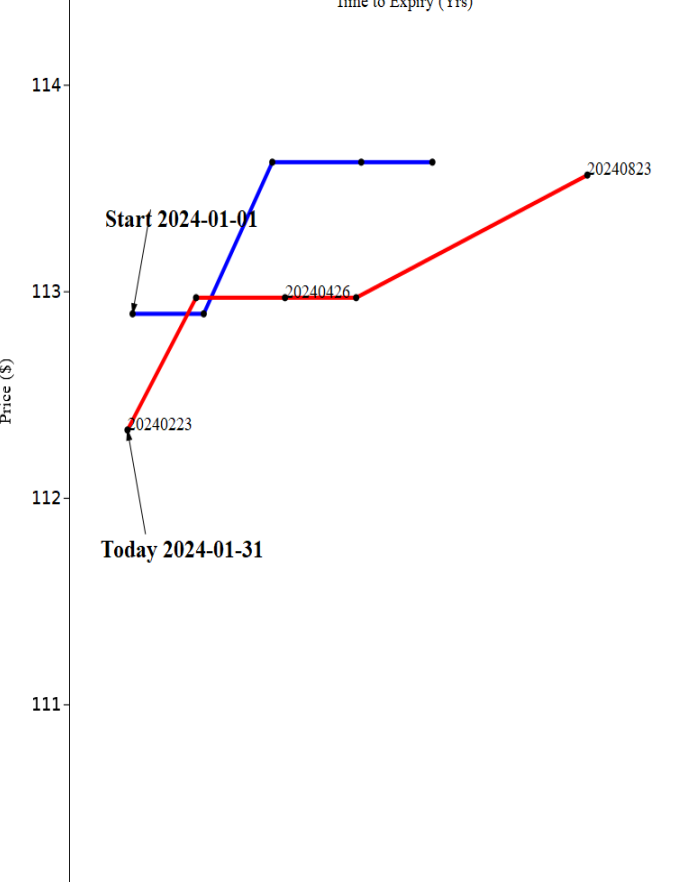
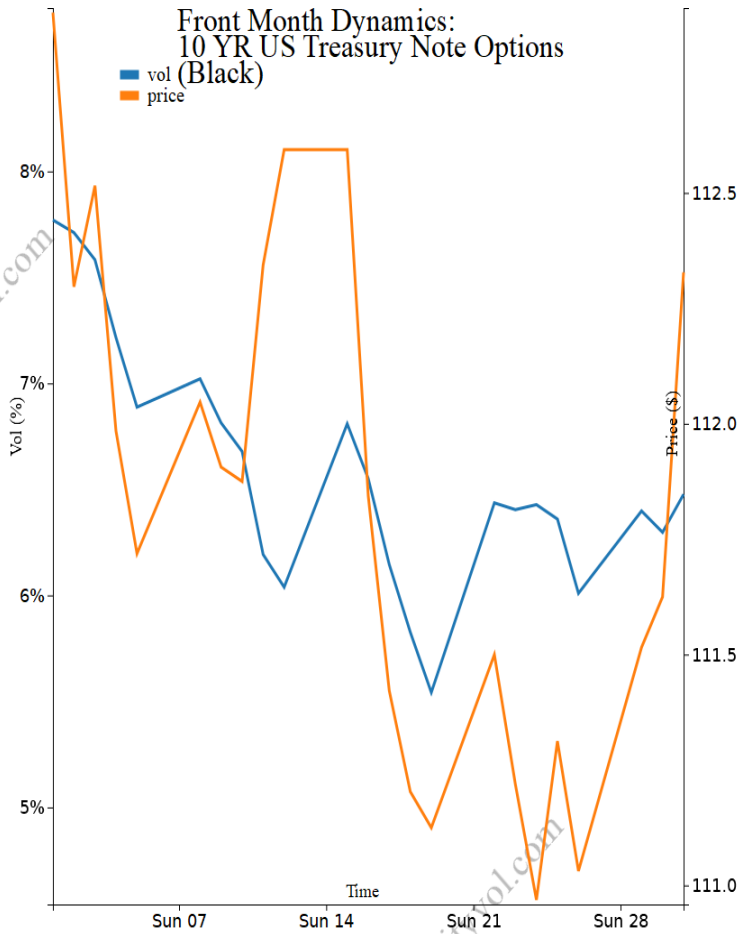
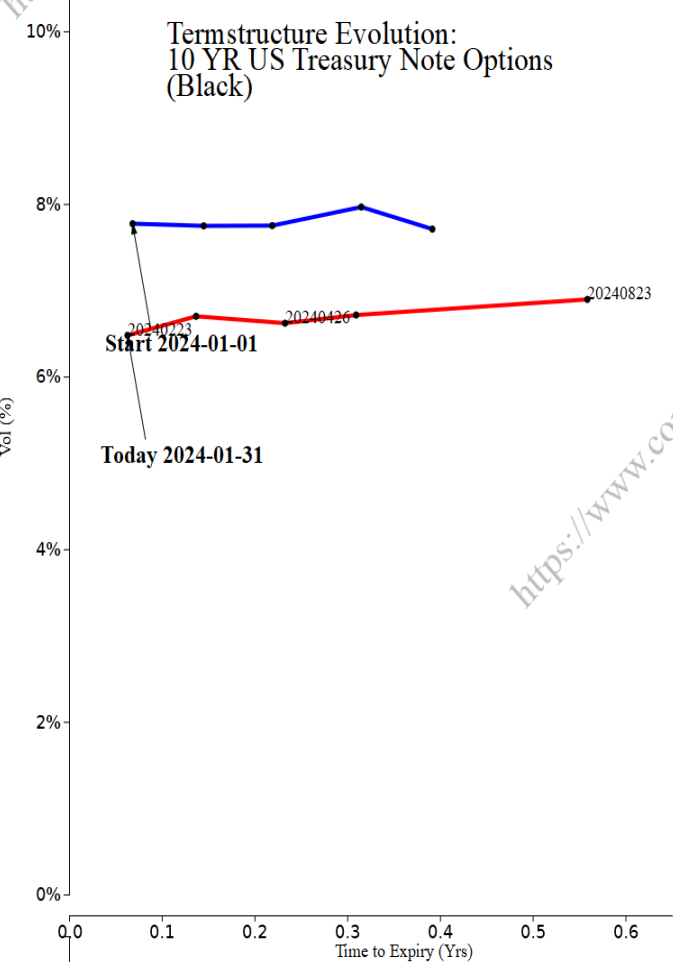


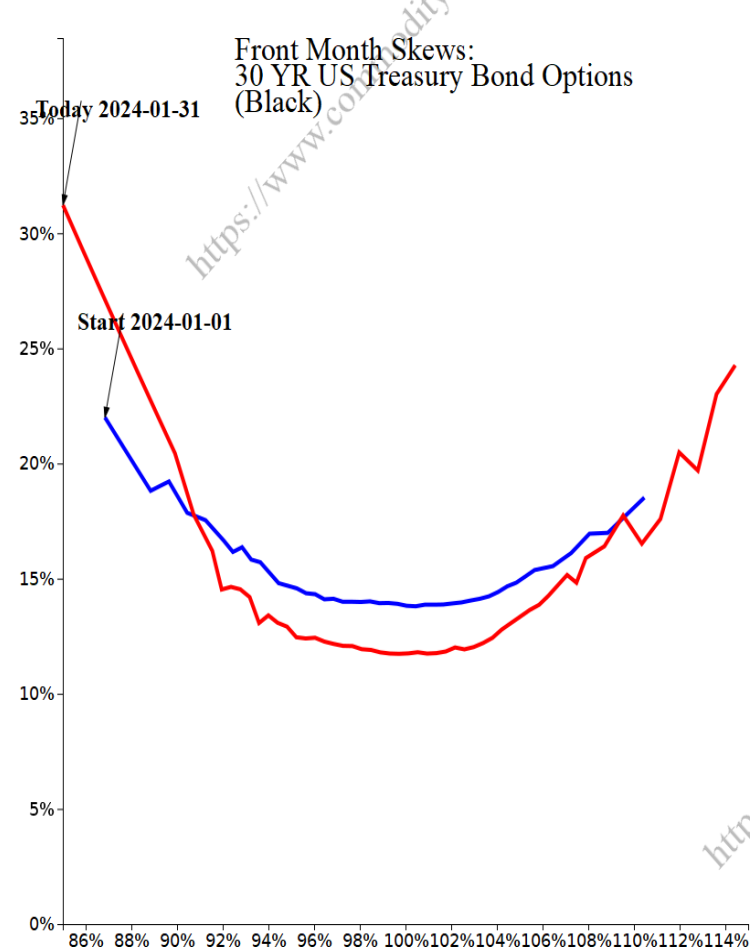
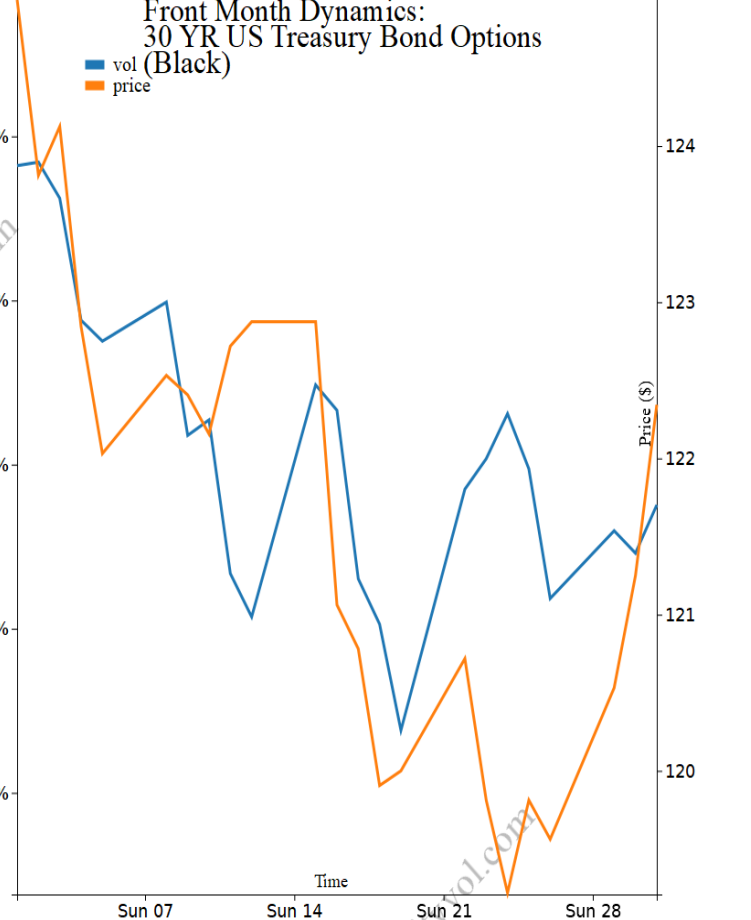
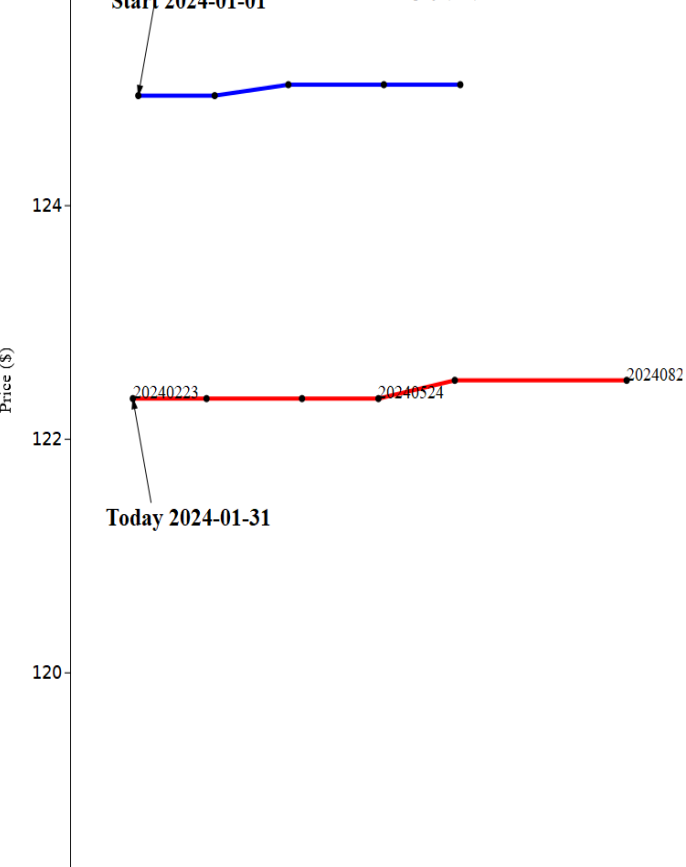
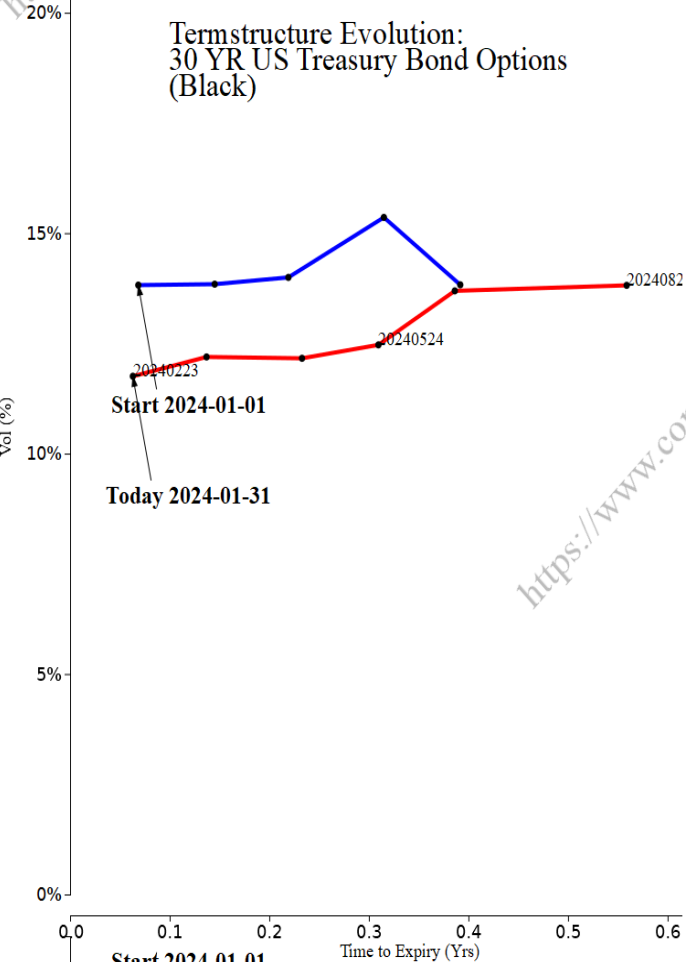


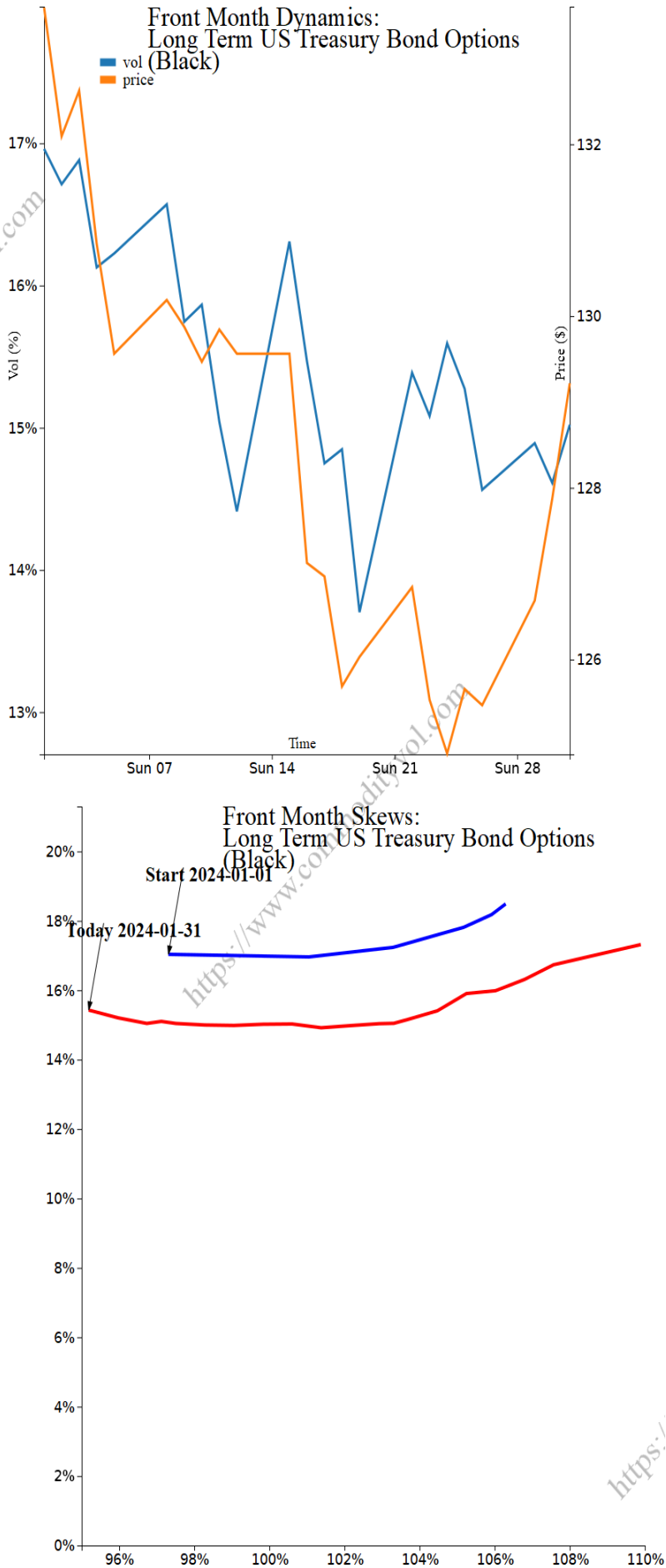
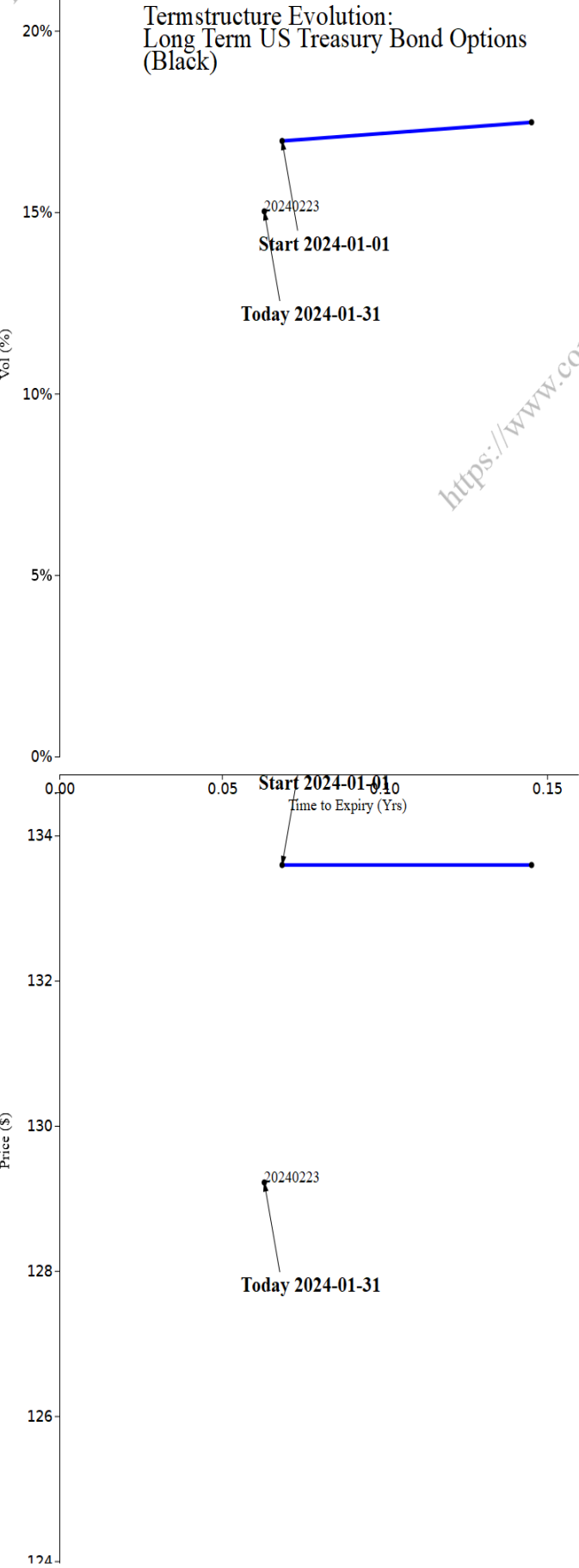




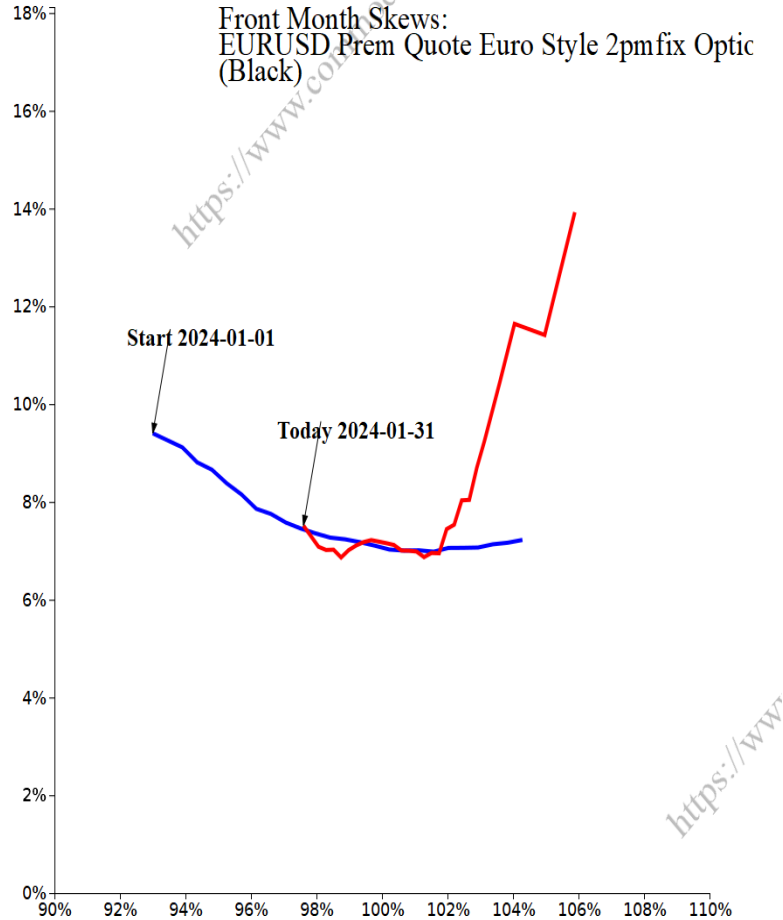
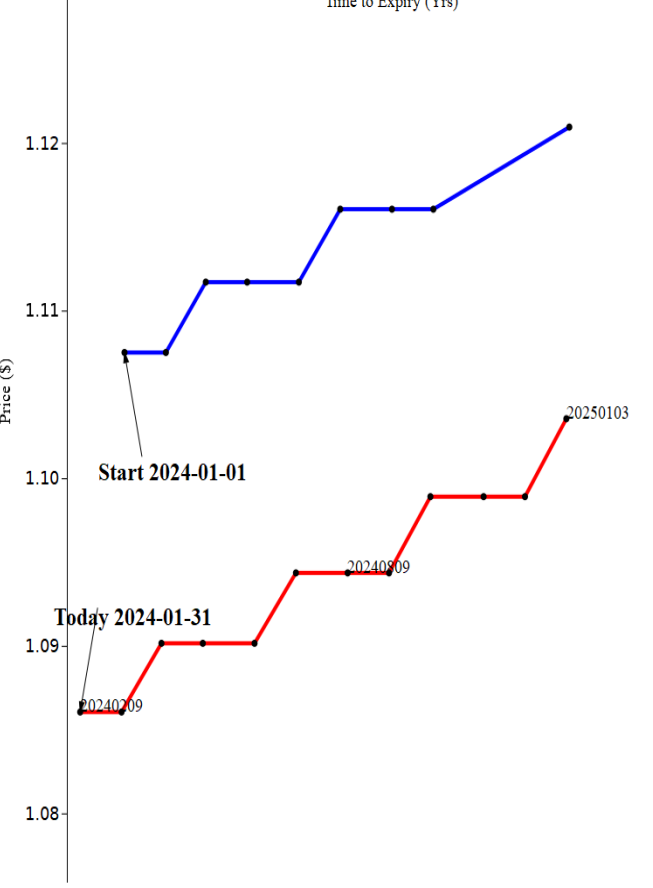
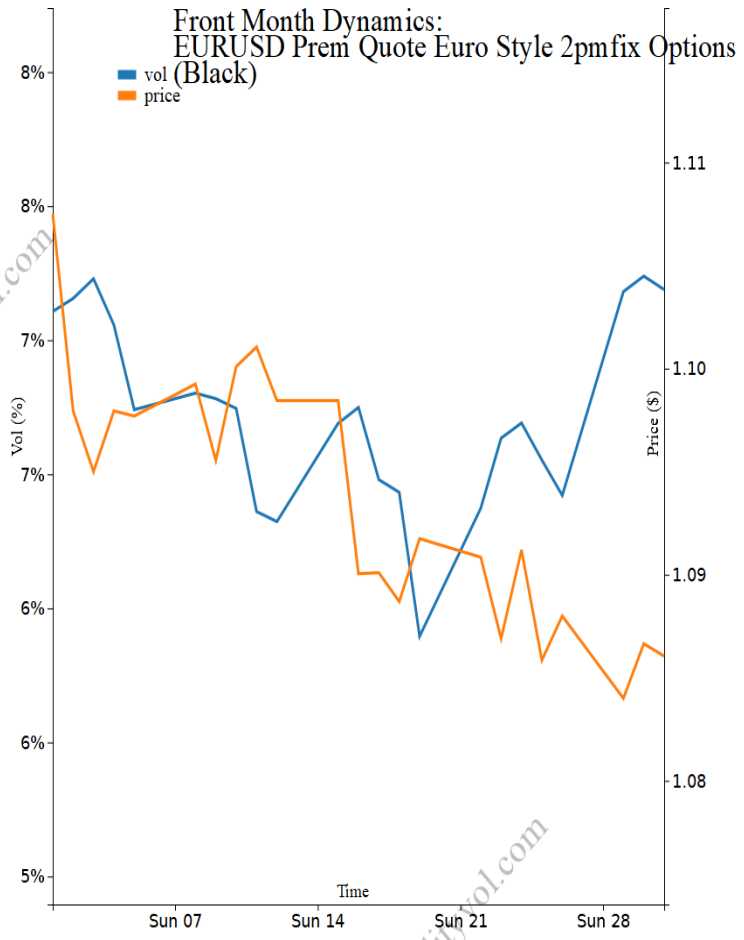
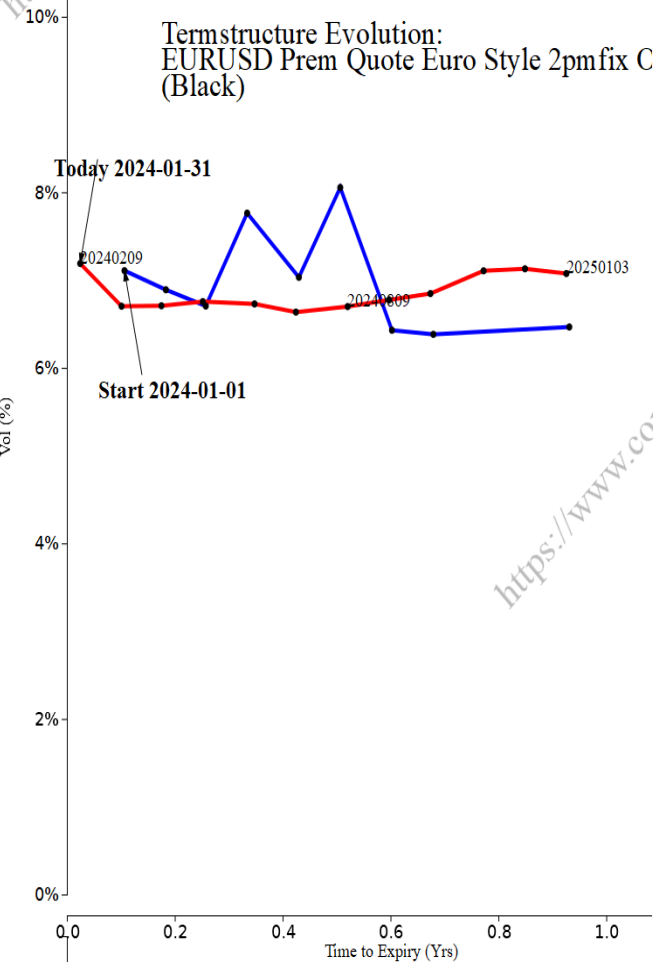




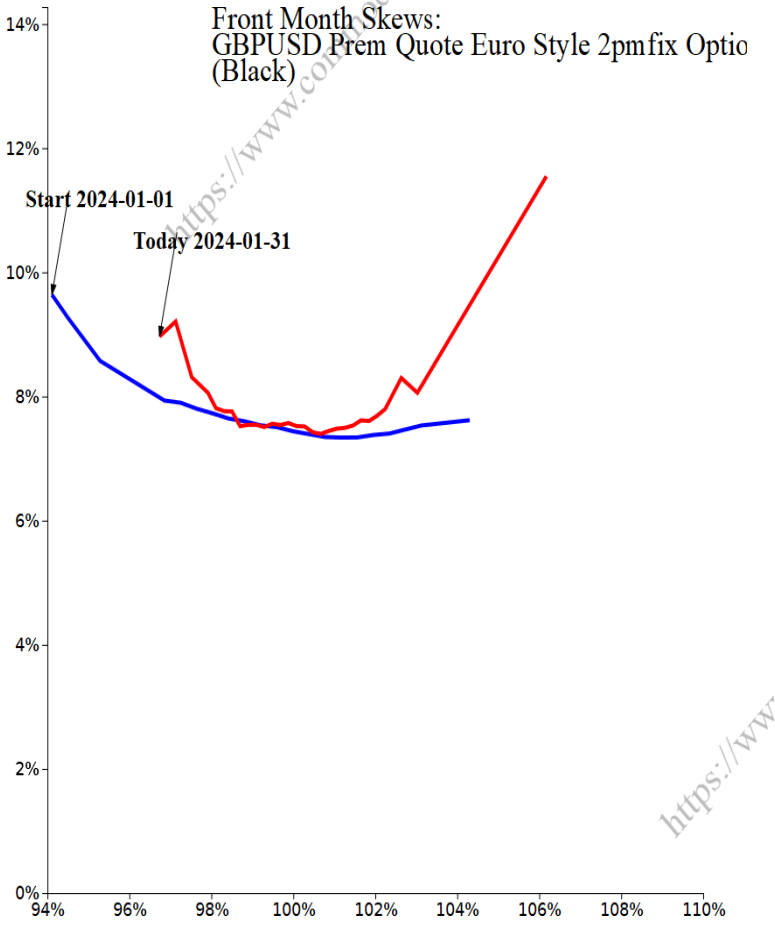
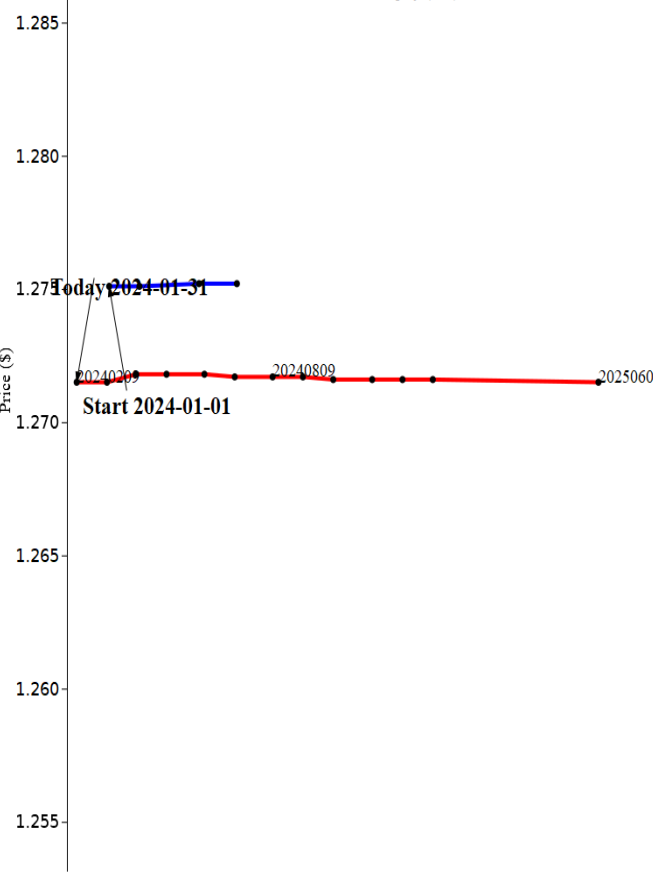
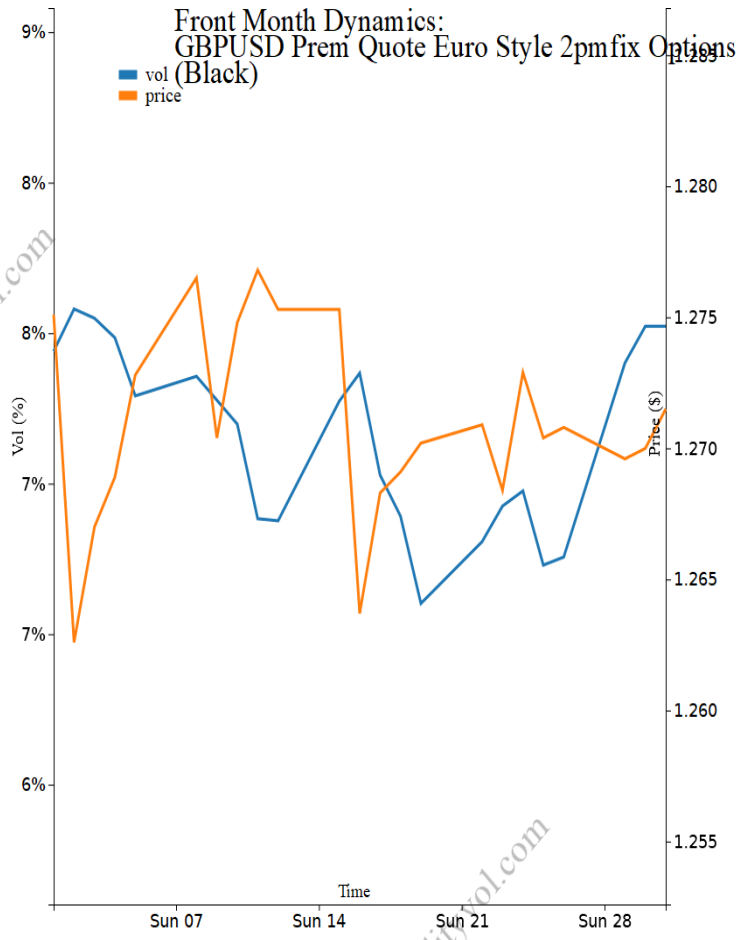
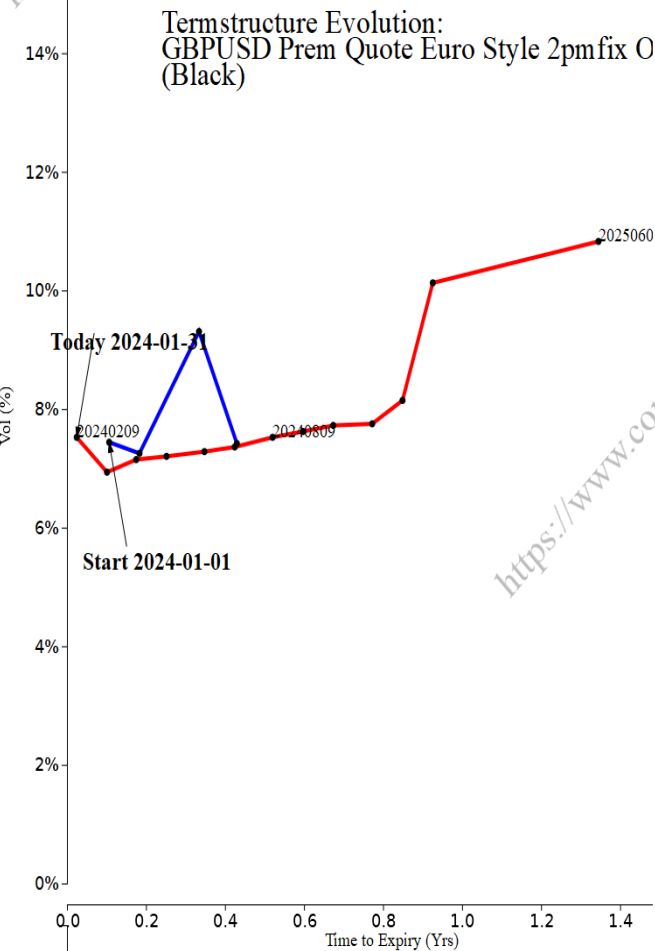


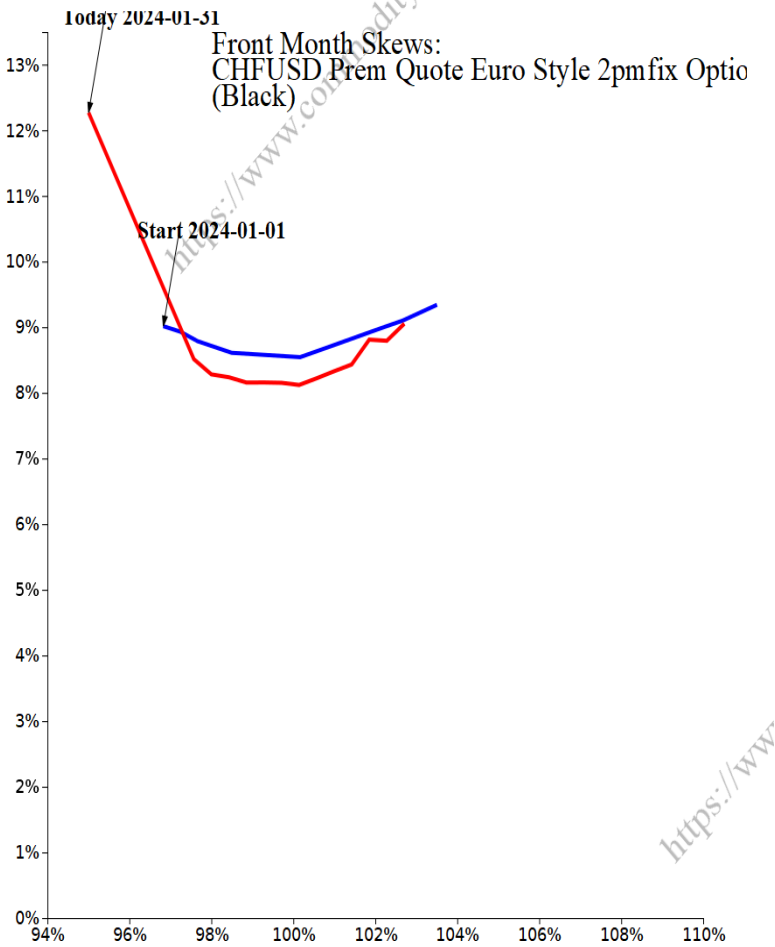
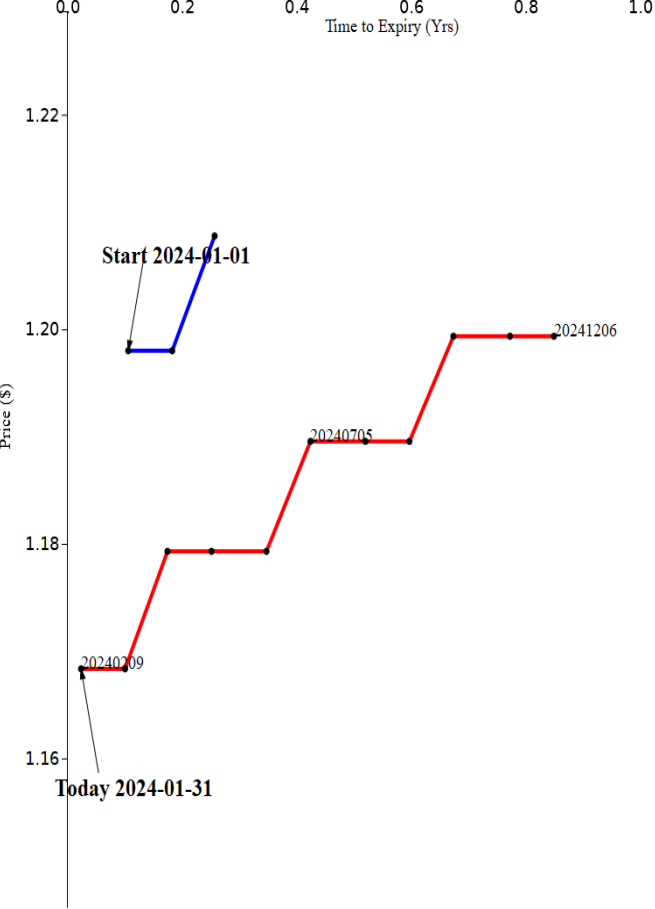
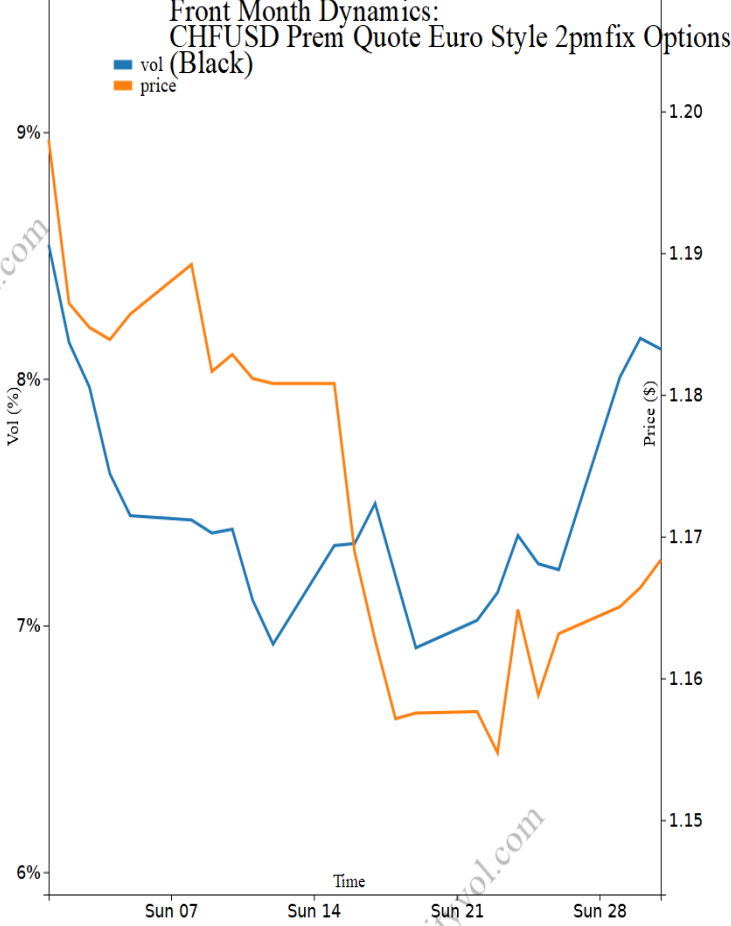
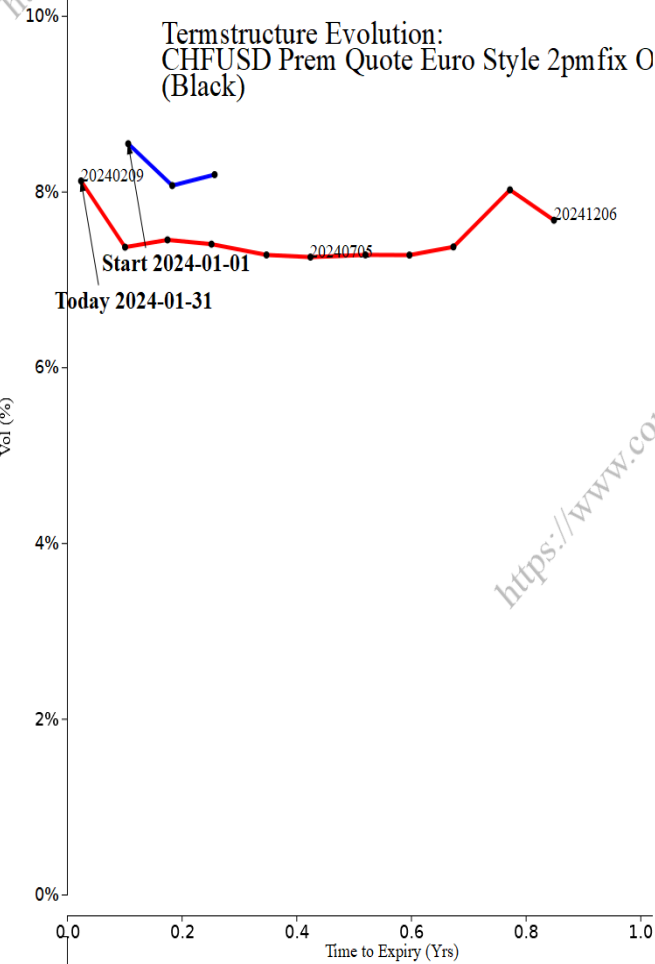


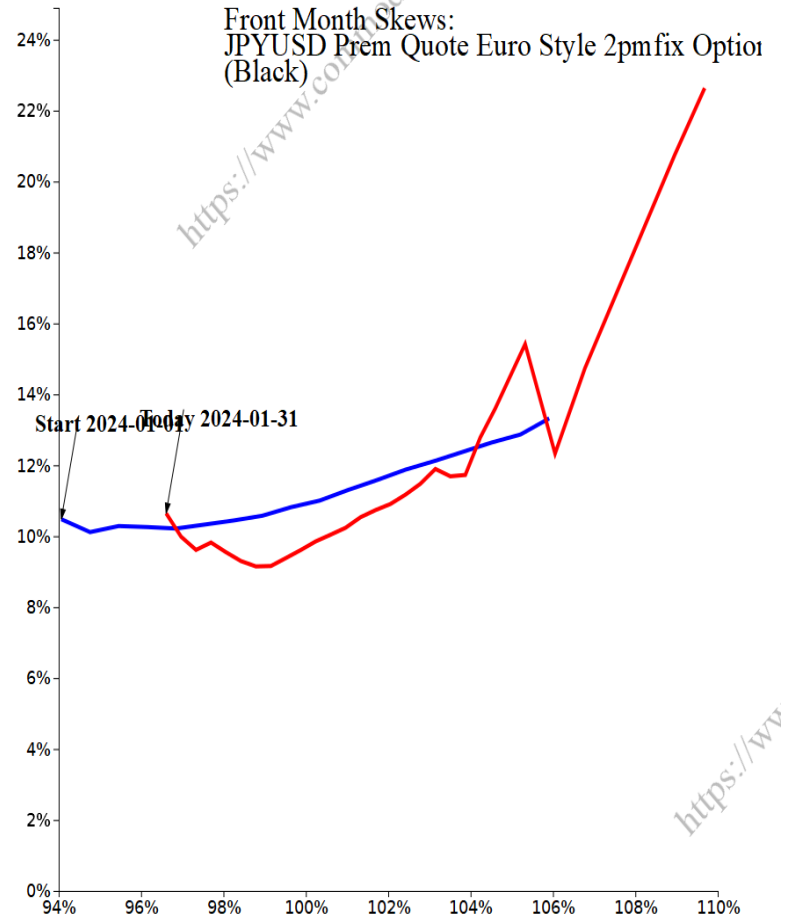
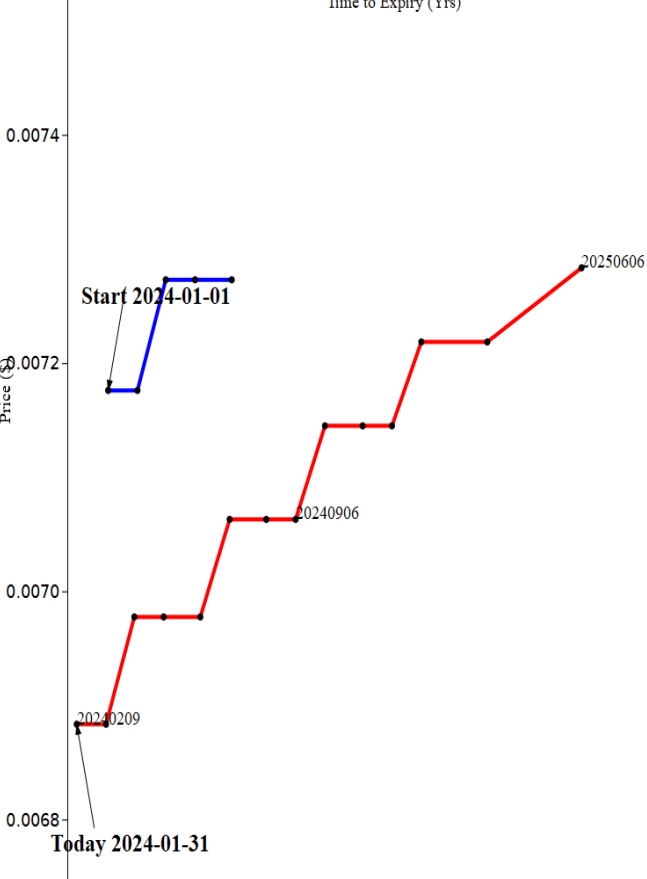
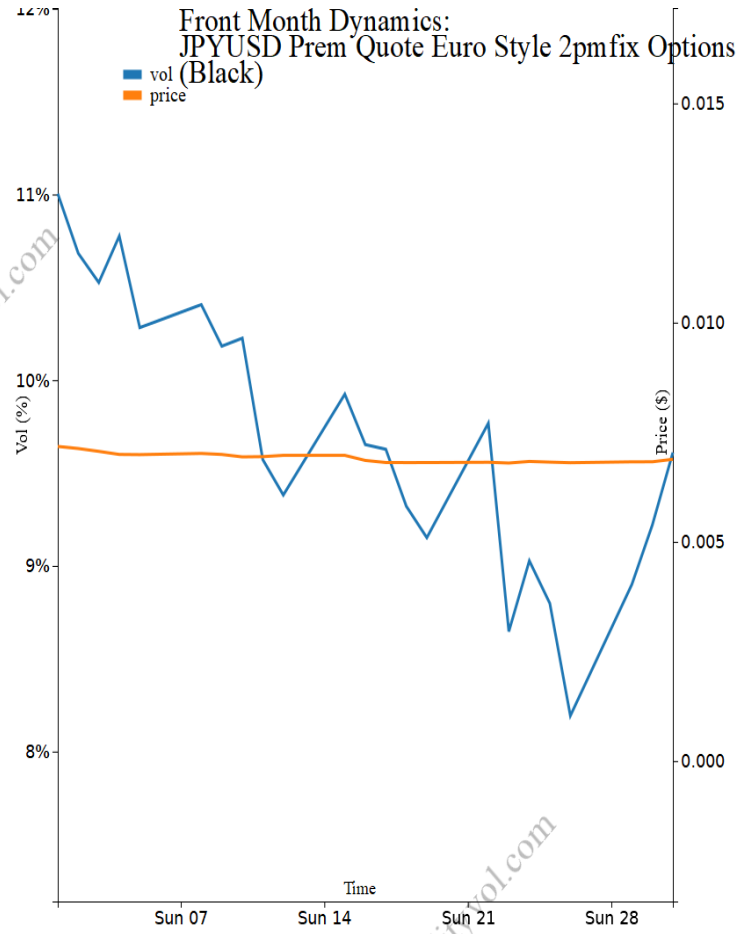
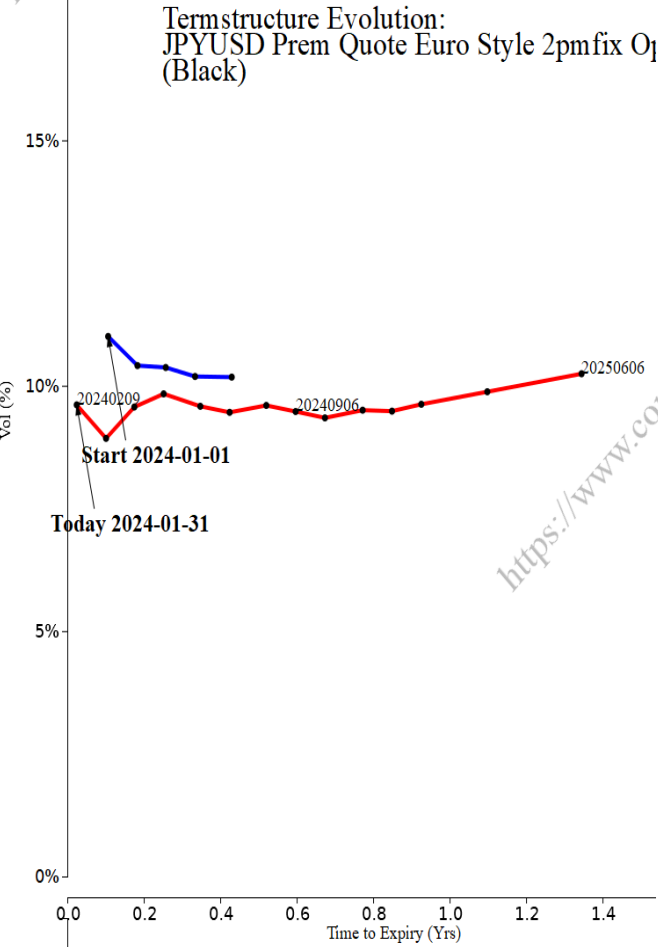
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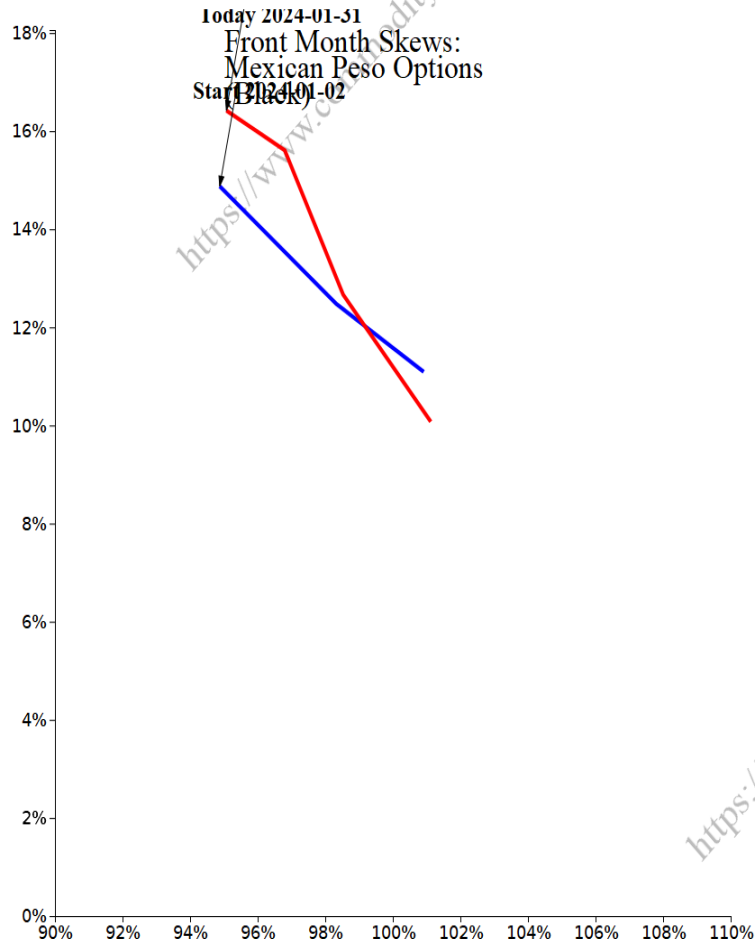
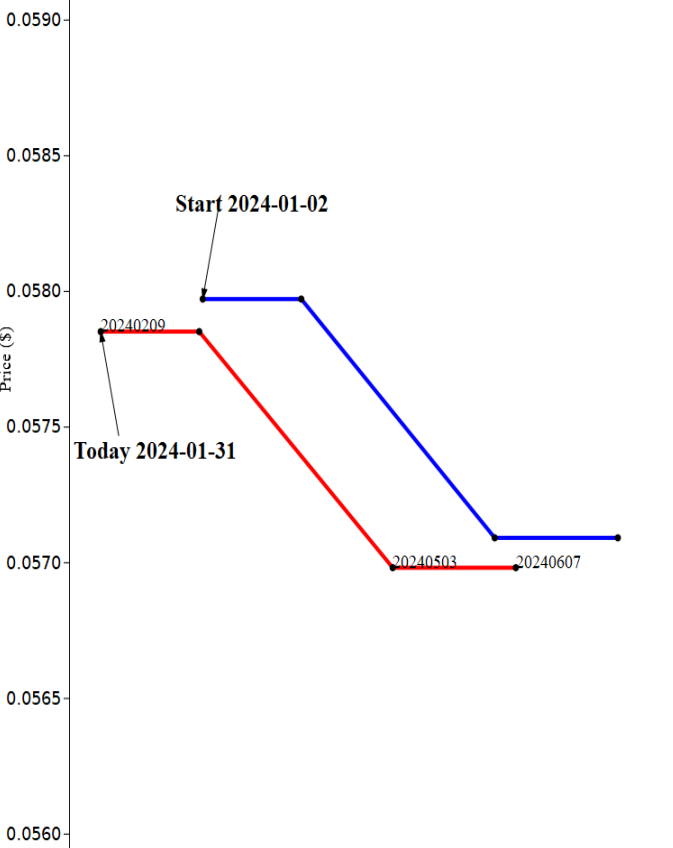
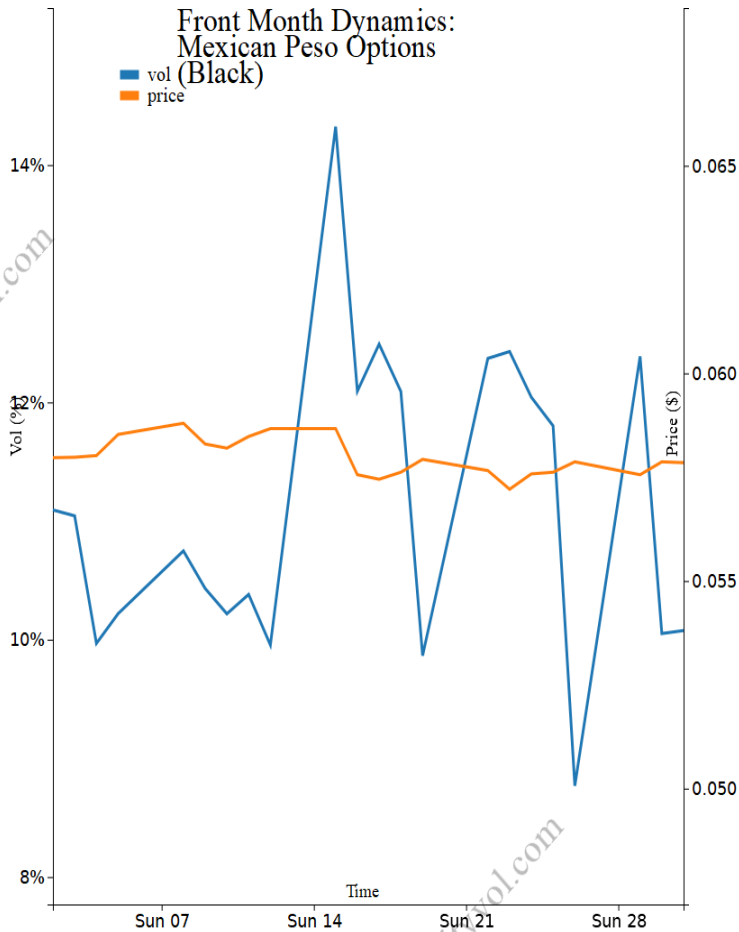
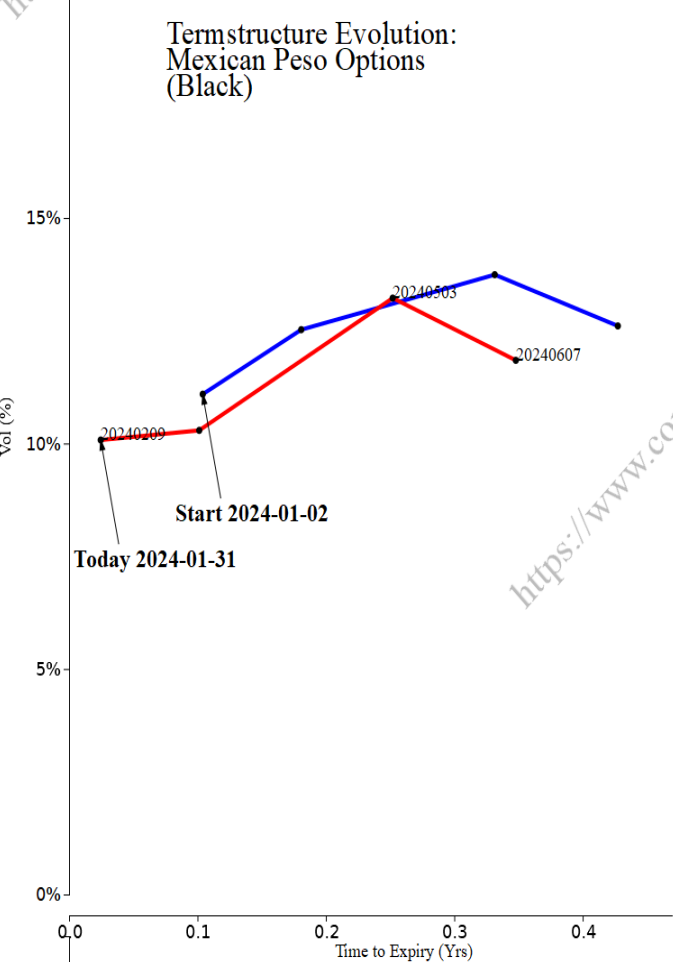


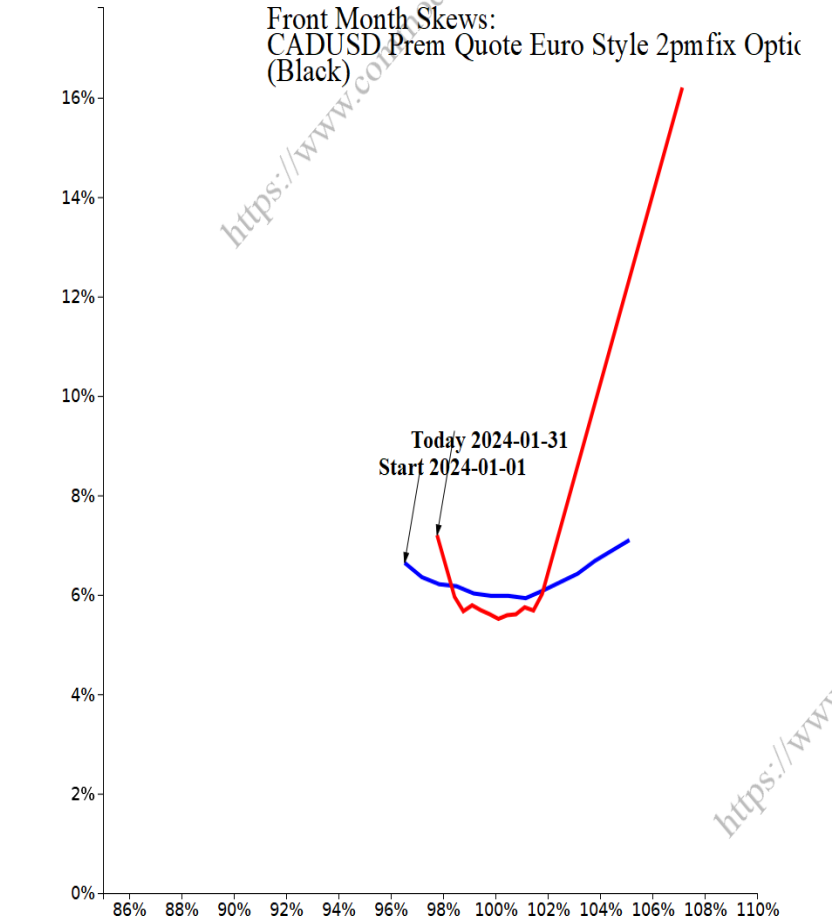
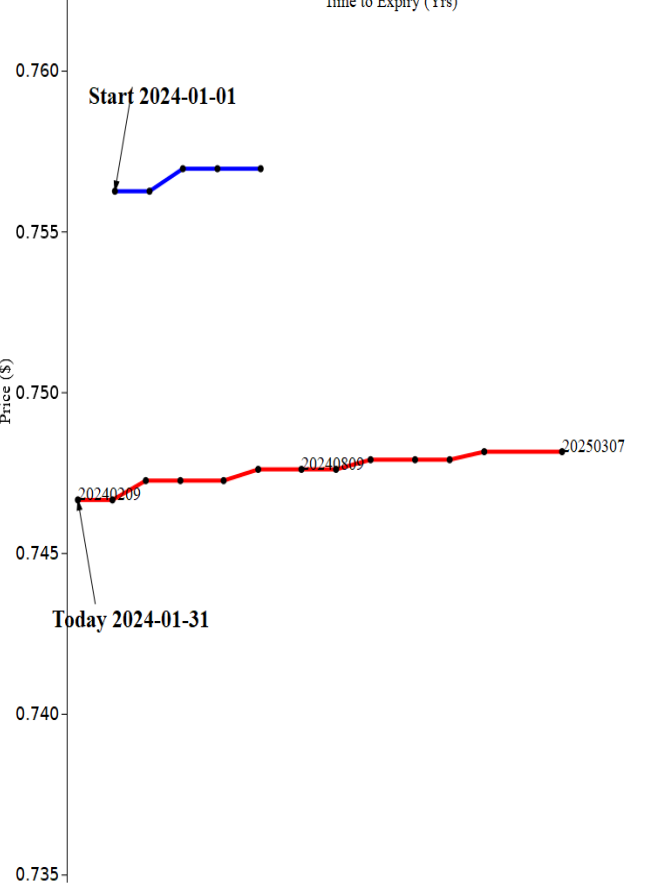
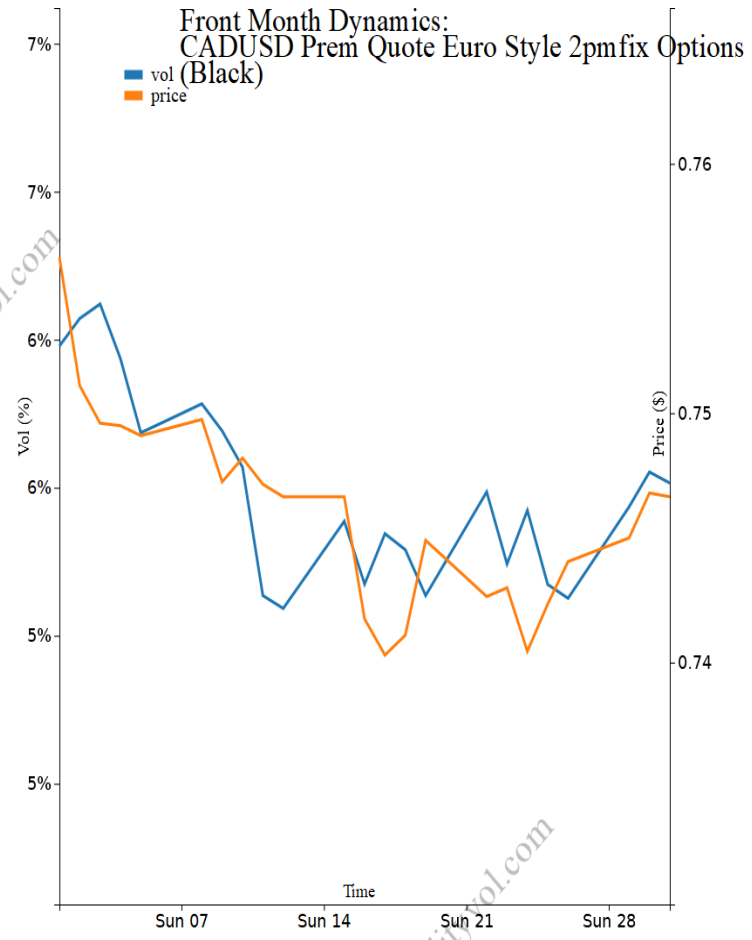
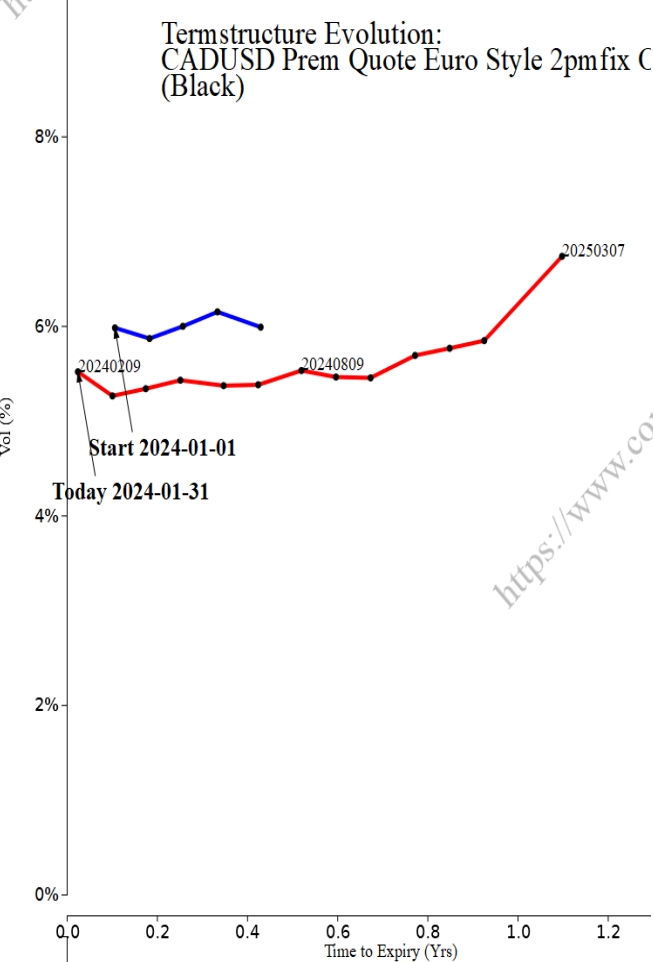


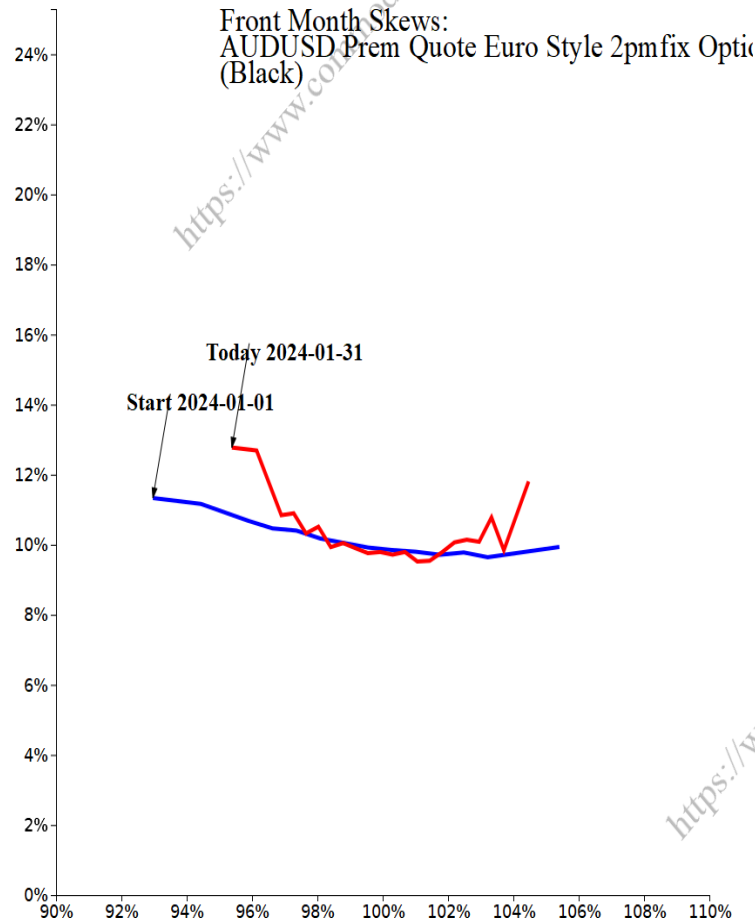
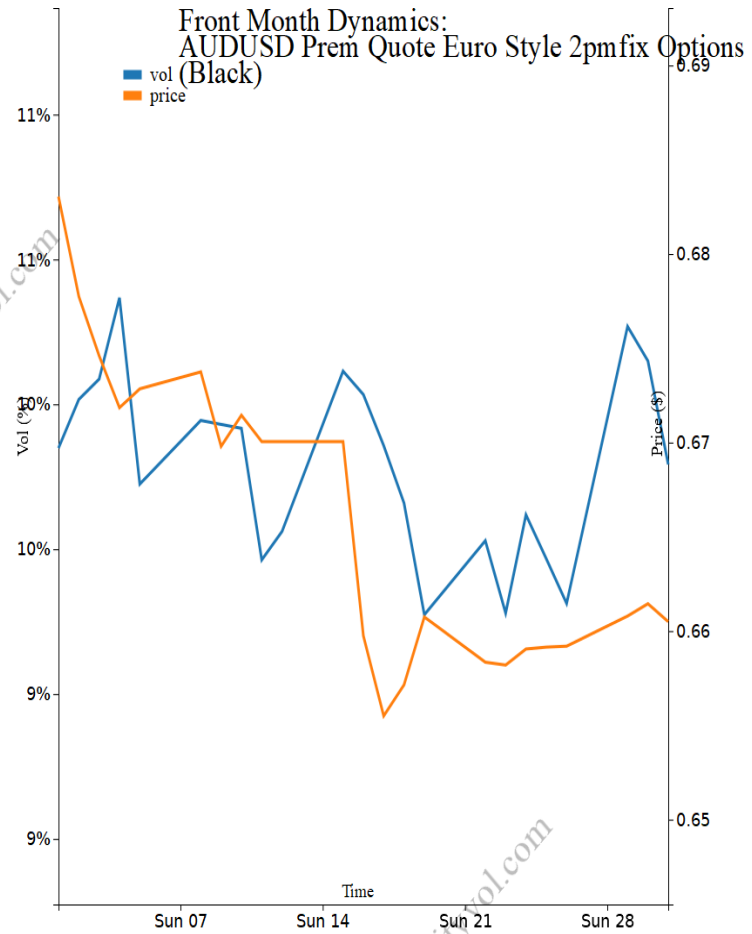
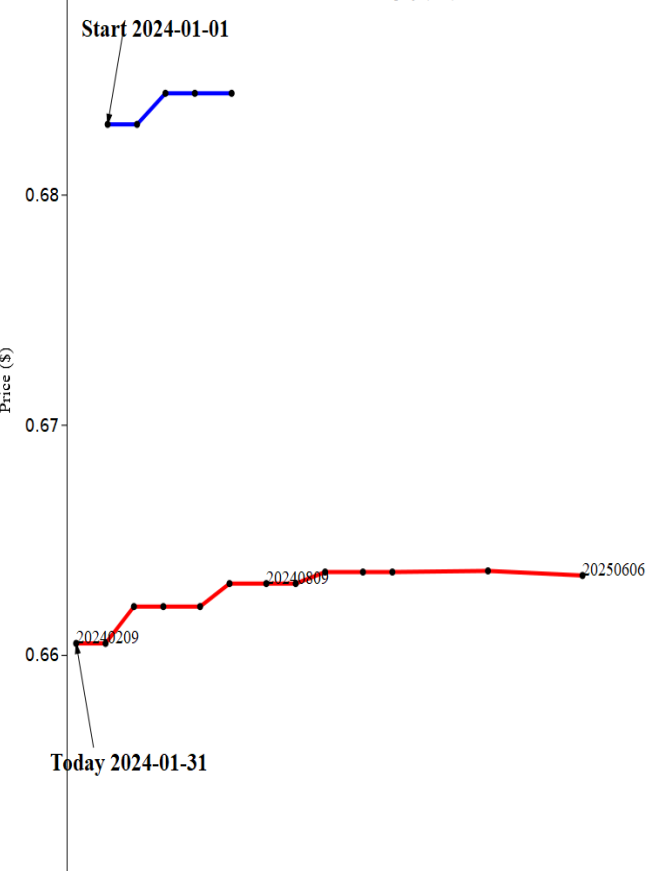
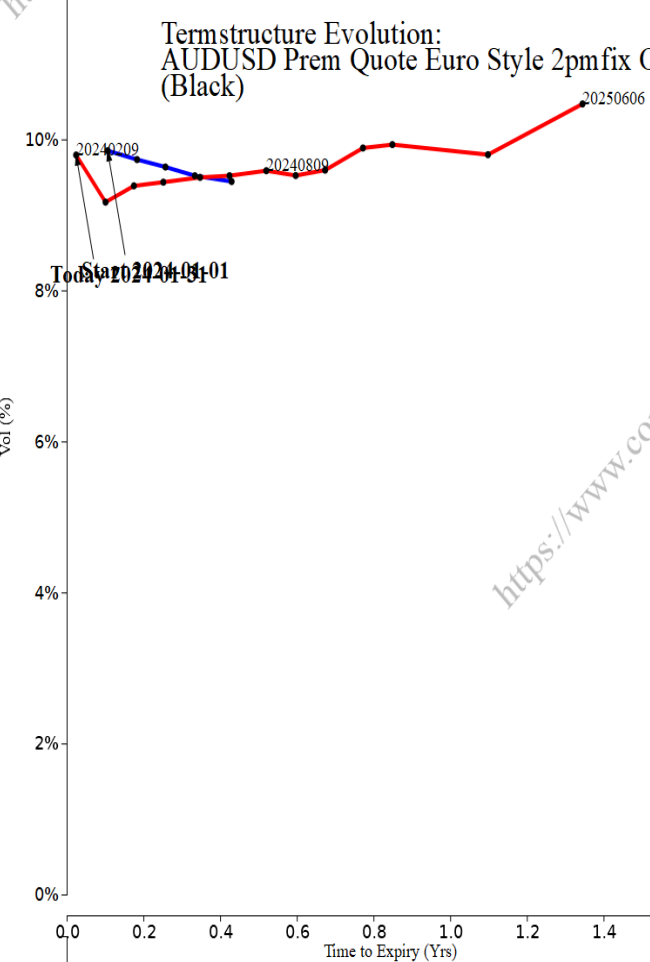


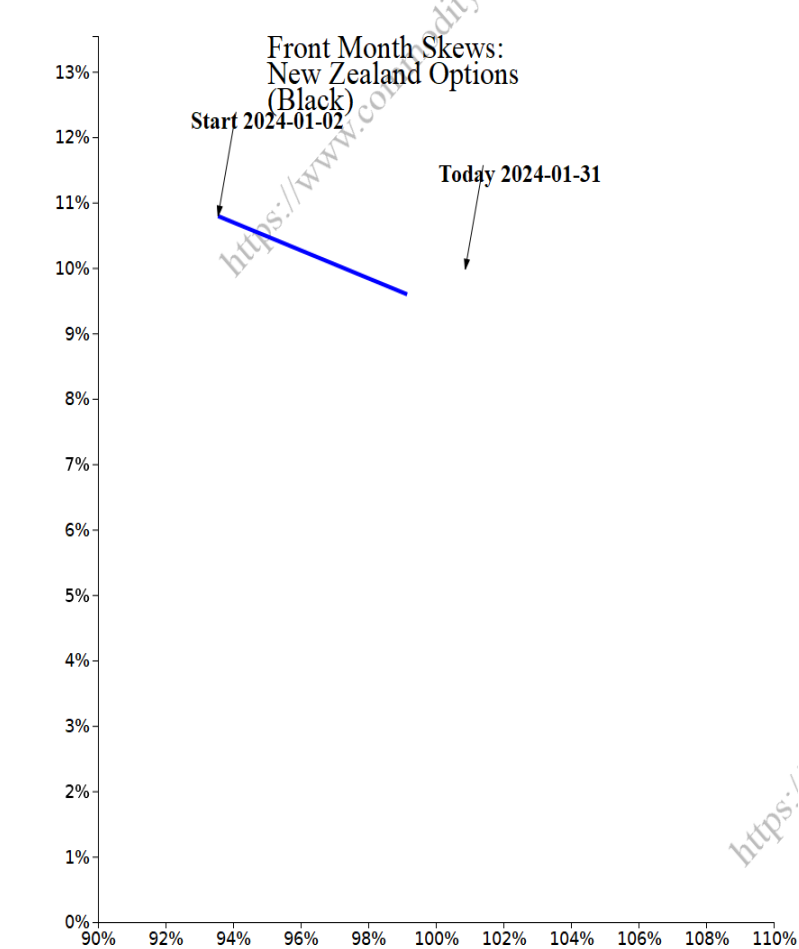
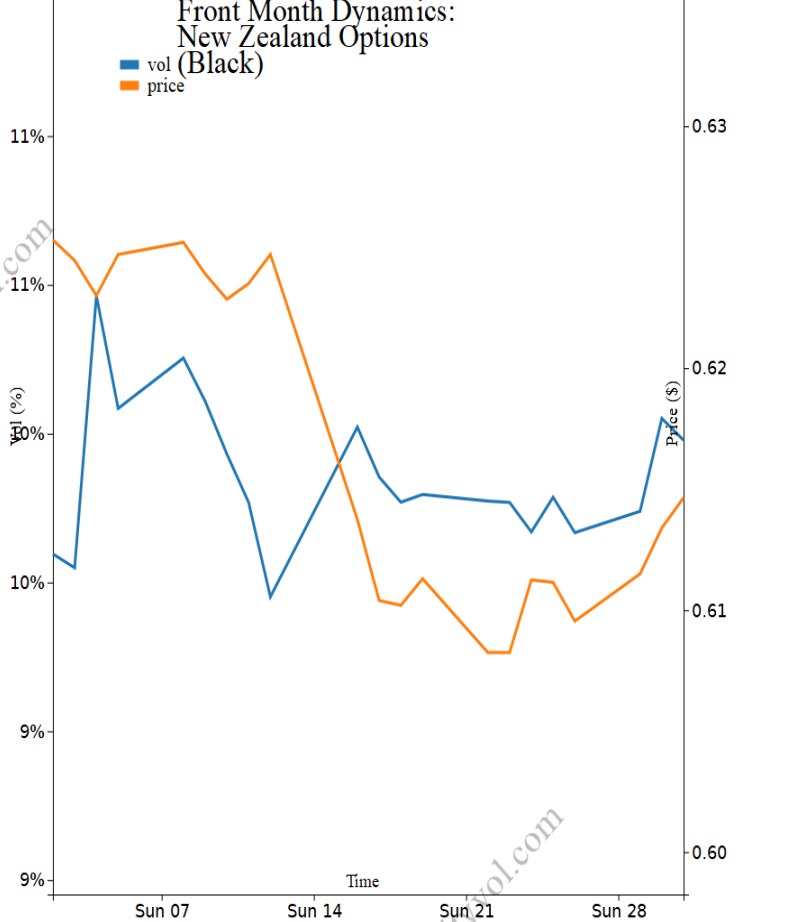
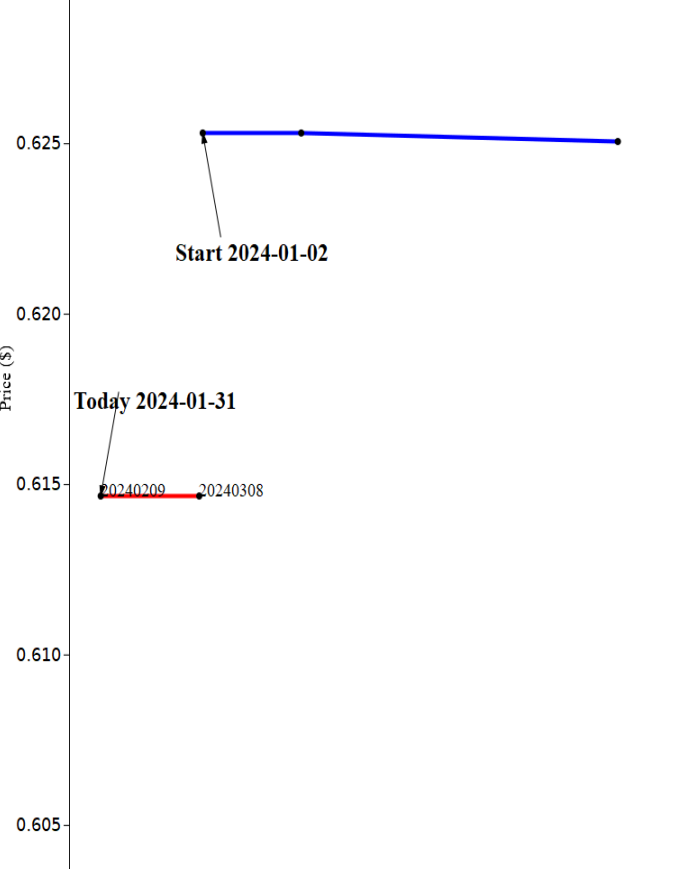
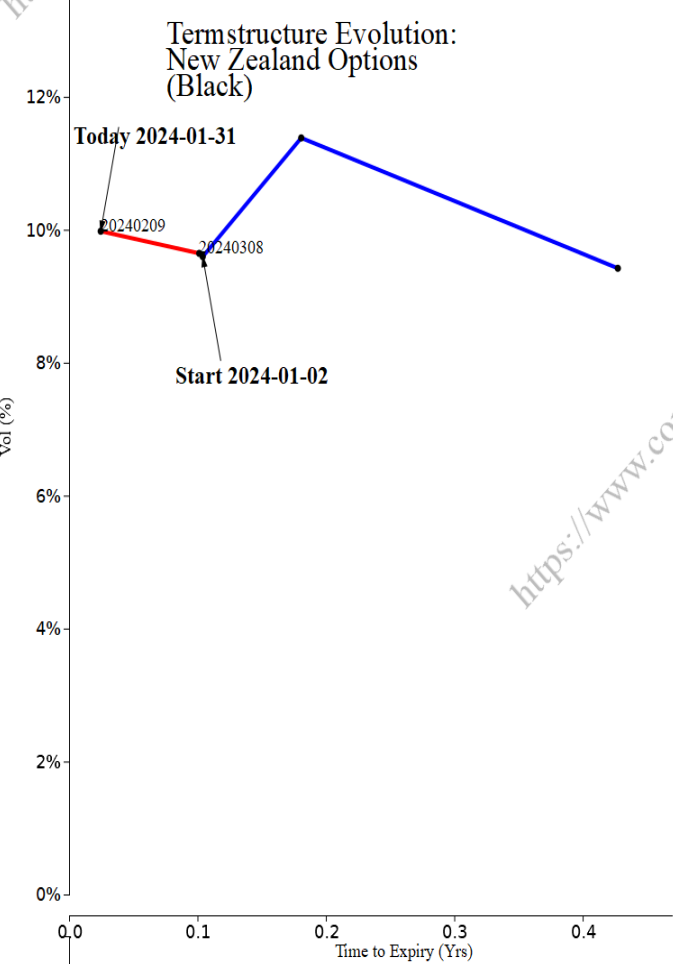


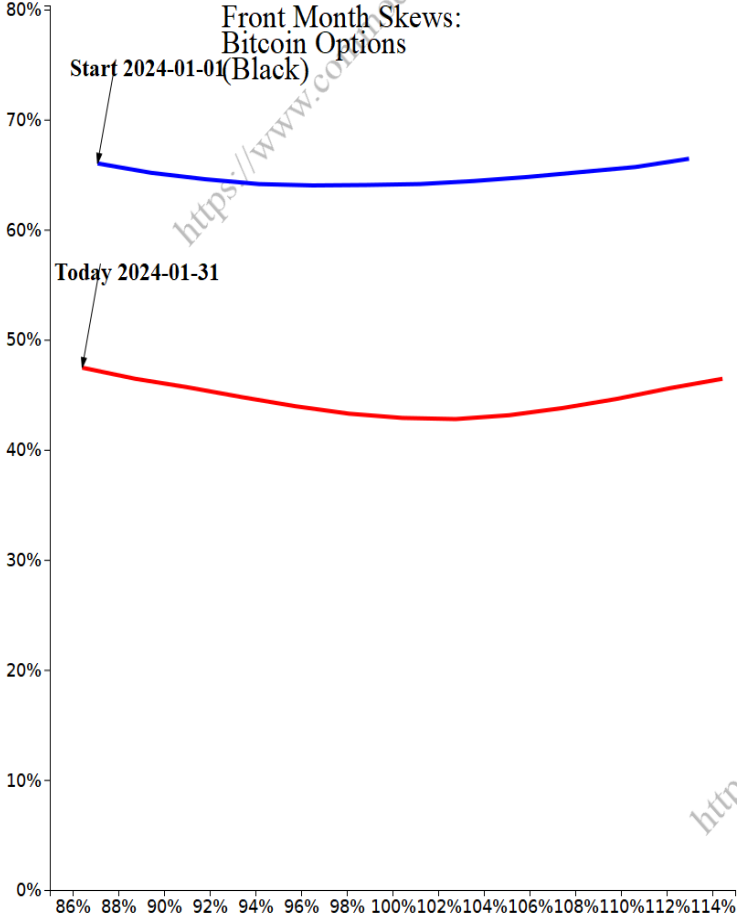
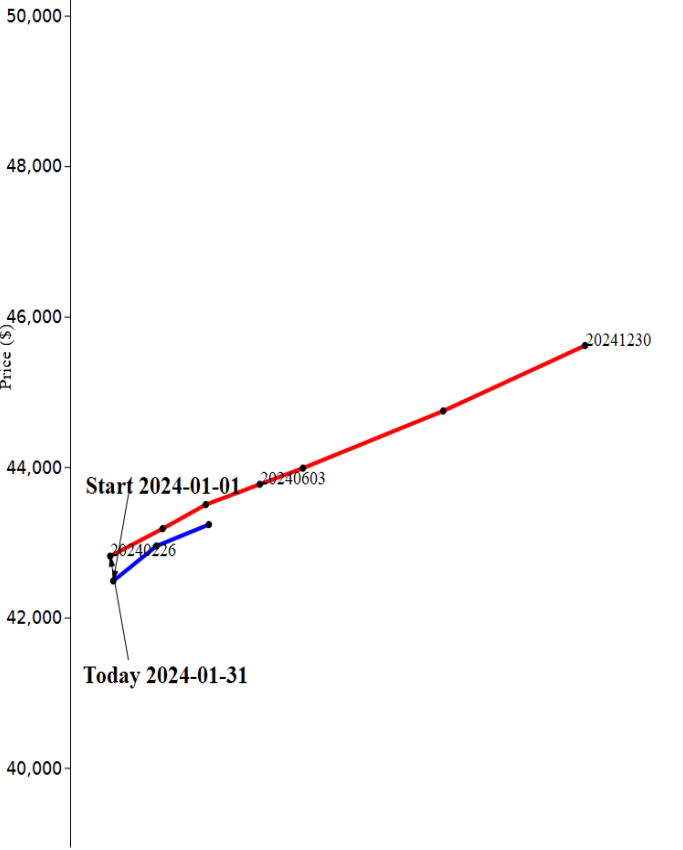
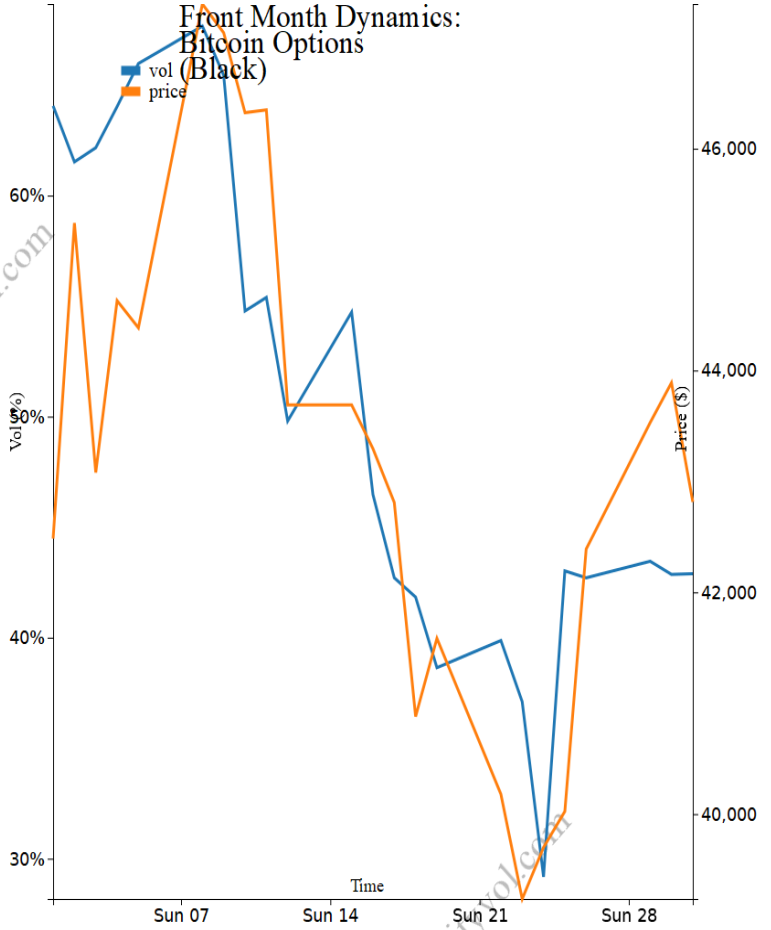
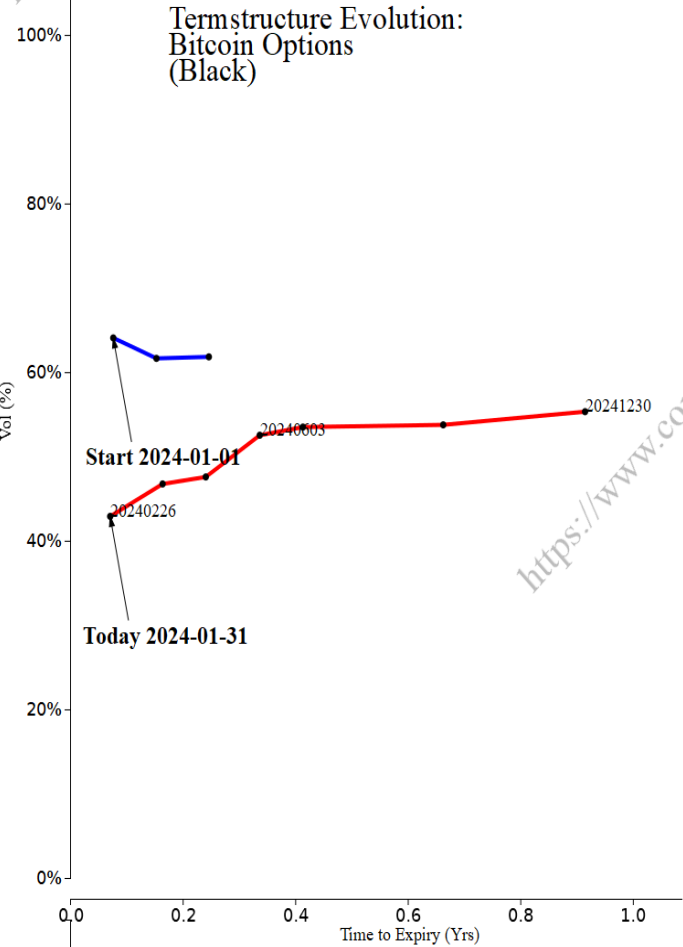




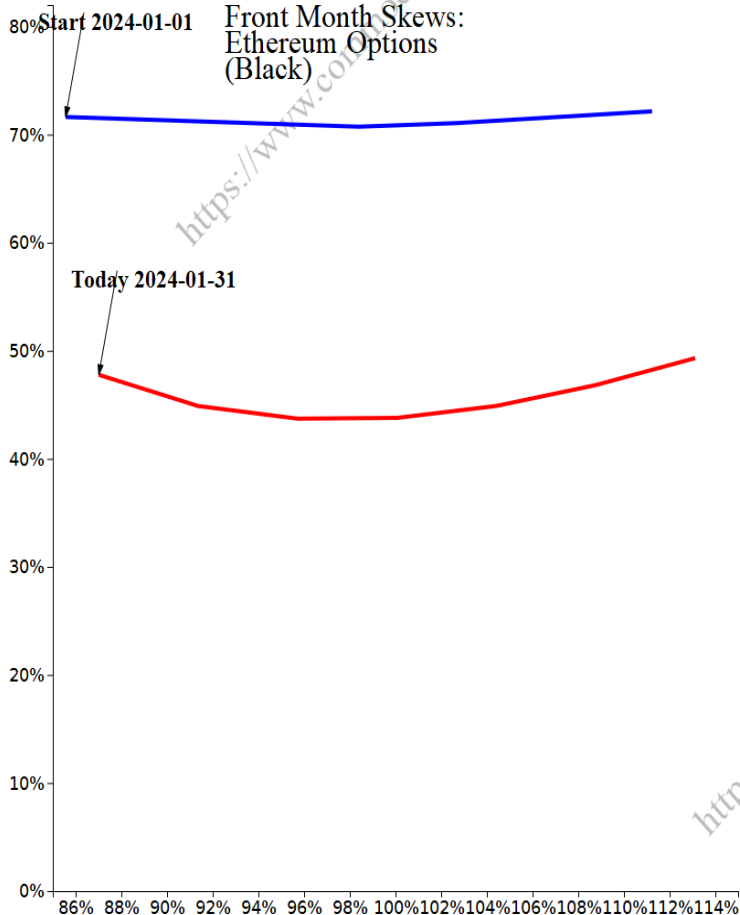
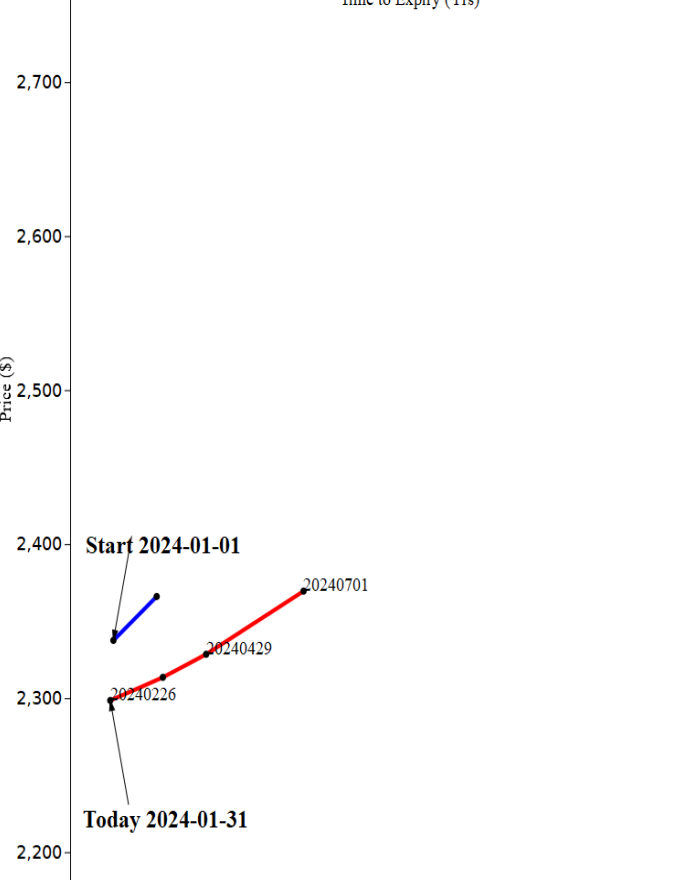
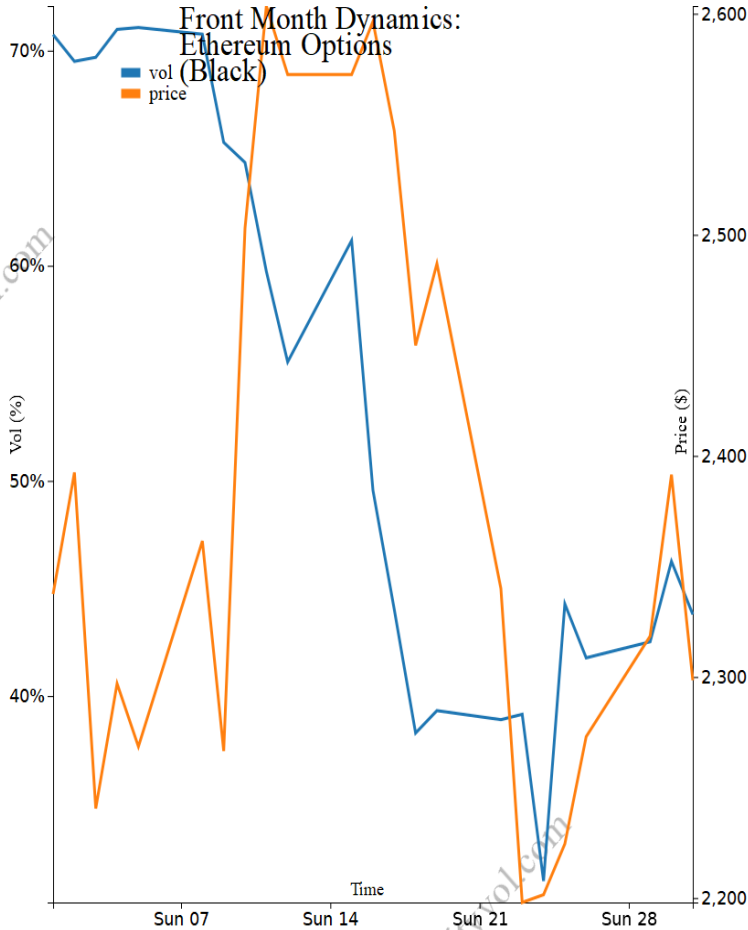
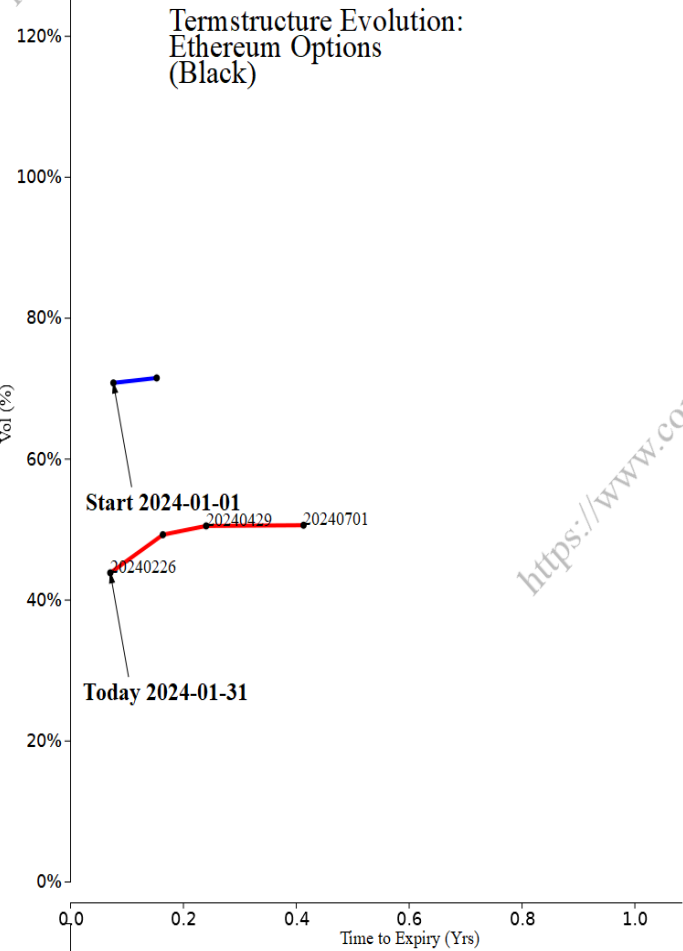




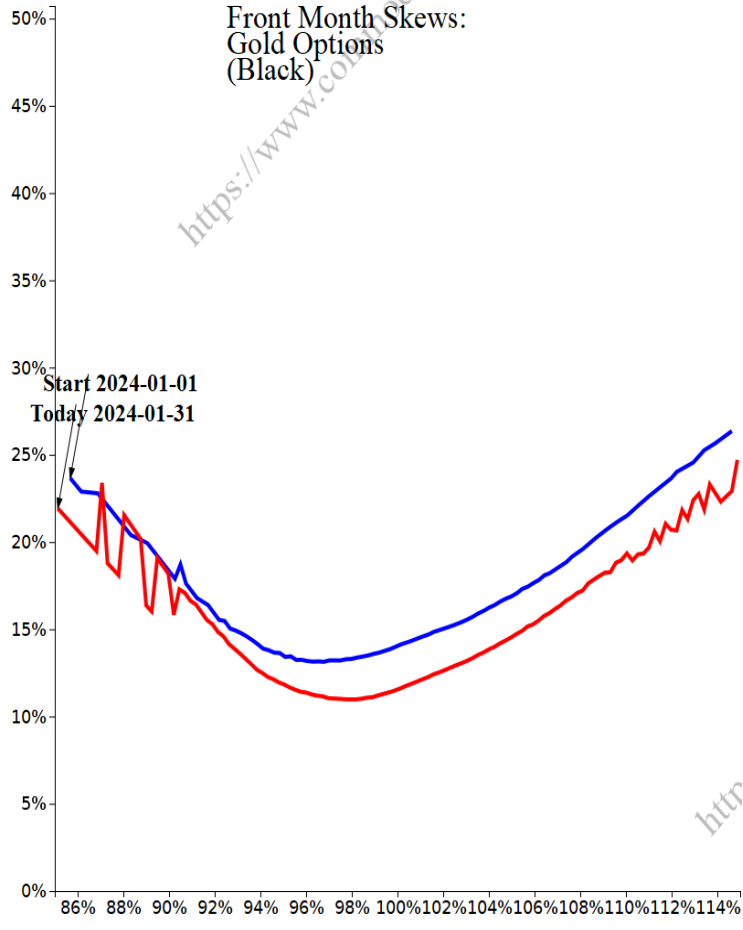
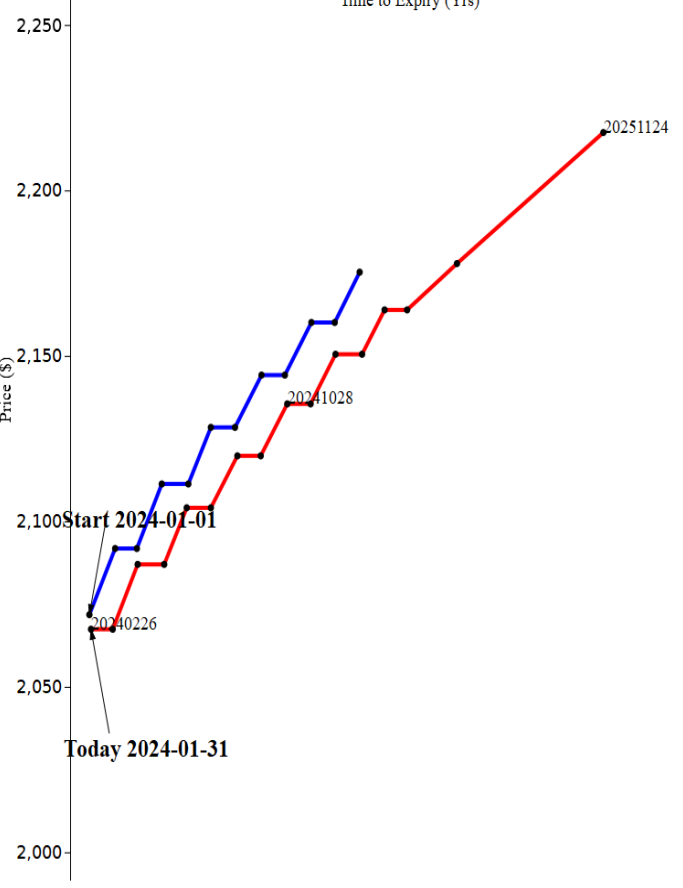
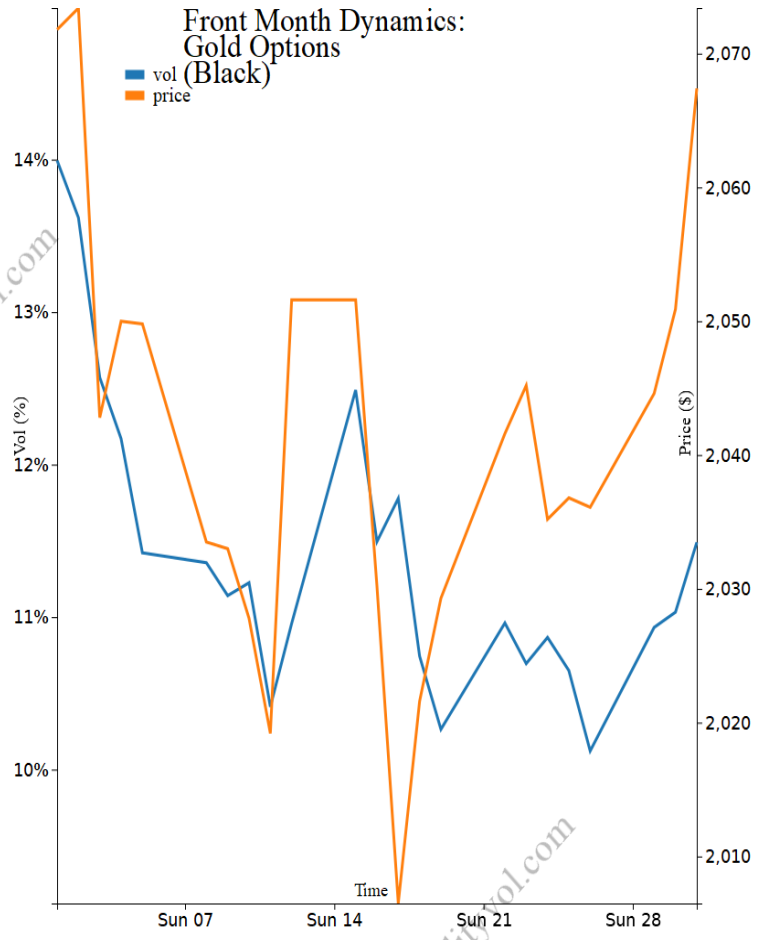
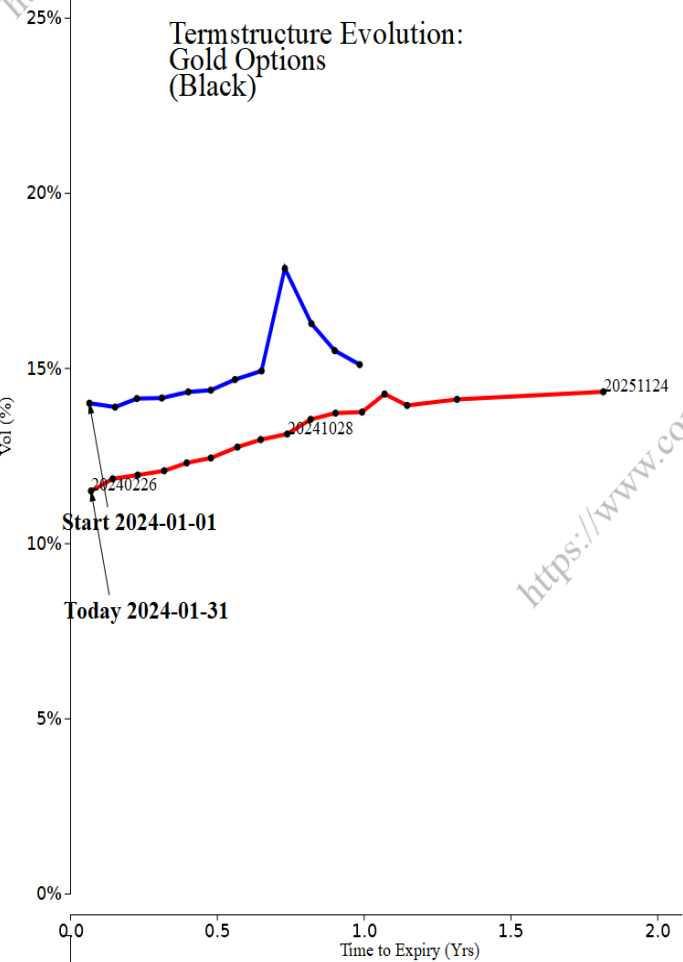


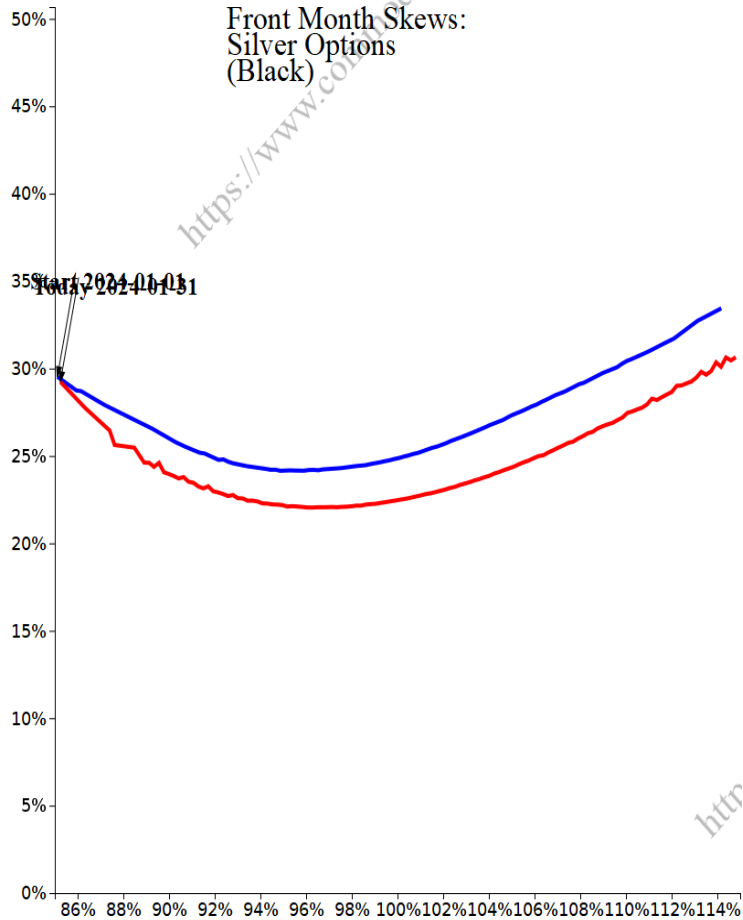
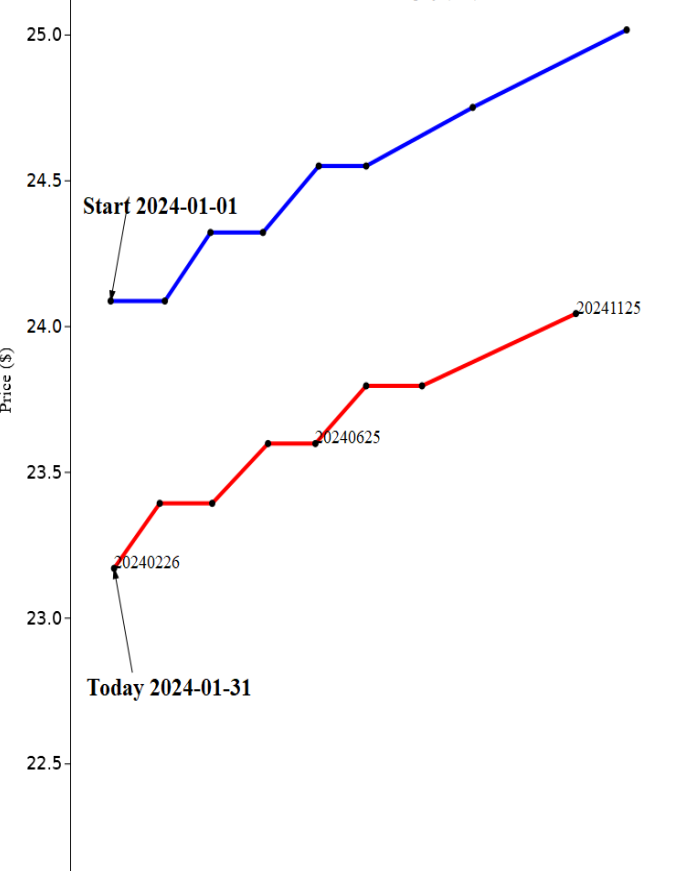
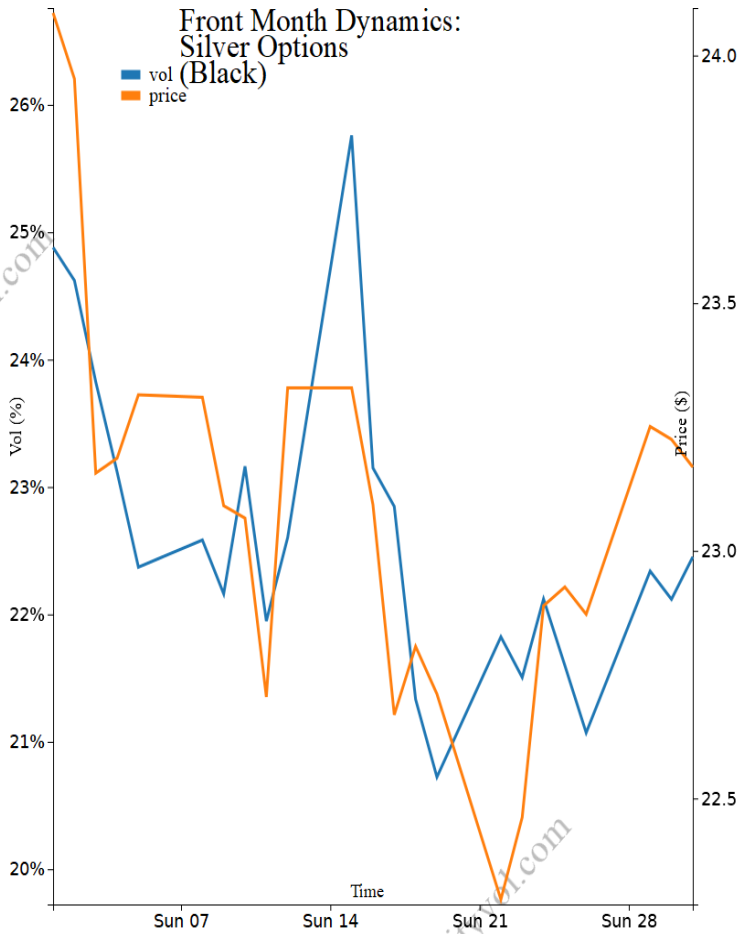
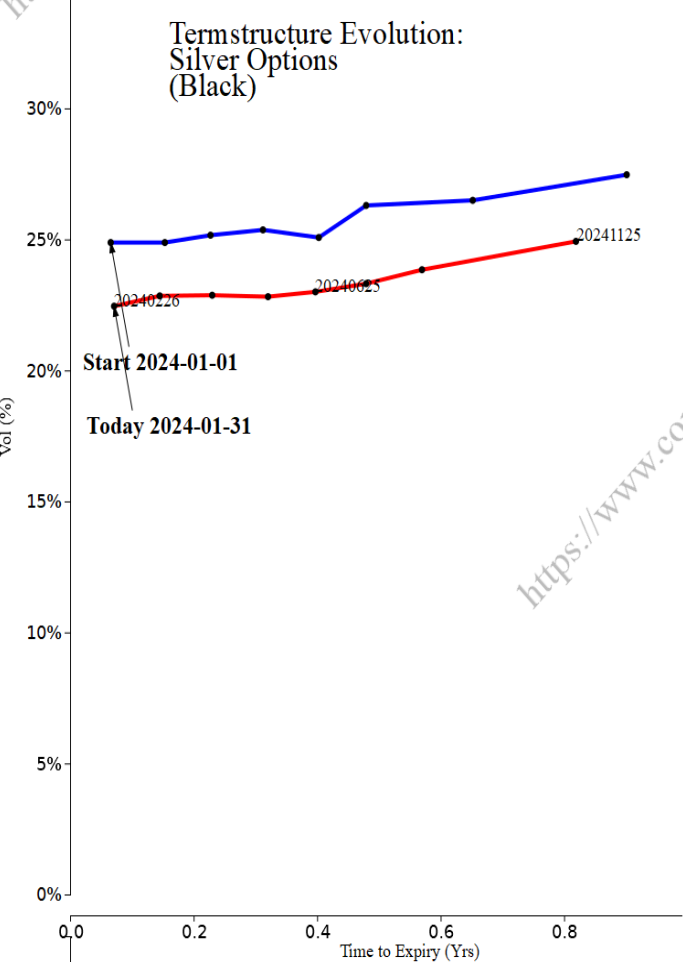


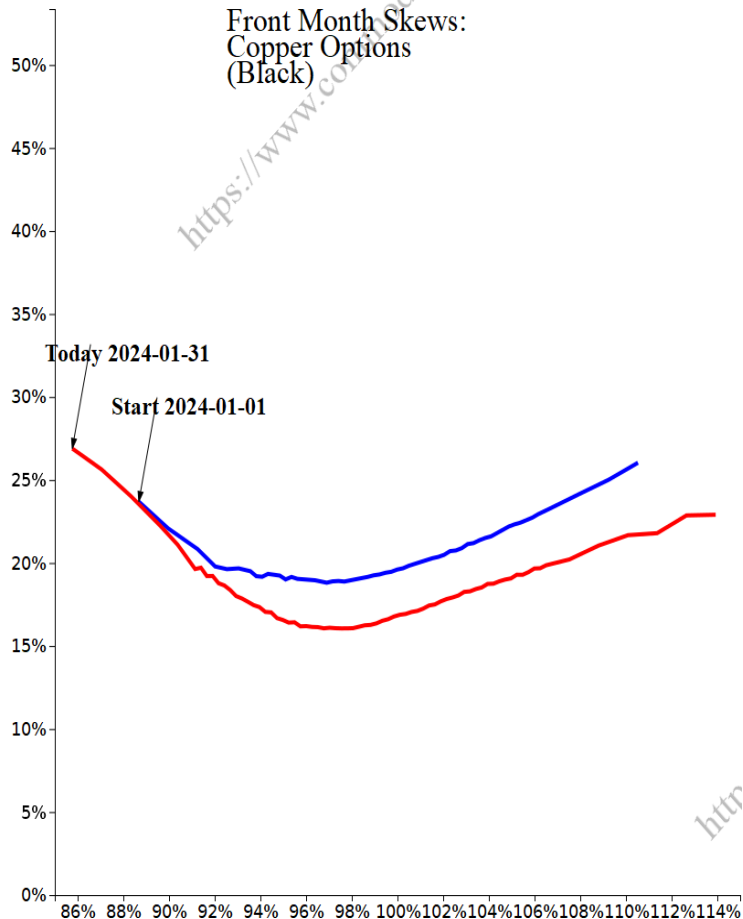
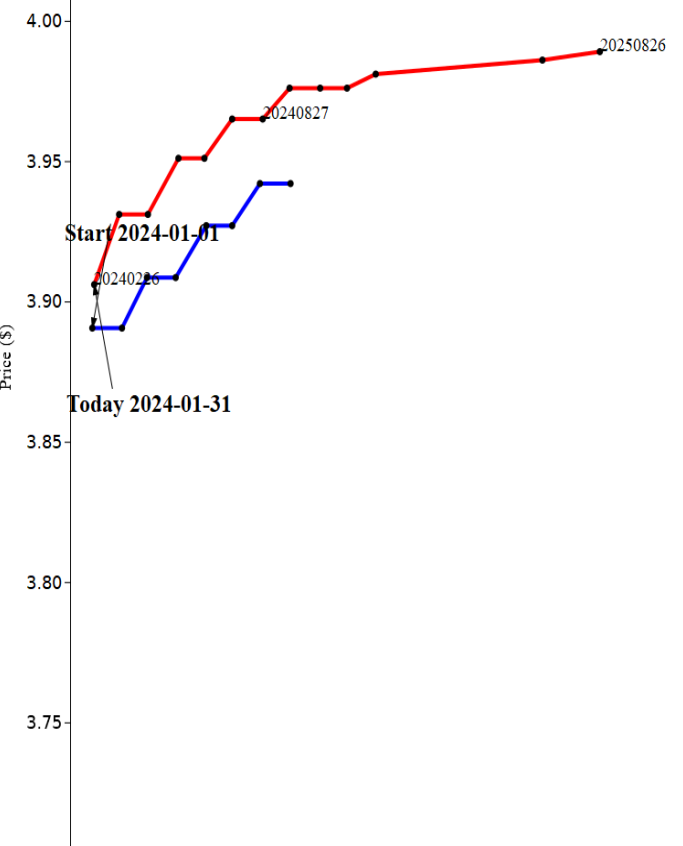
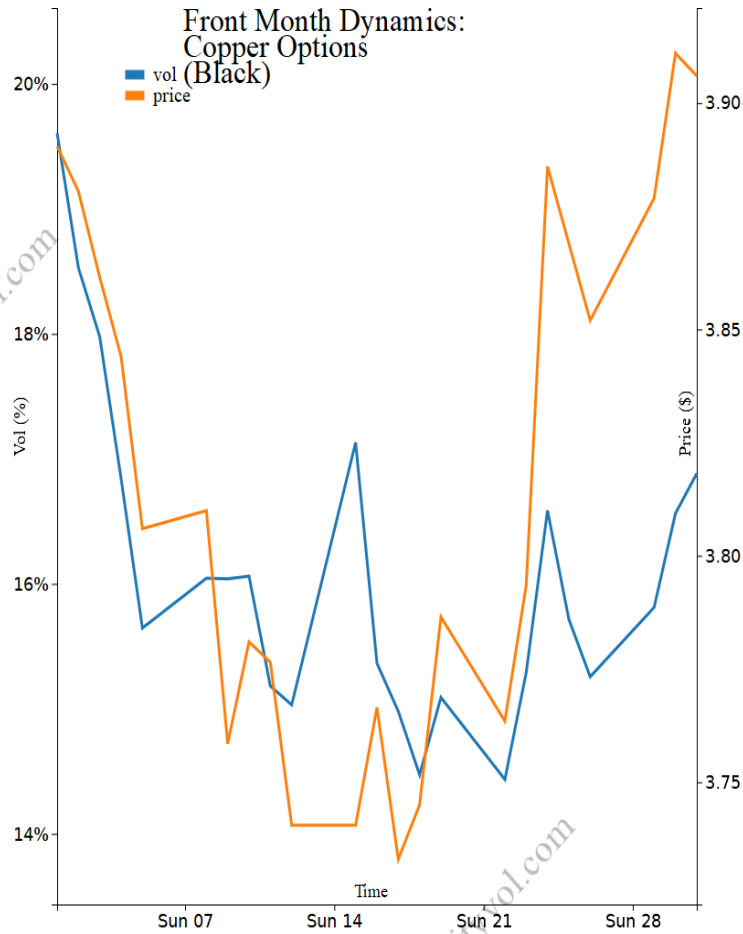
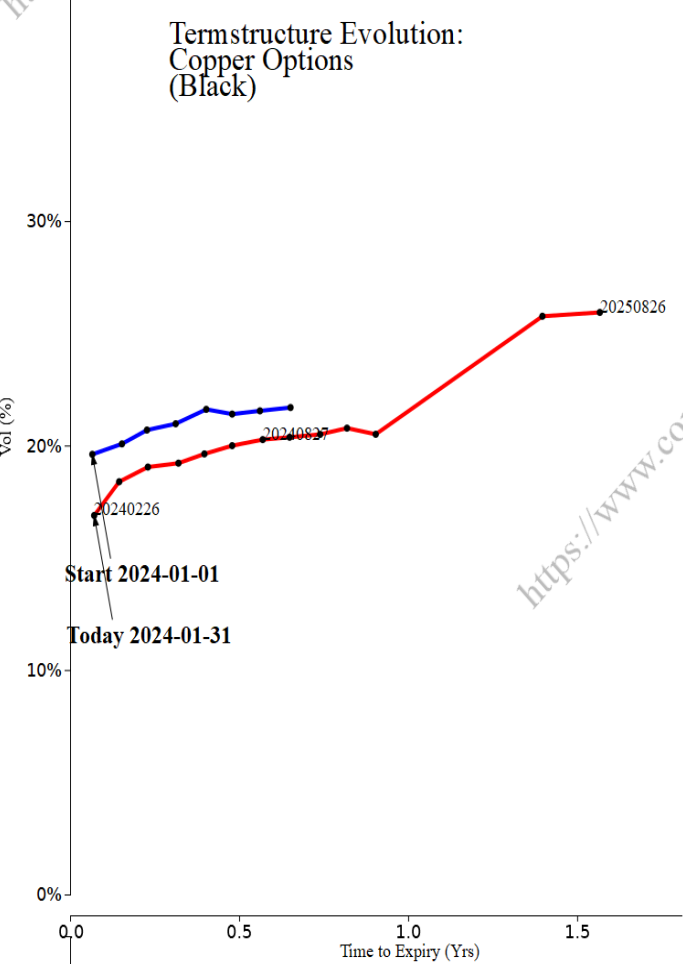


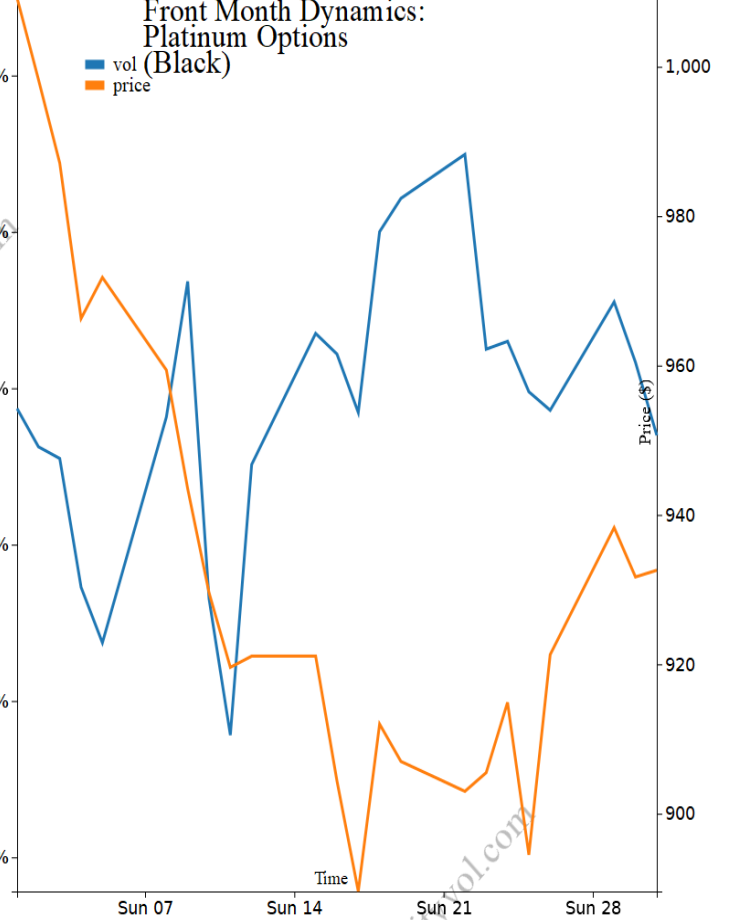
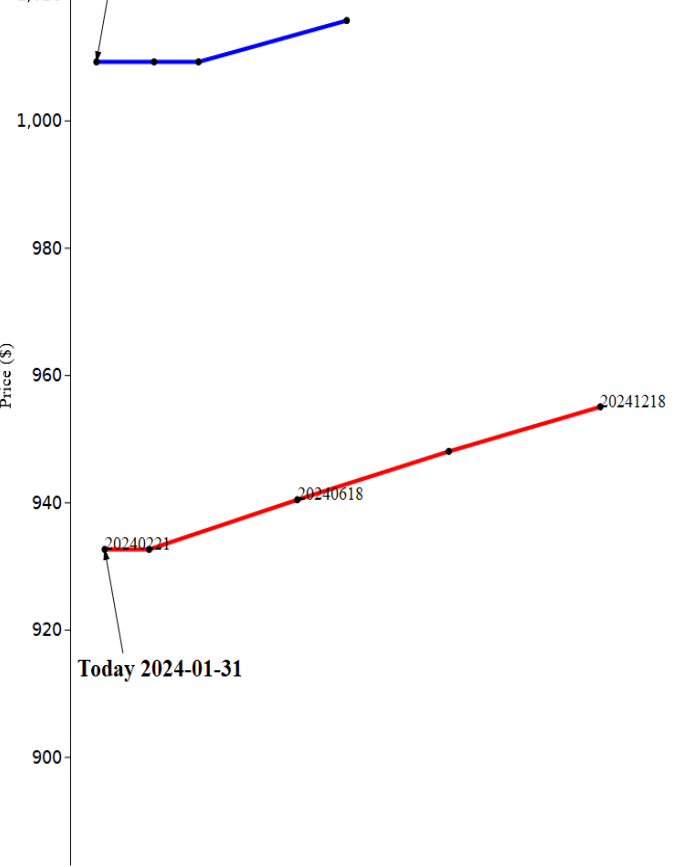
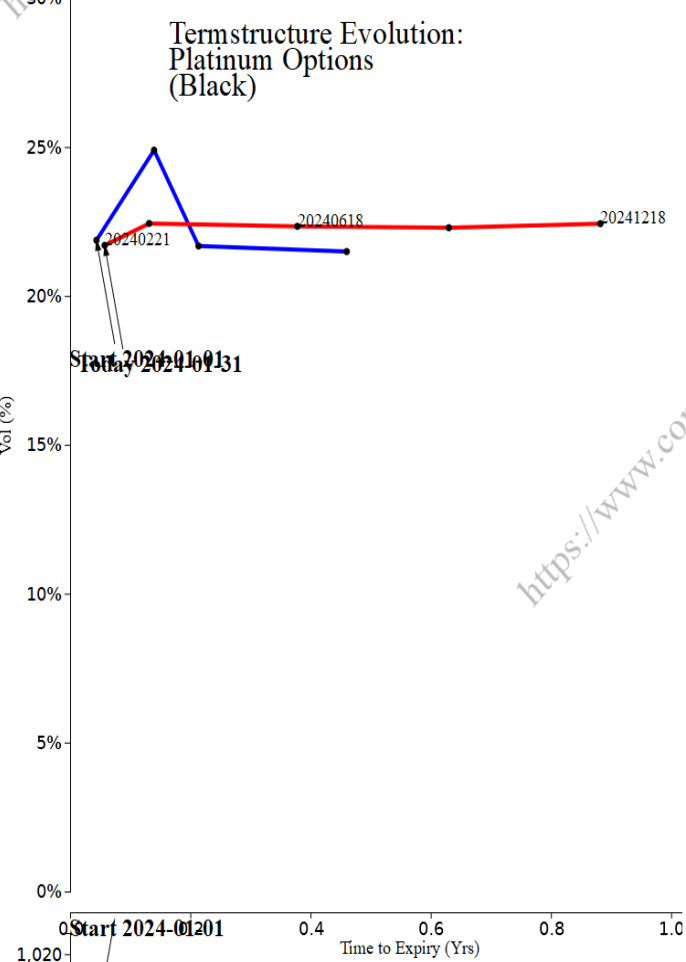


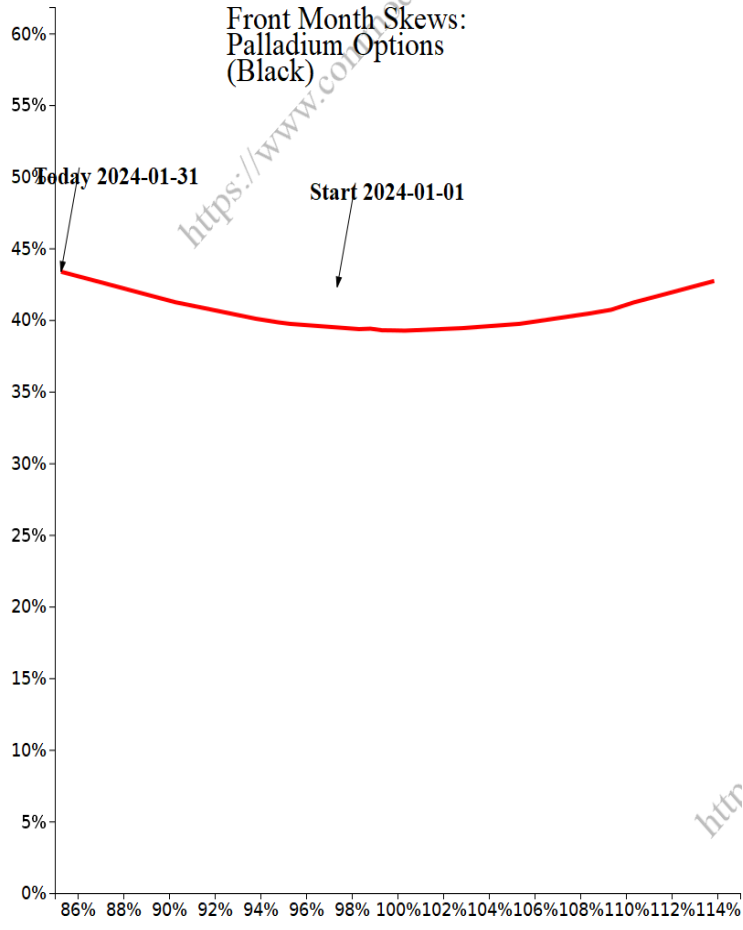
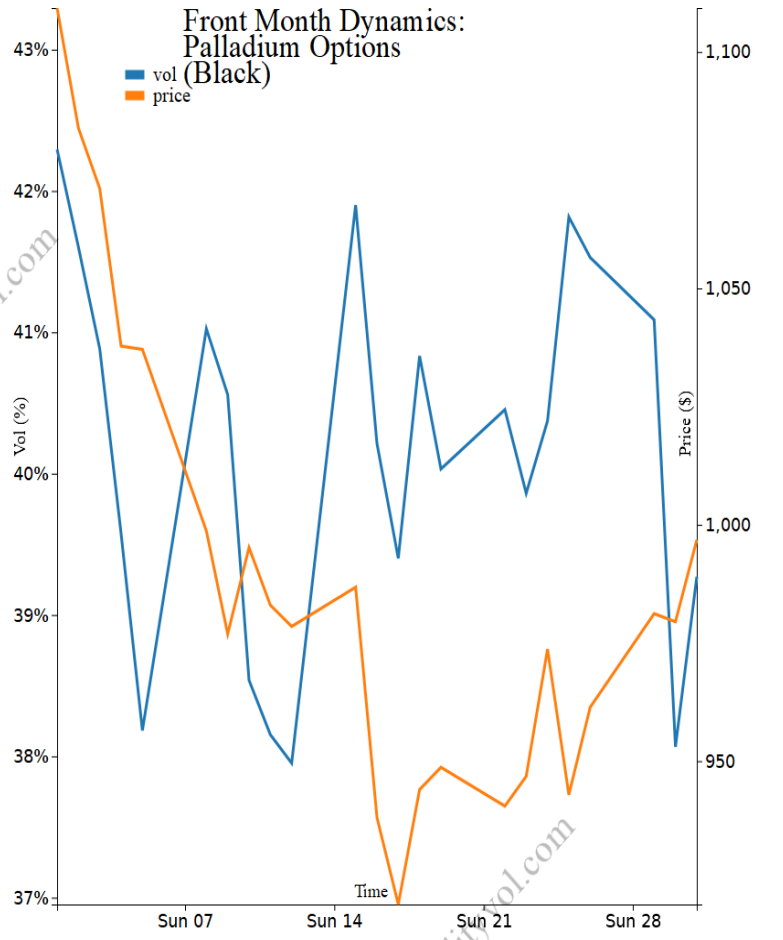
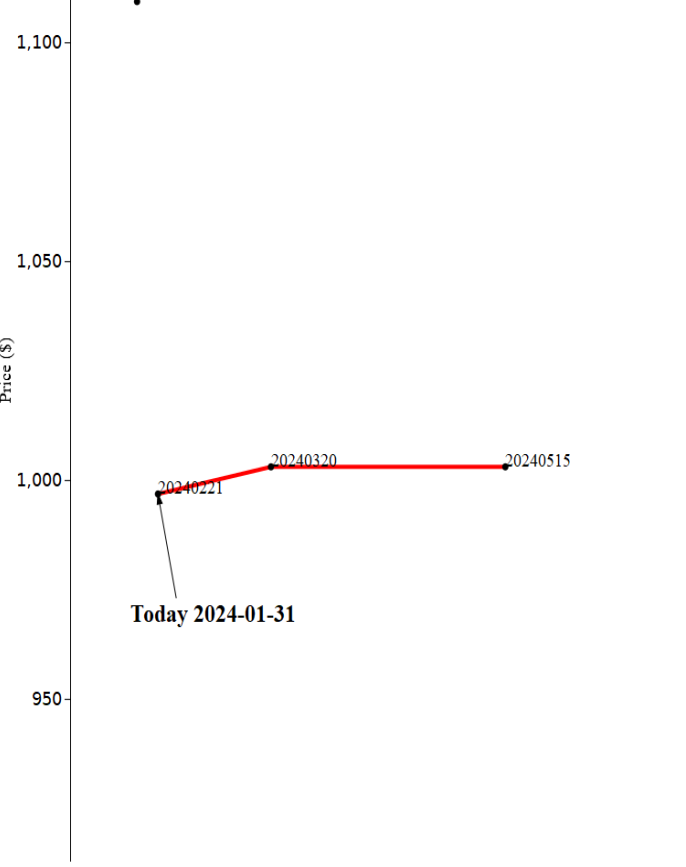
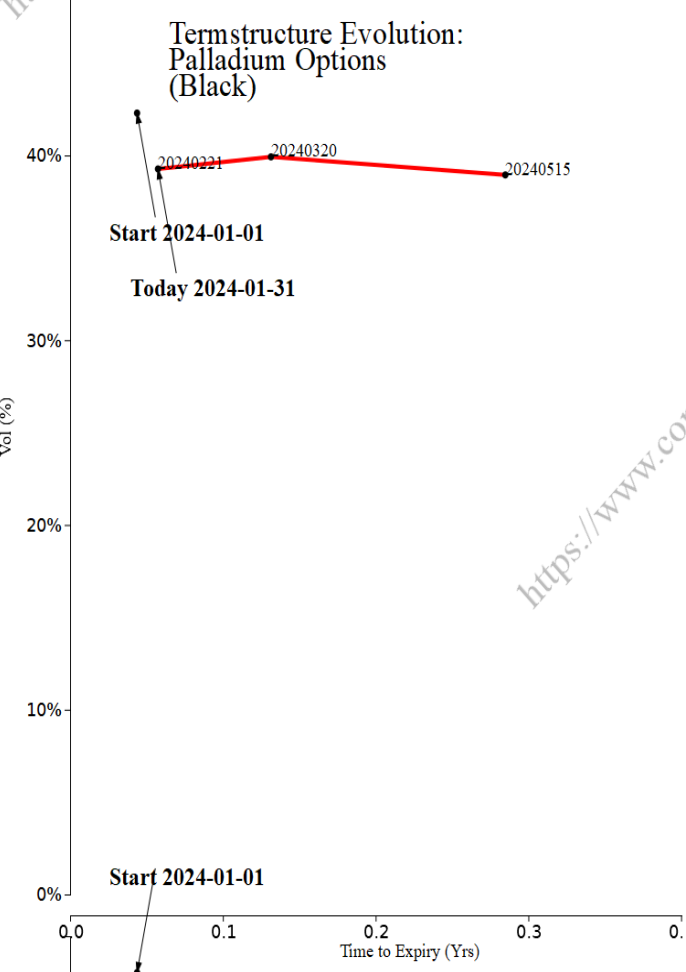
## **Metals**





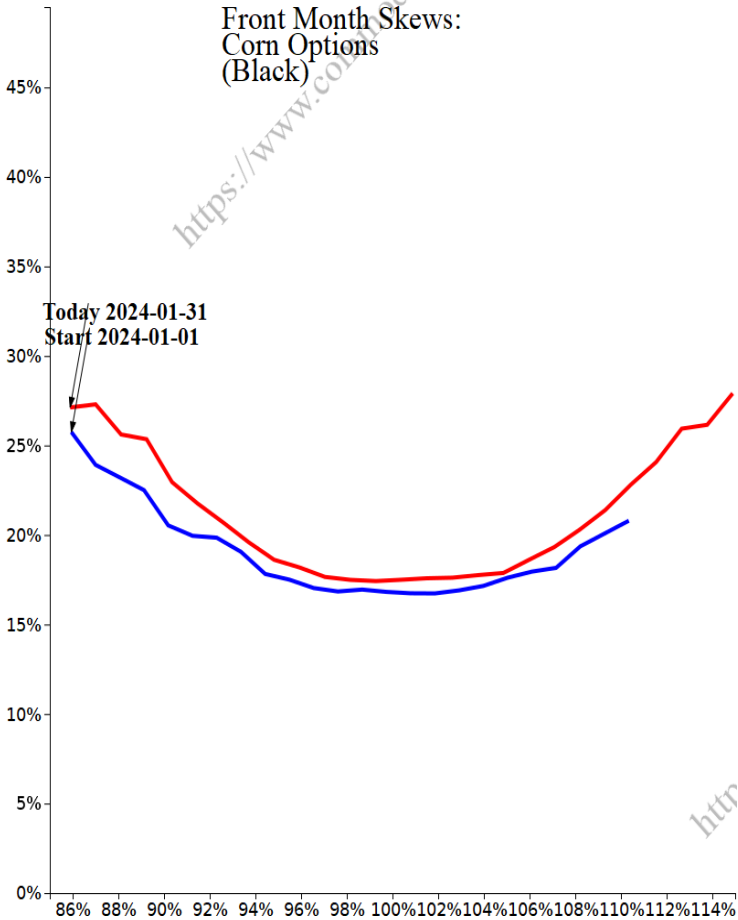
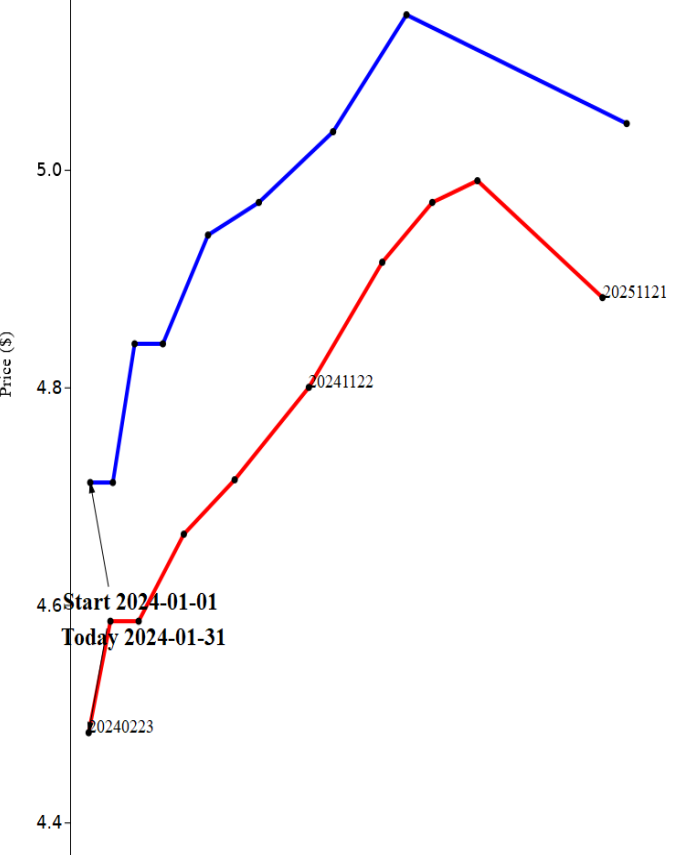
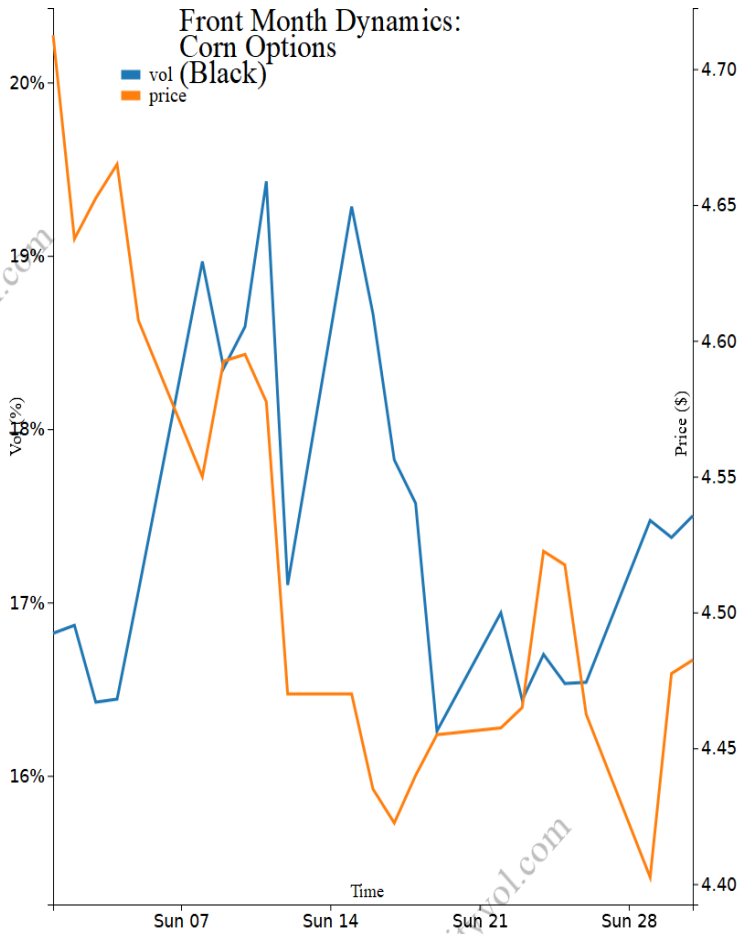
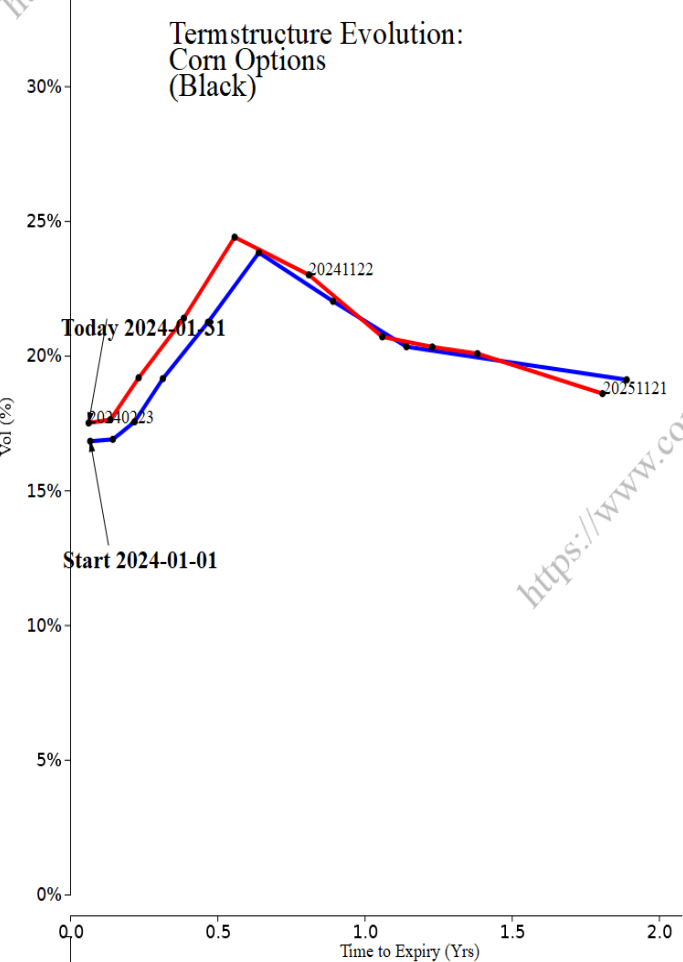


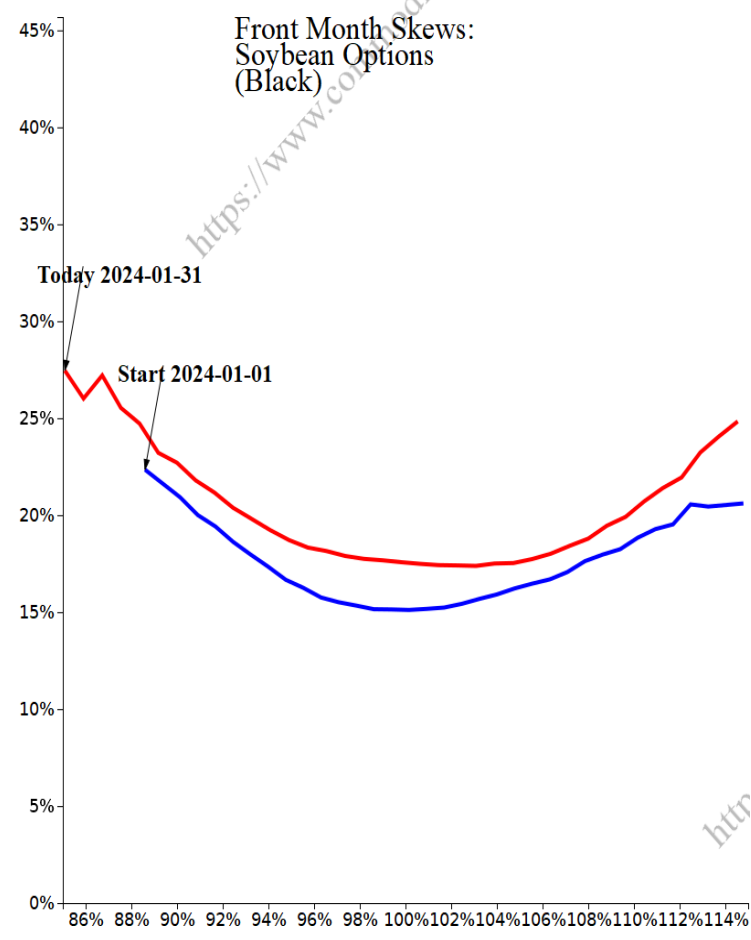
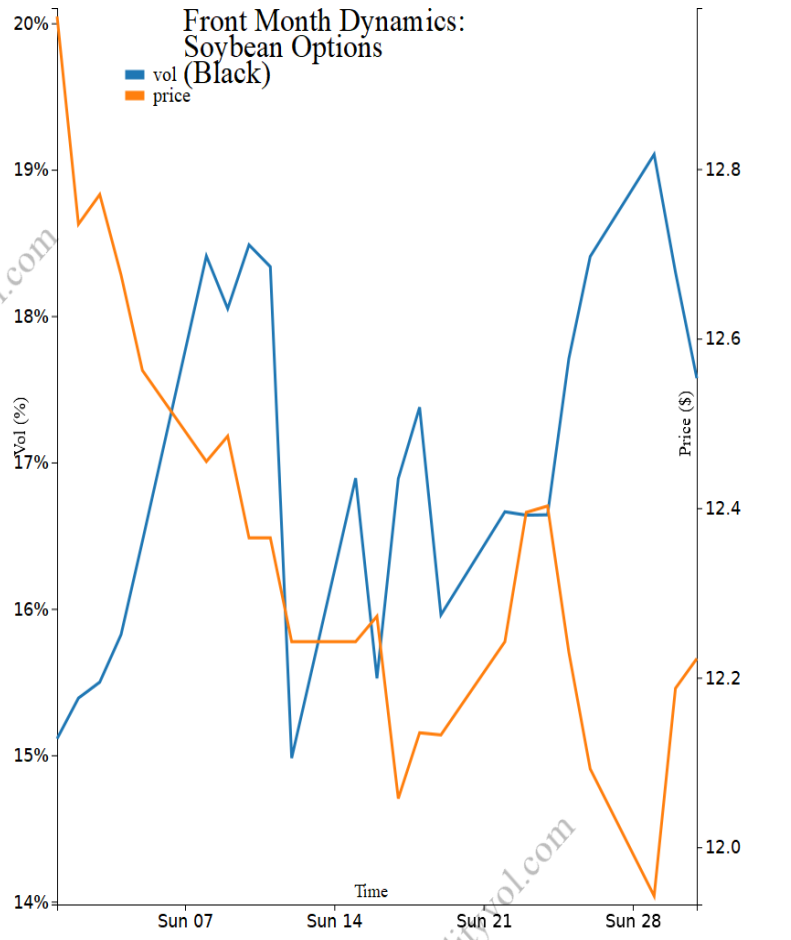
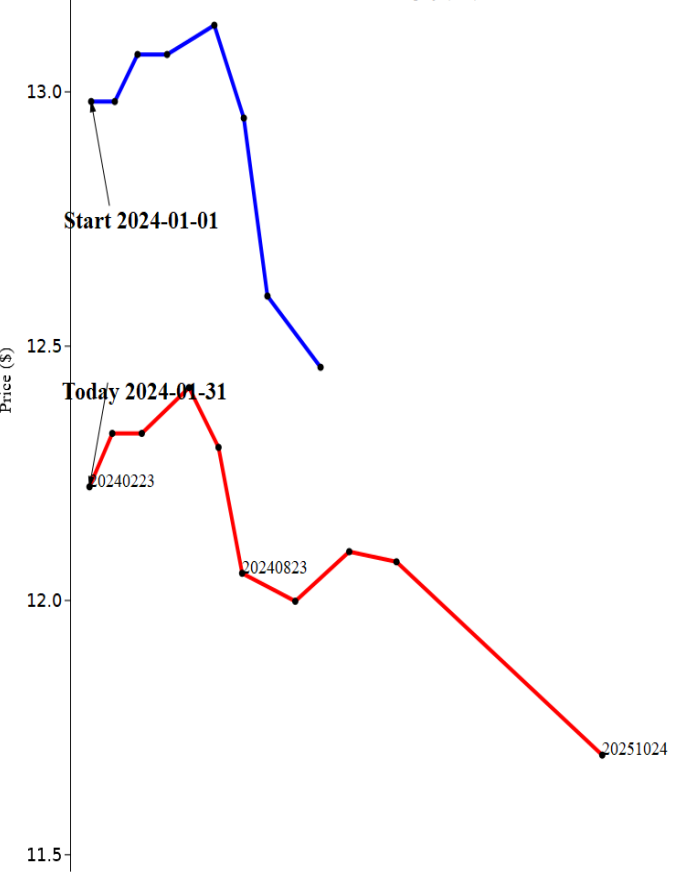
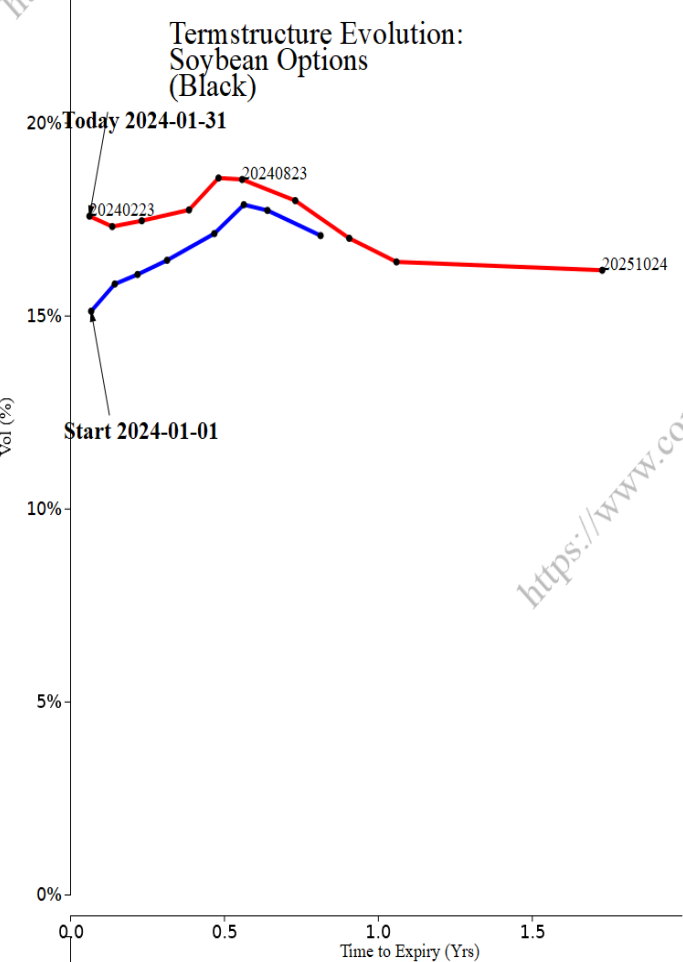


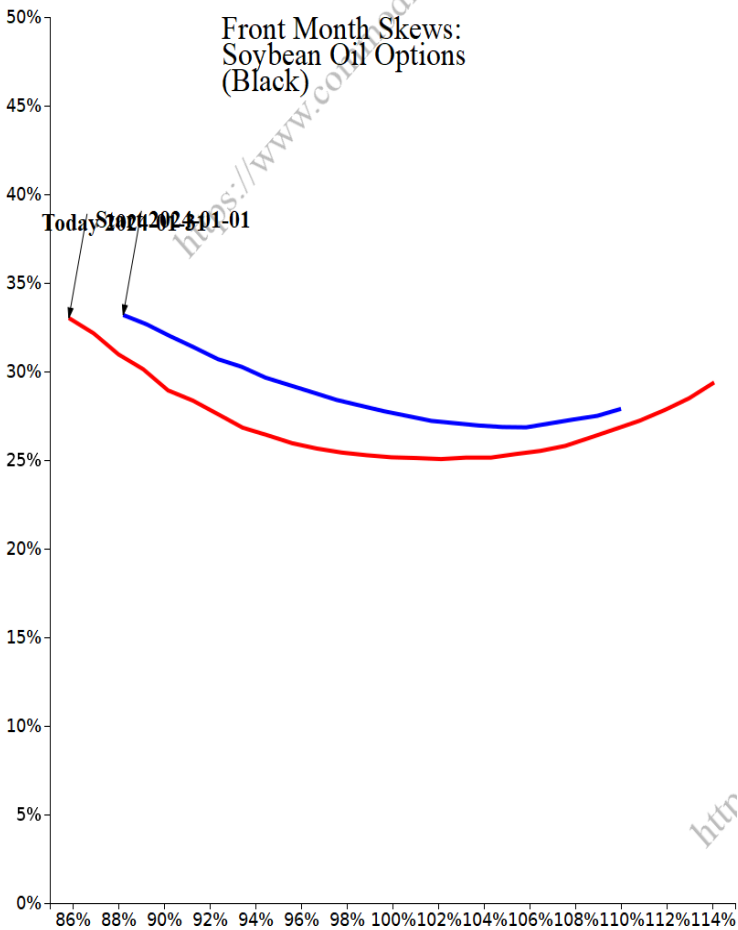
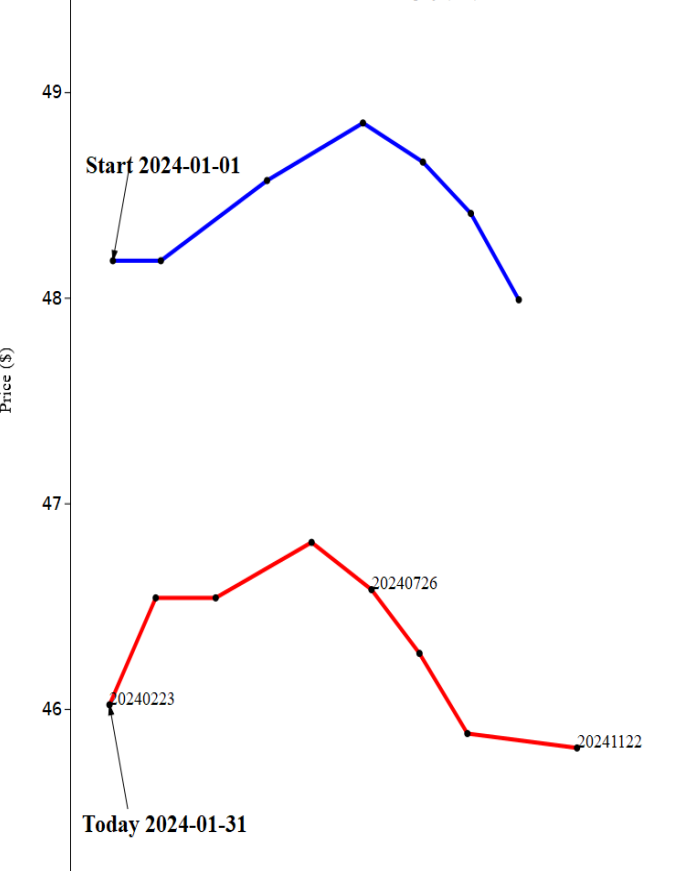
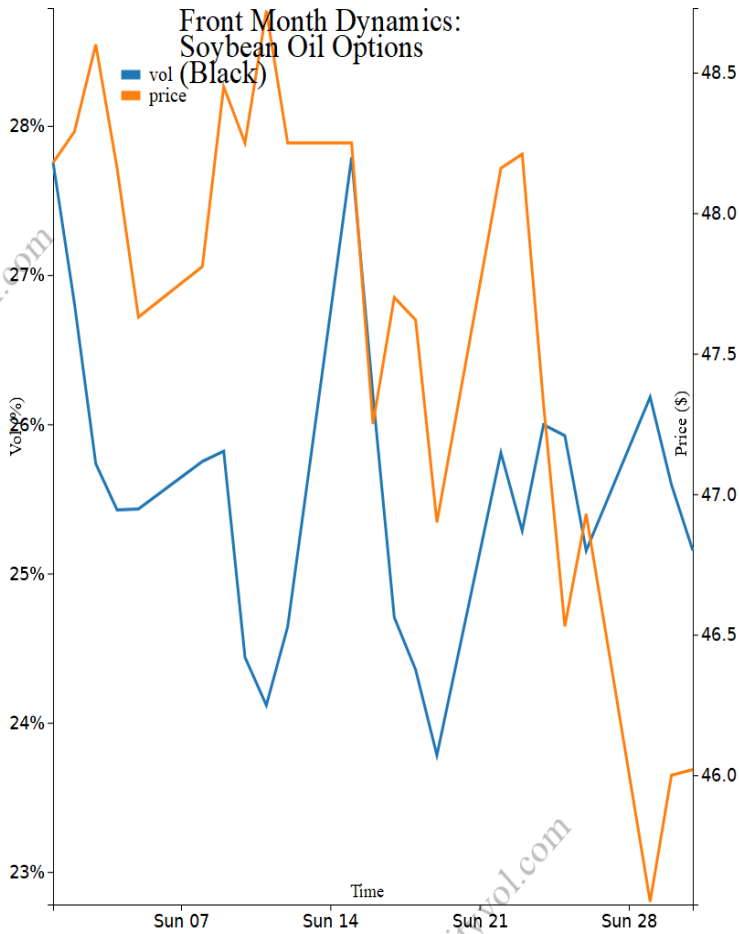
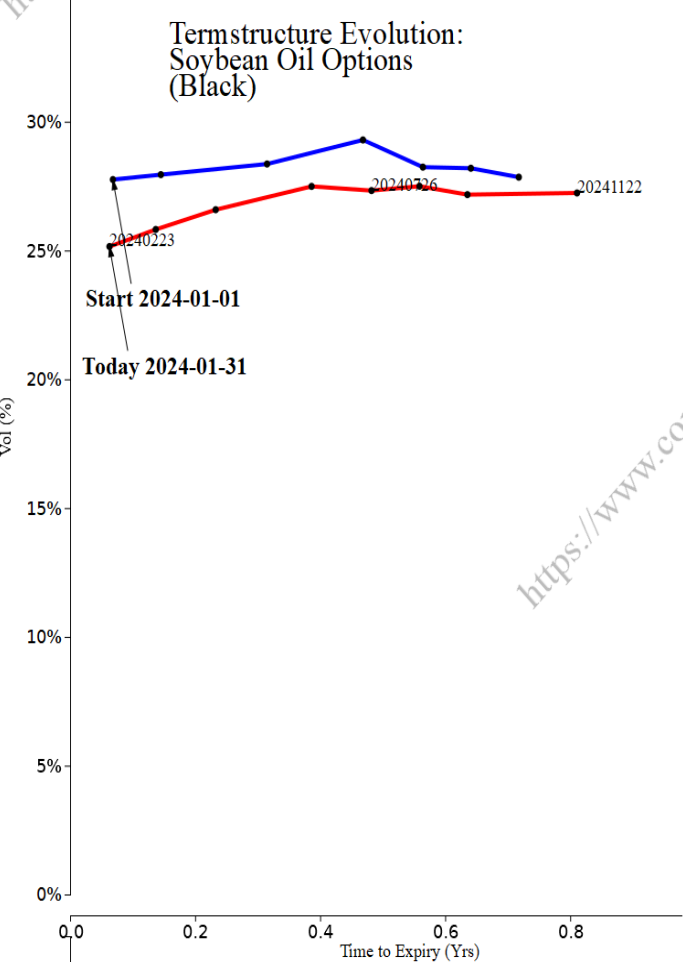


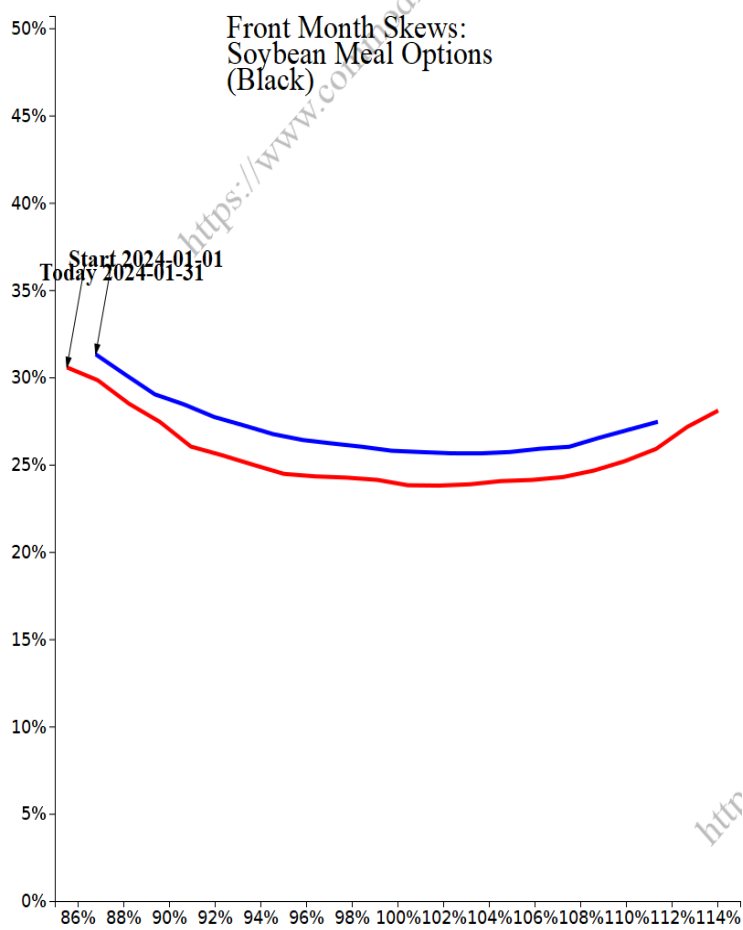
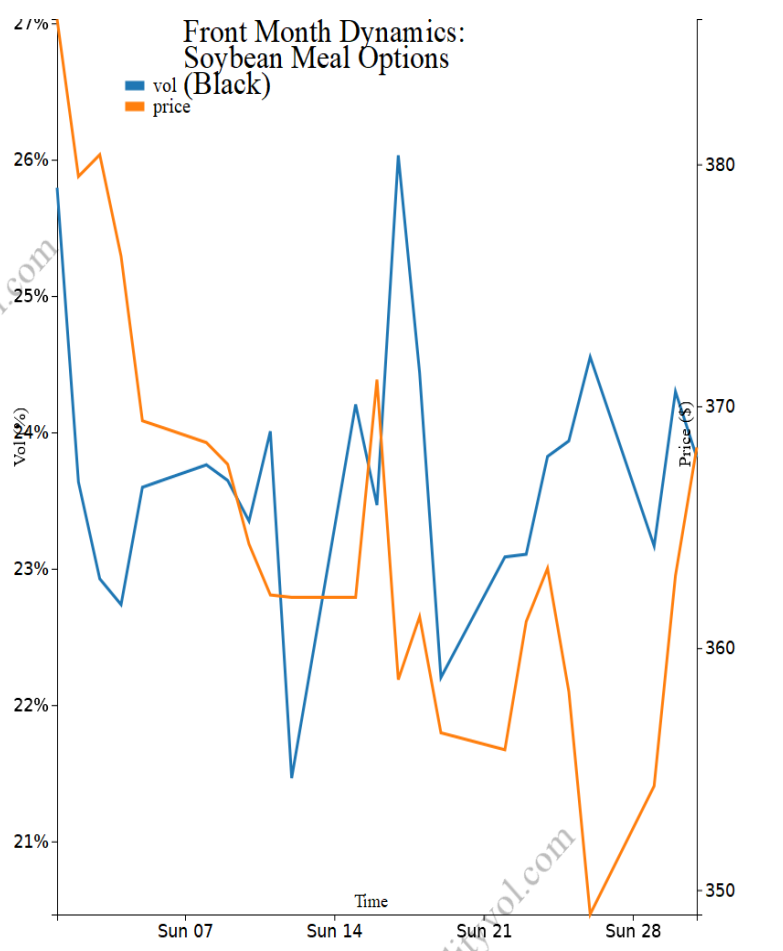
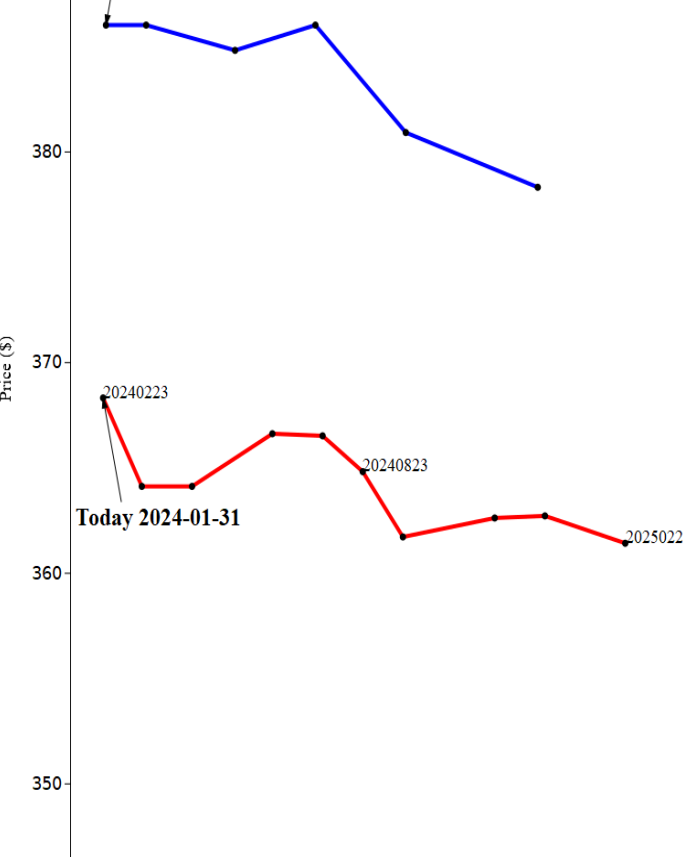
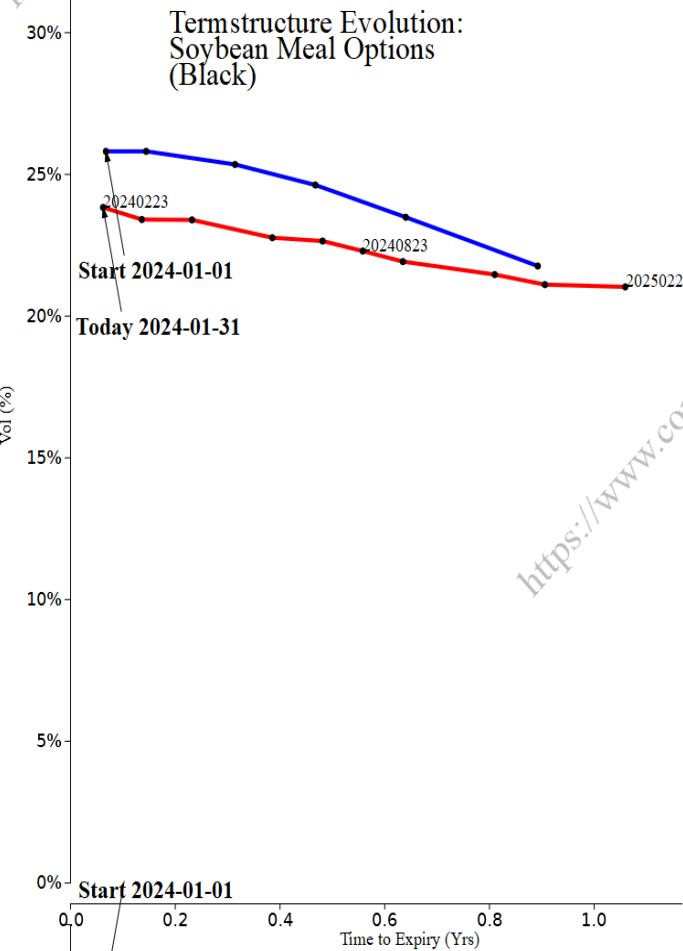
**Ags: Grains, Oilseeds, and so forth**

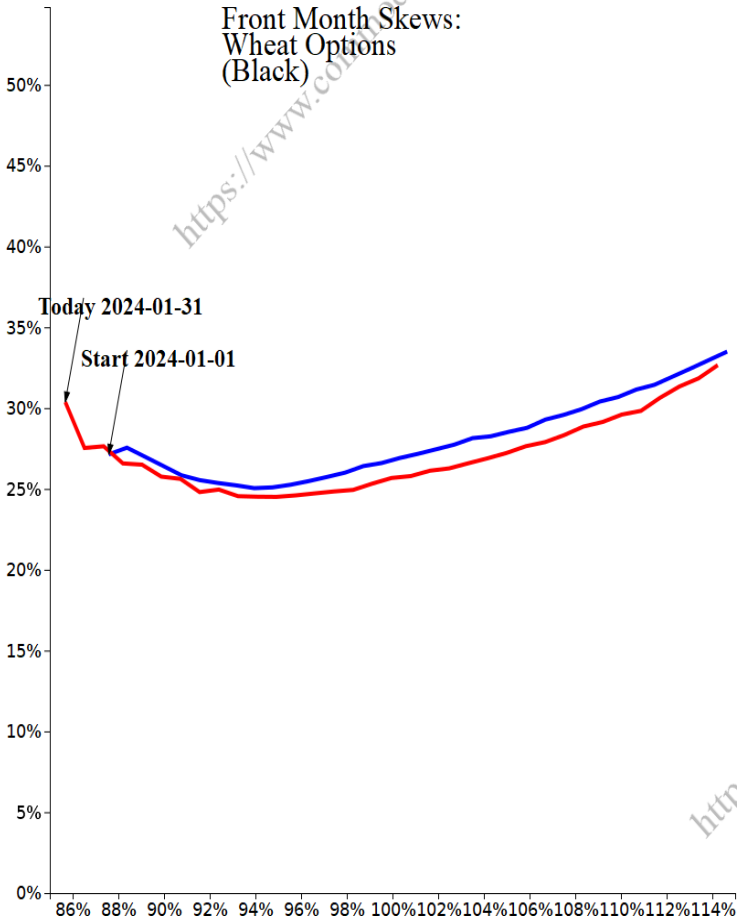
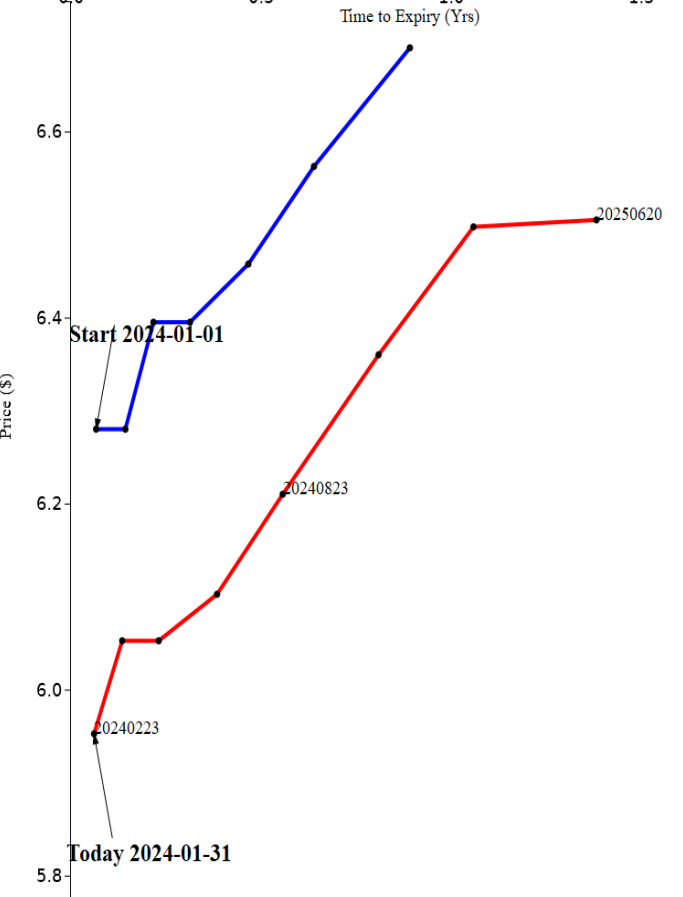
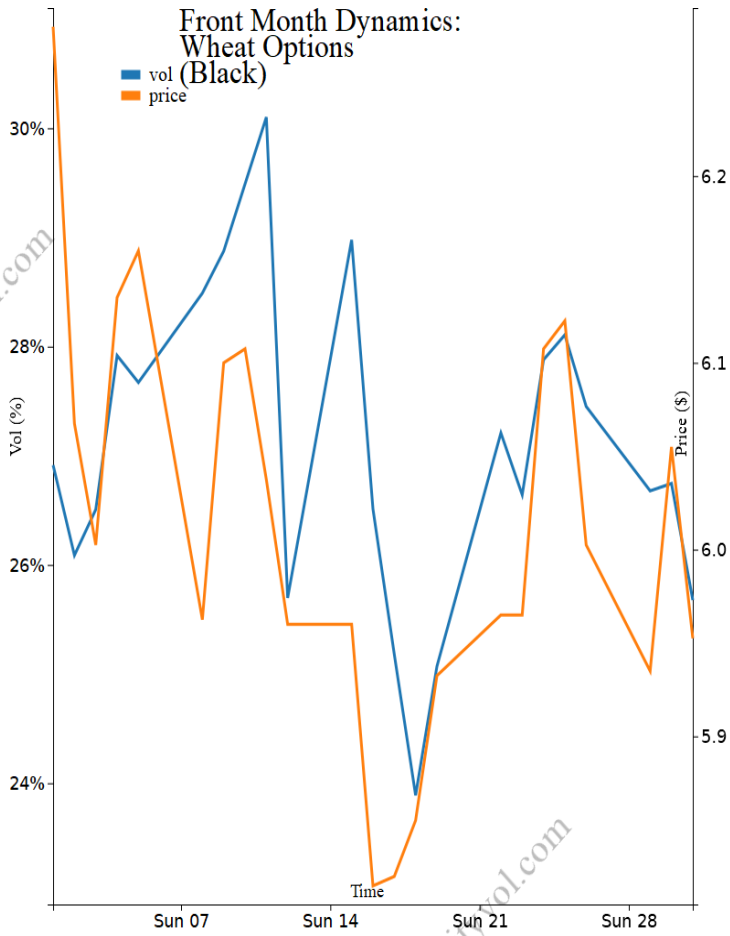
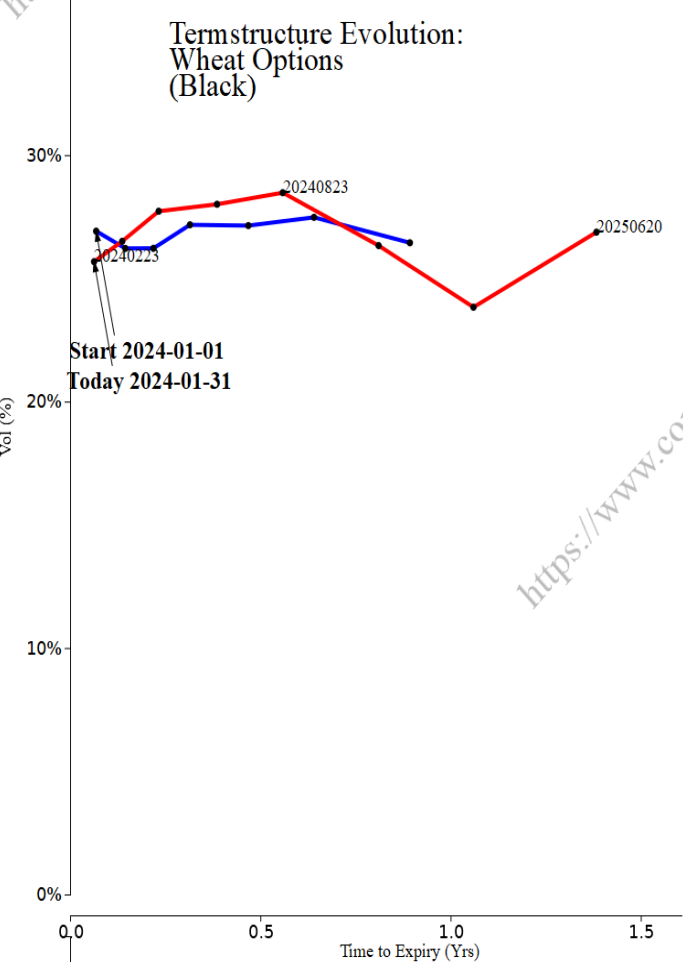


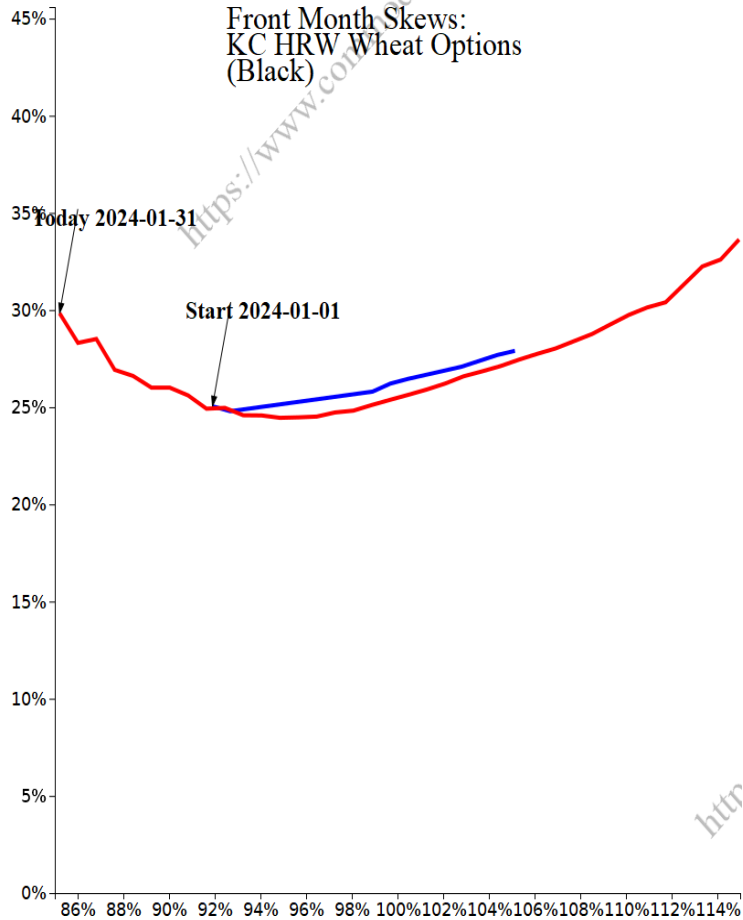
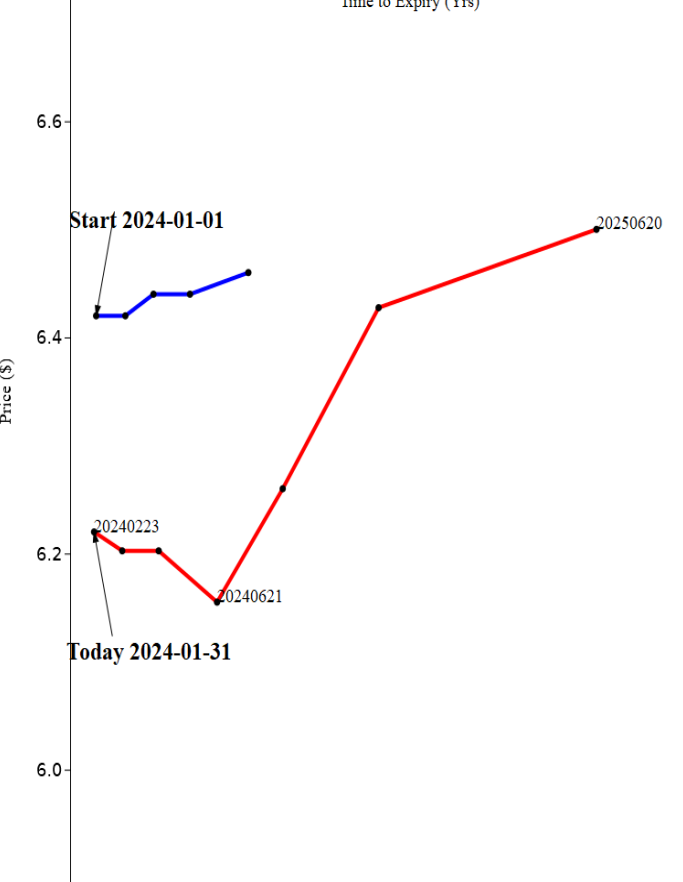
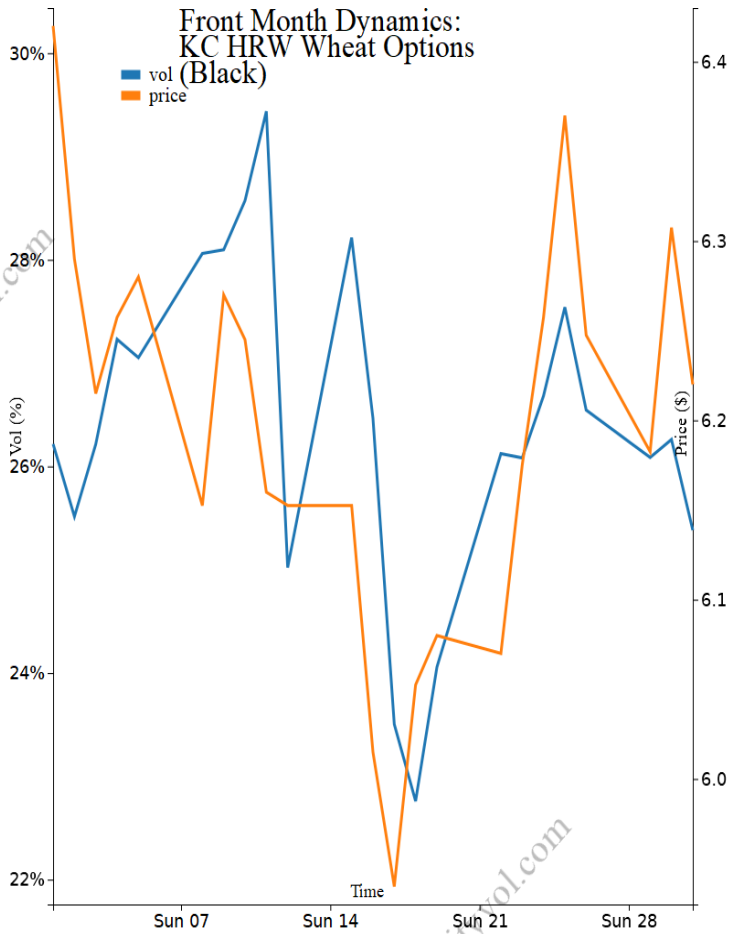
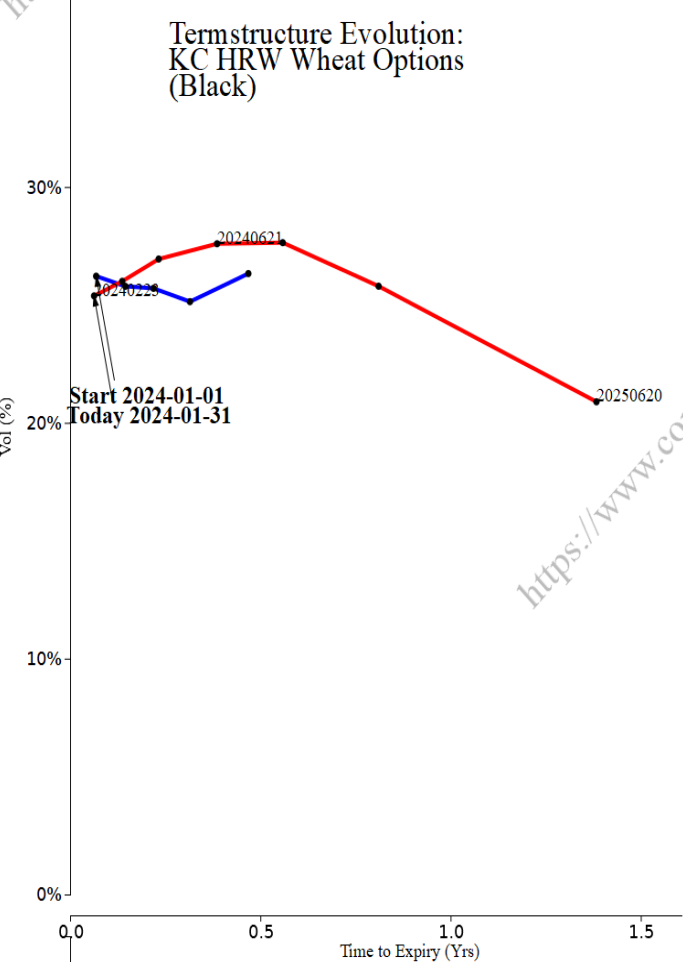


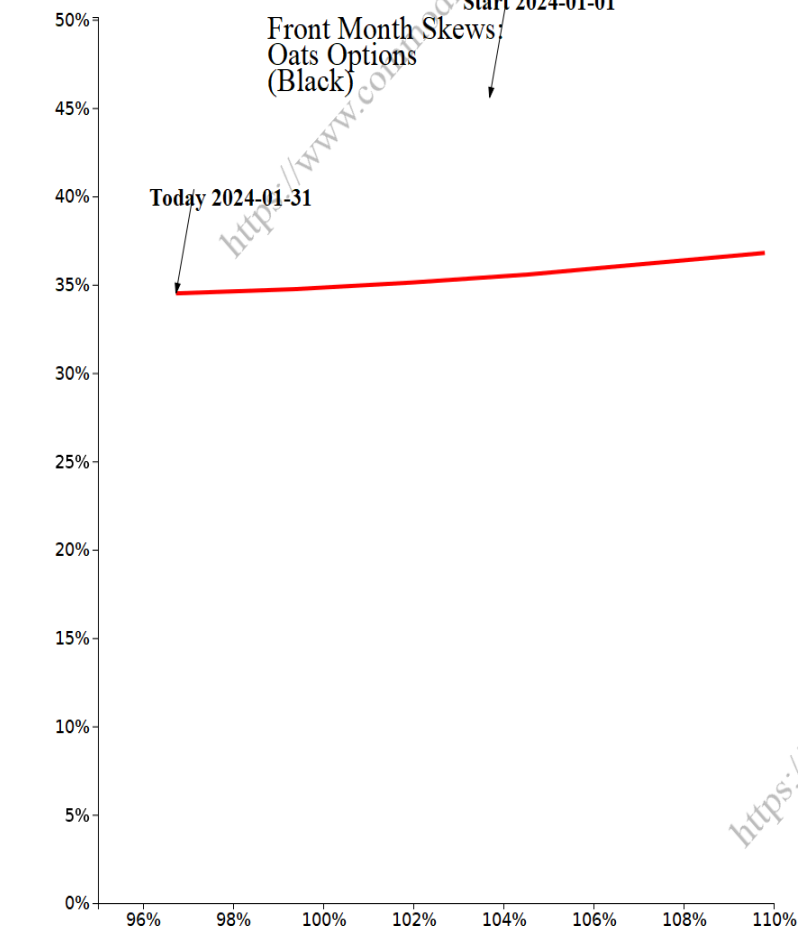
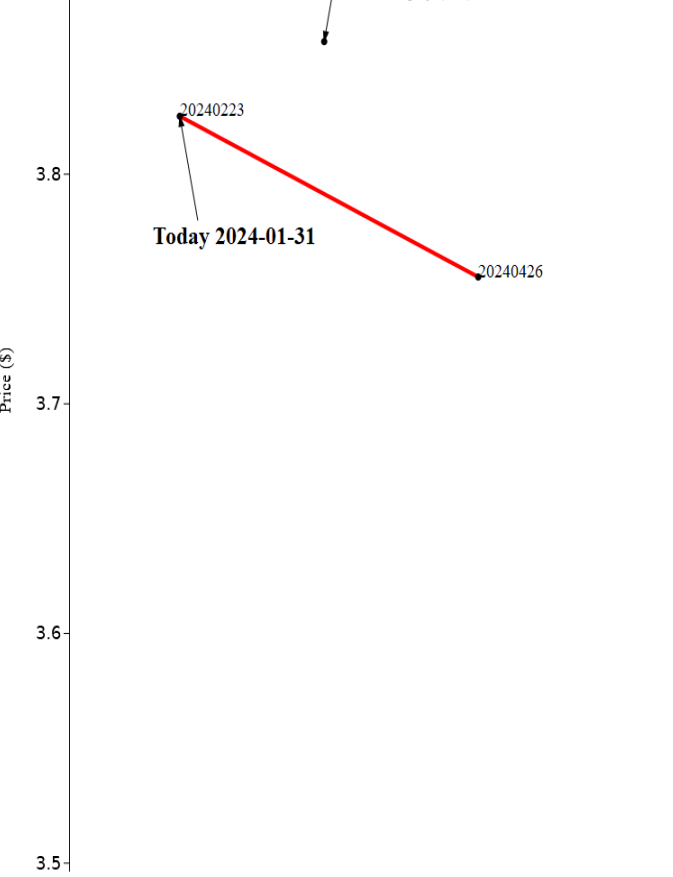
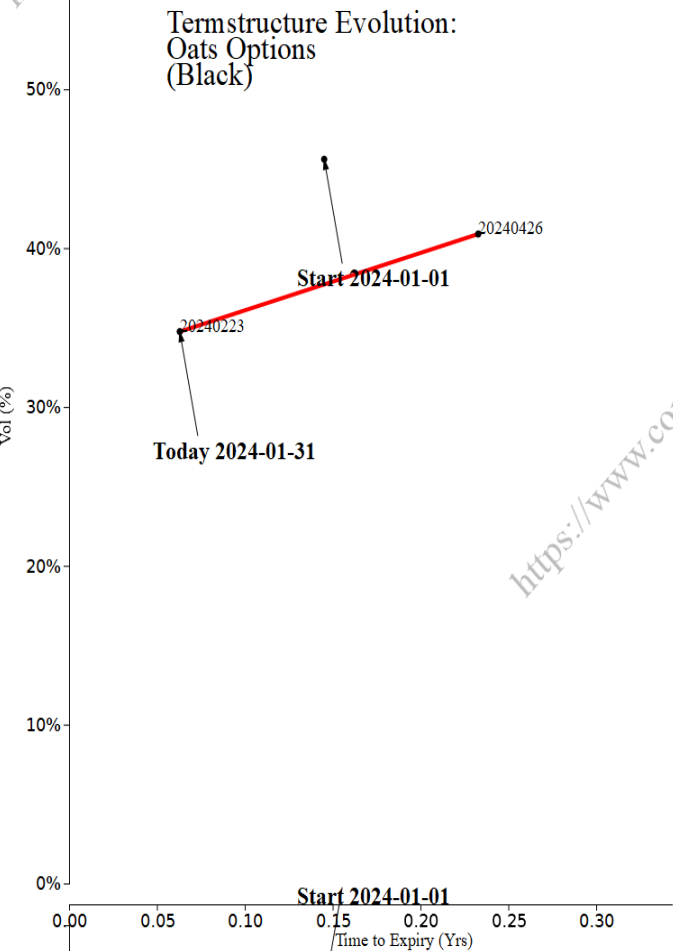


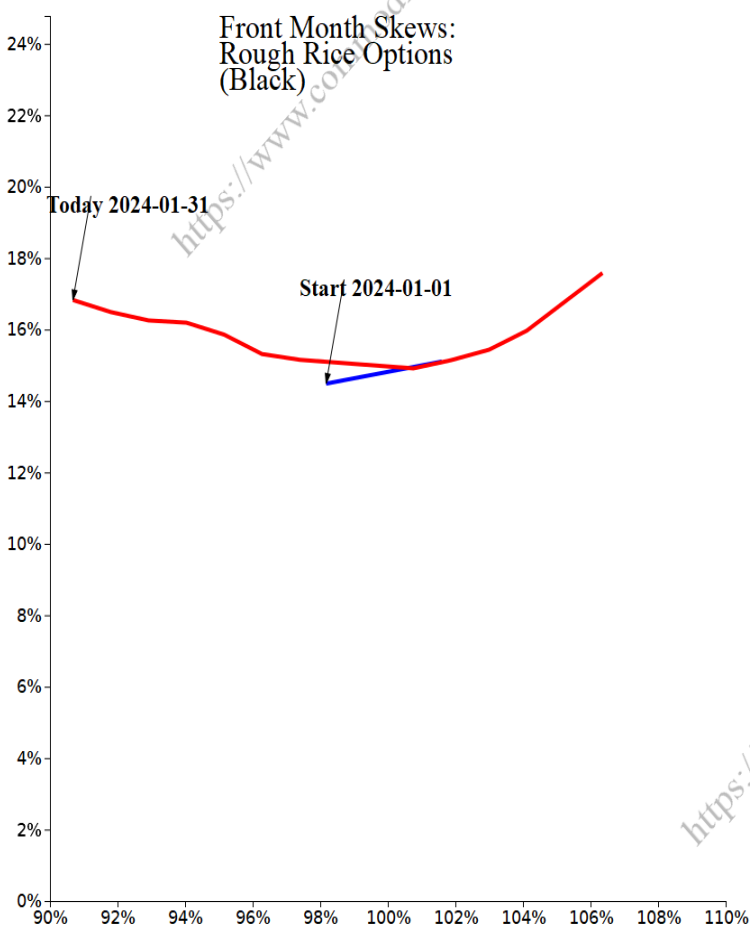
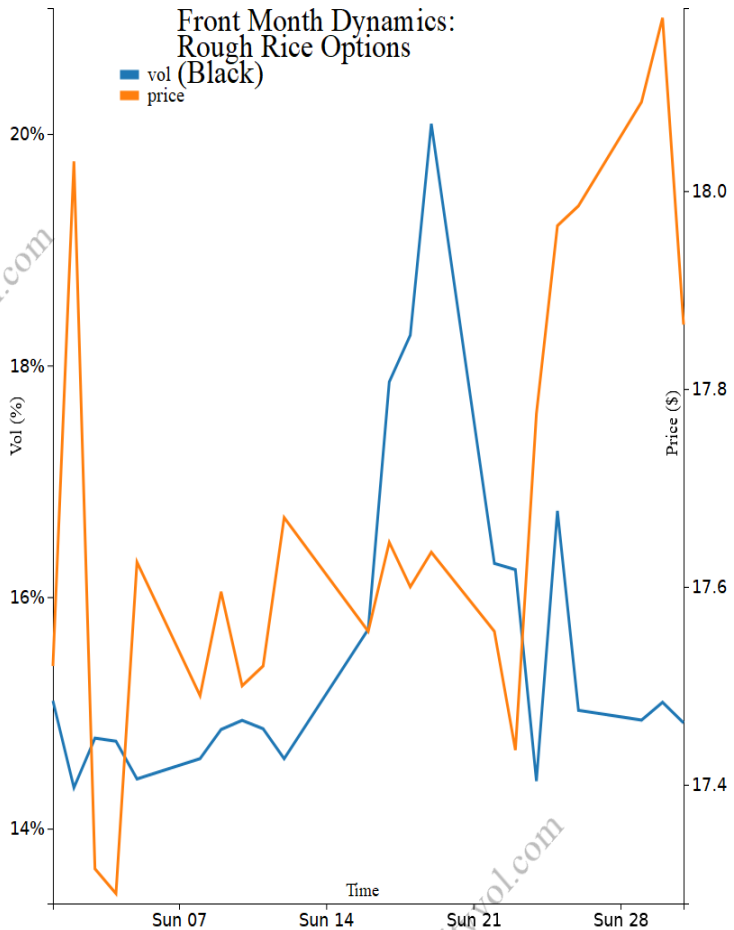
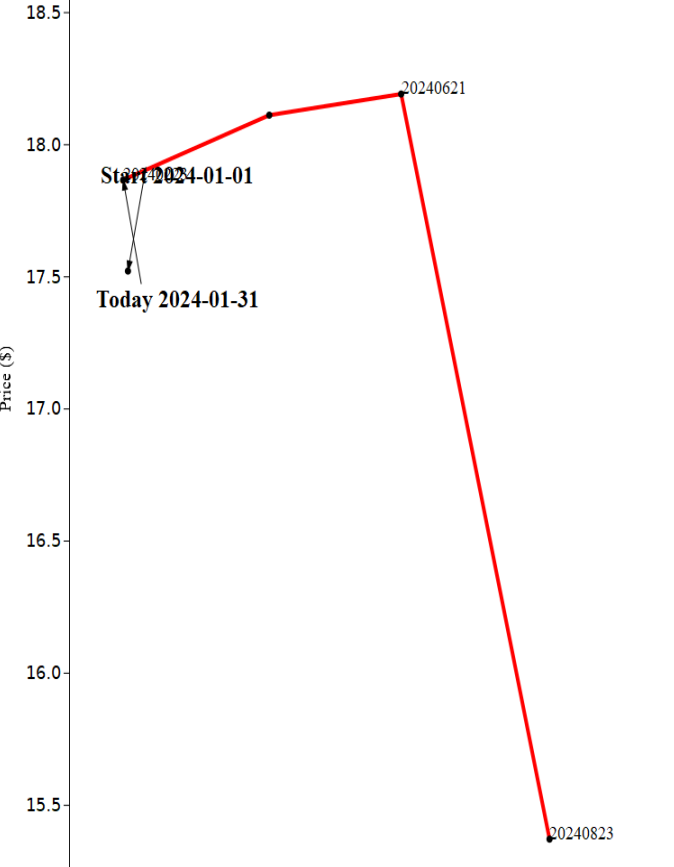
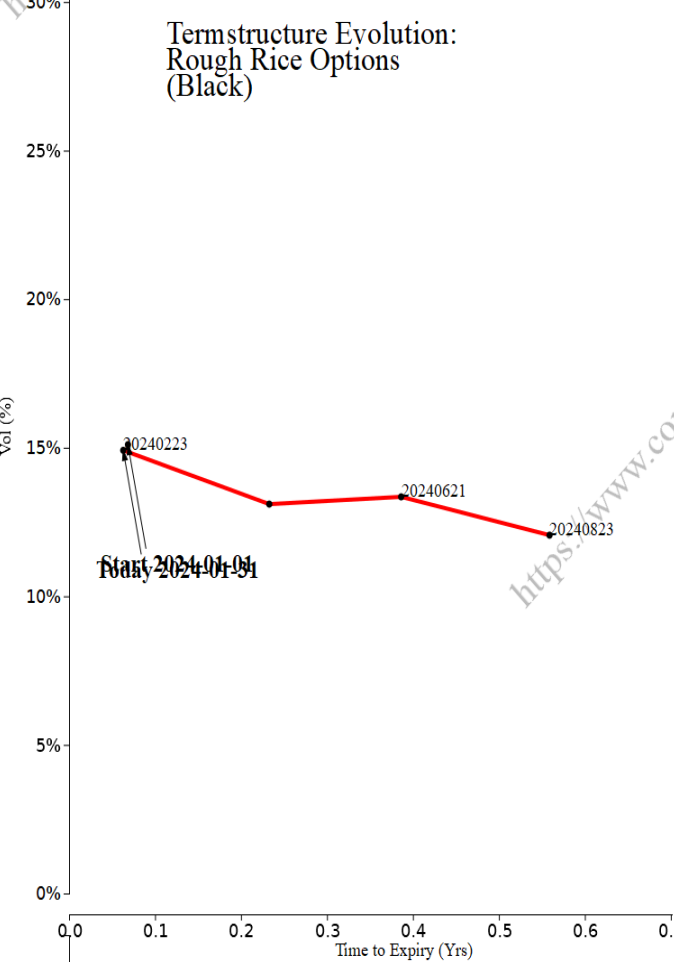




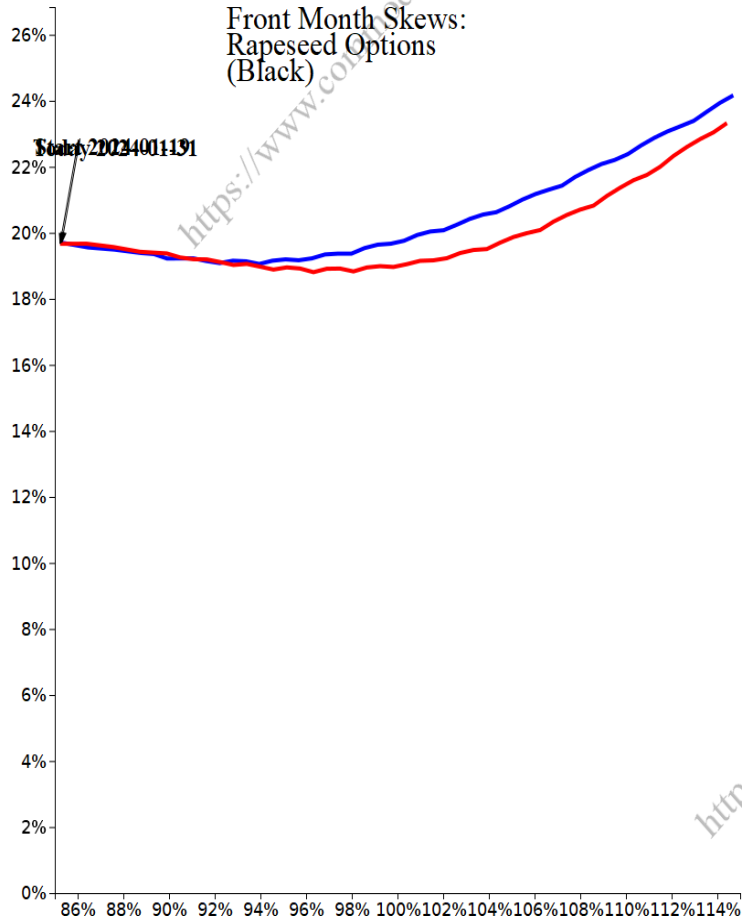
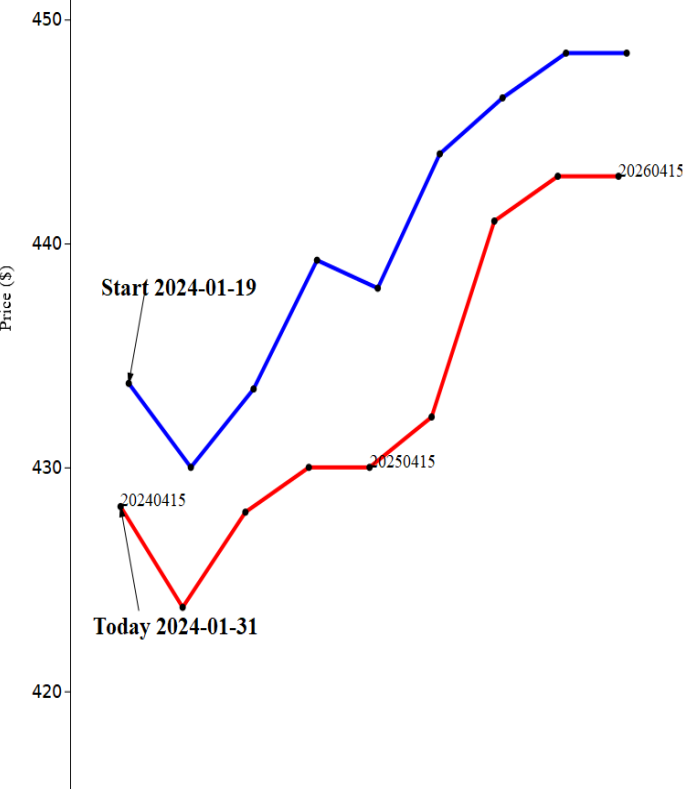
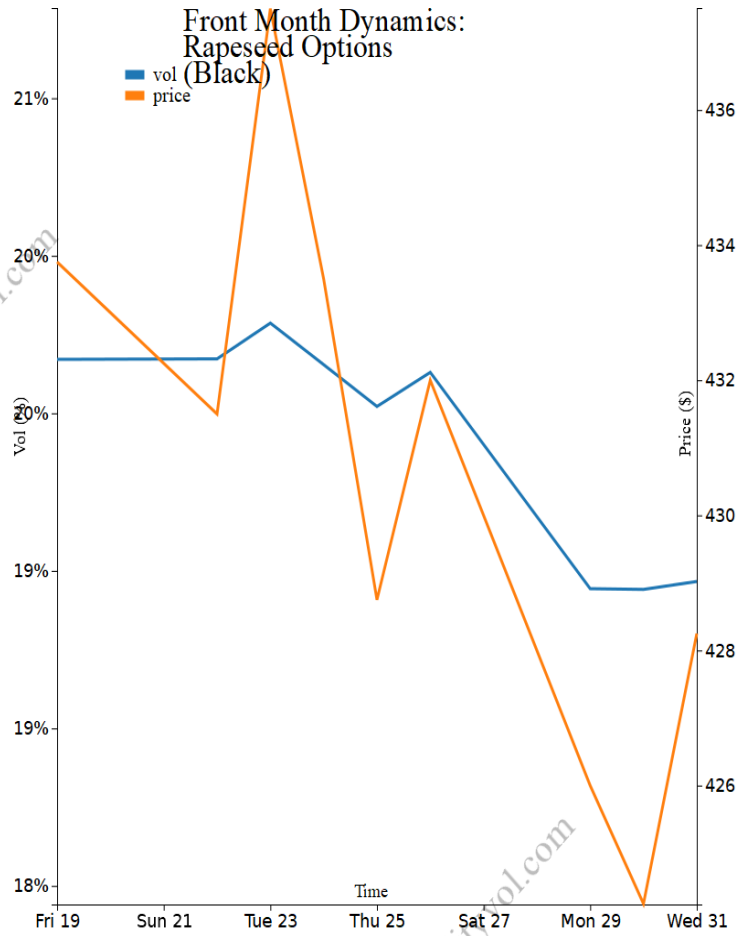
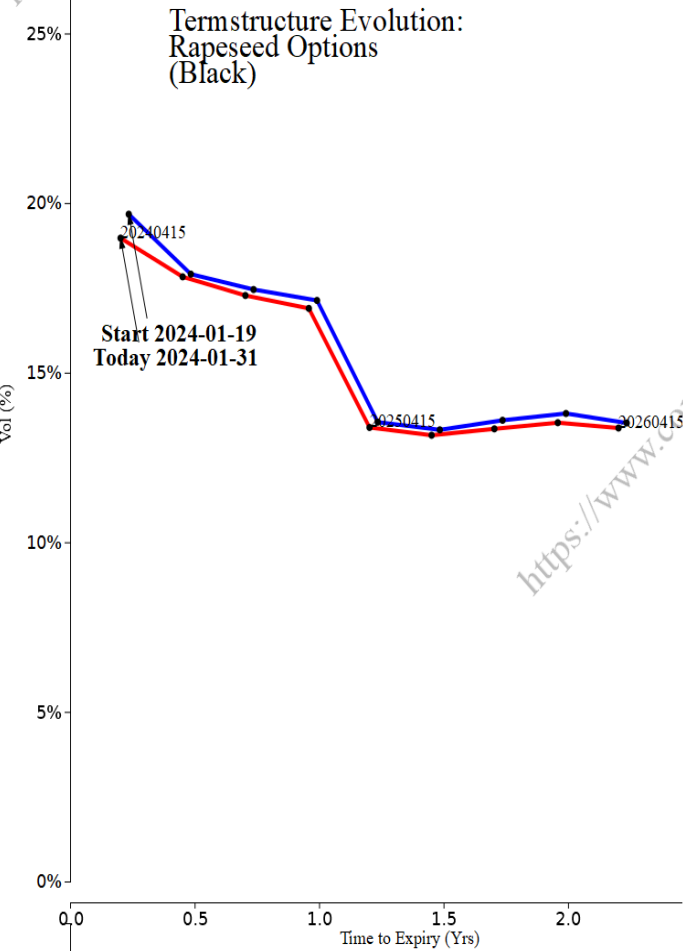




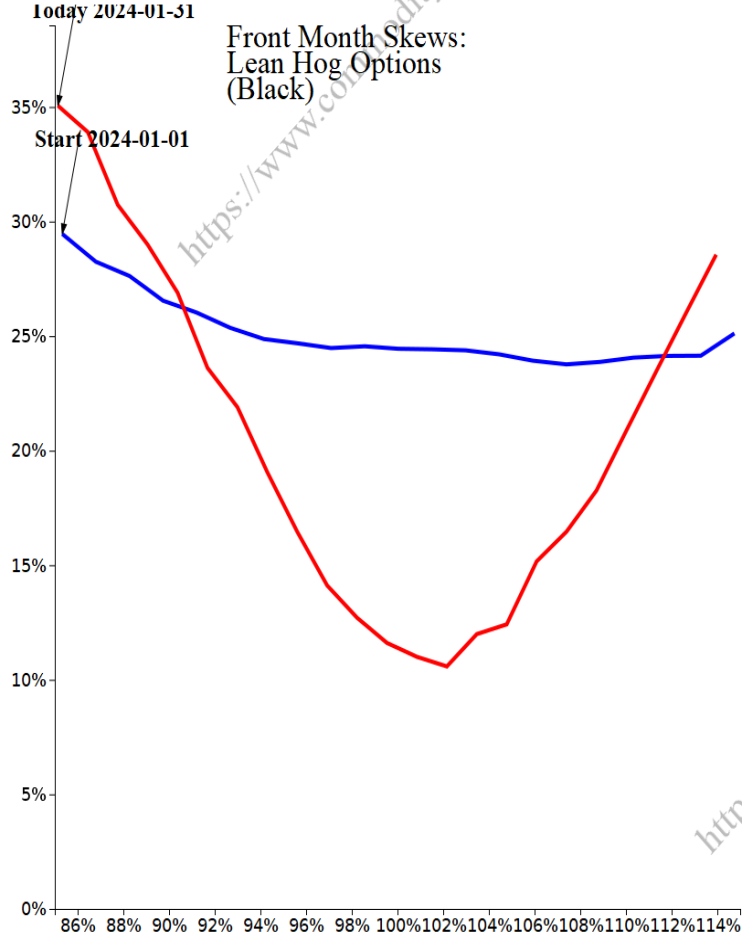
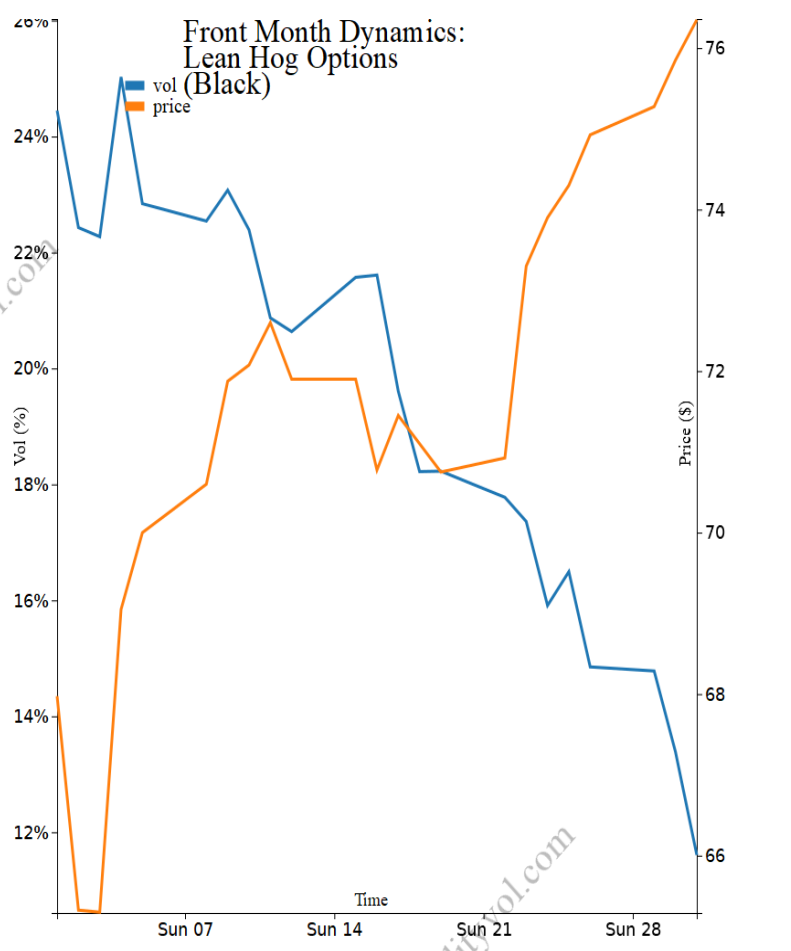
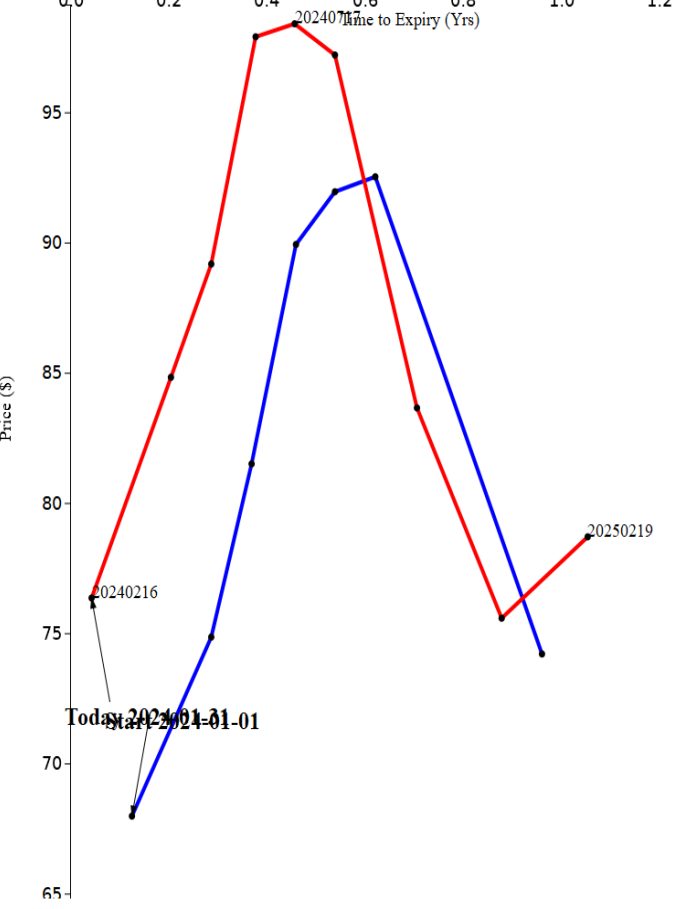
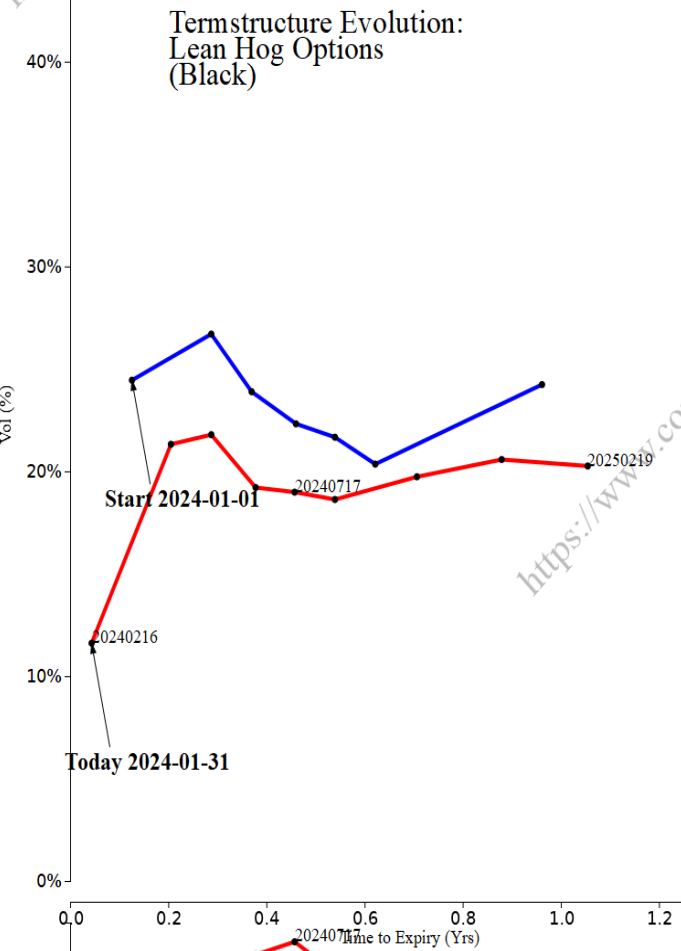


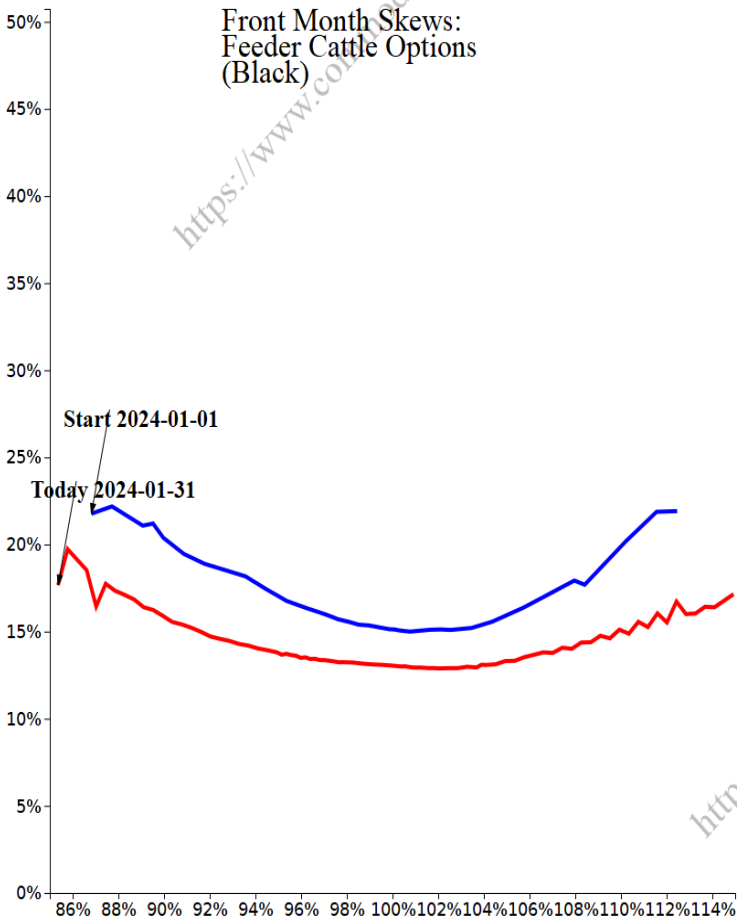
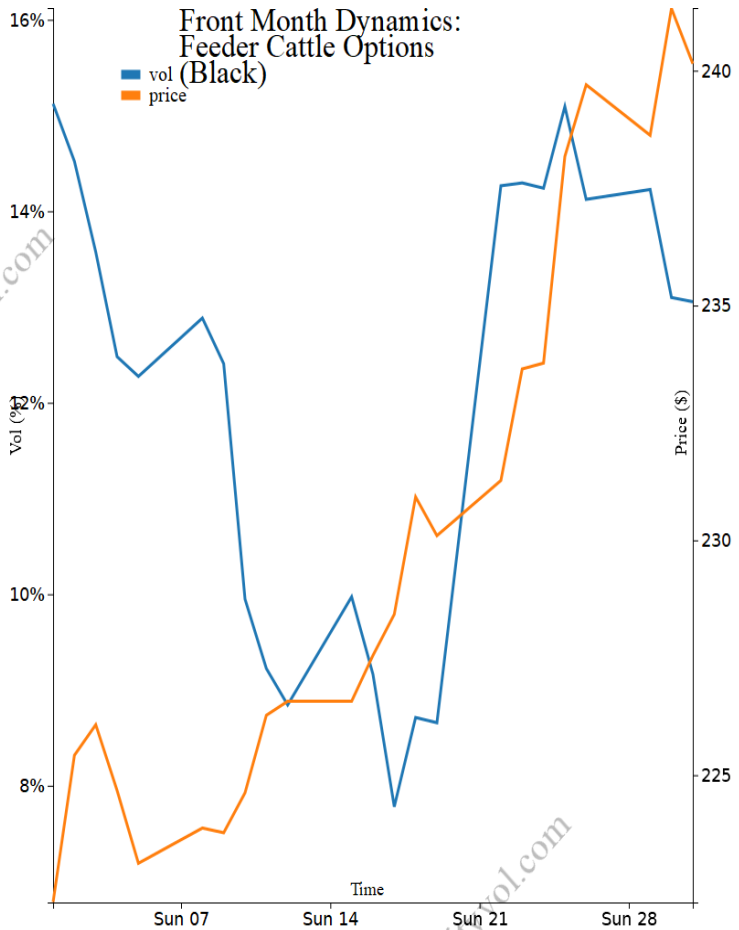
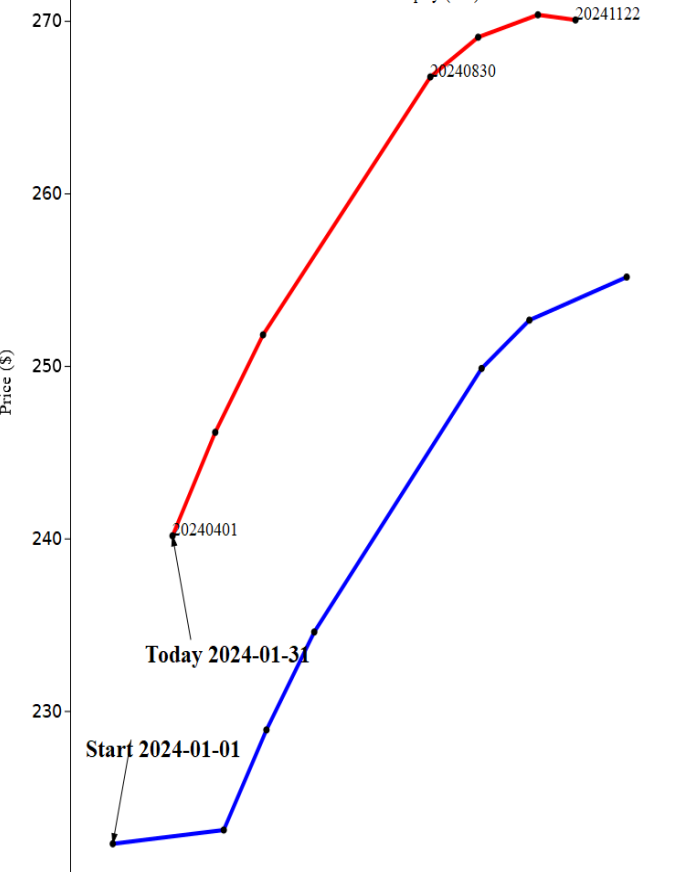
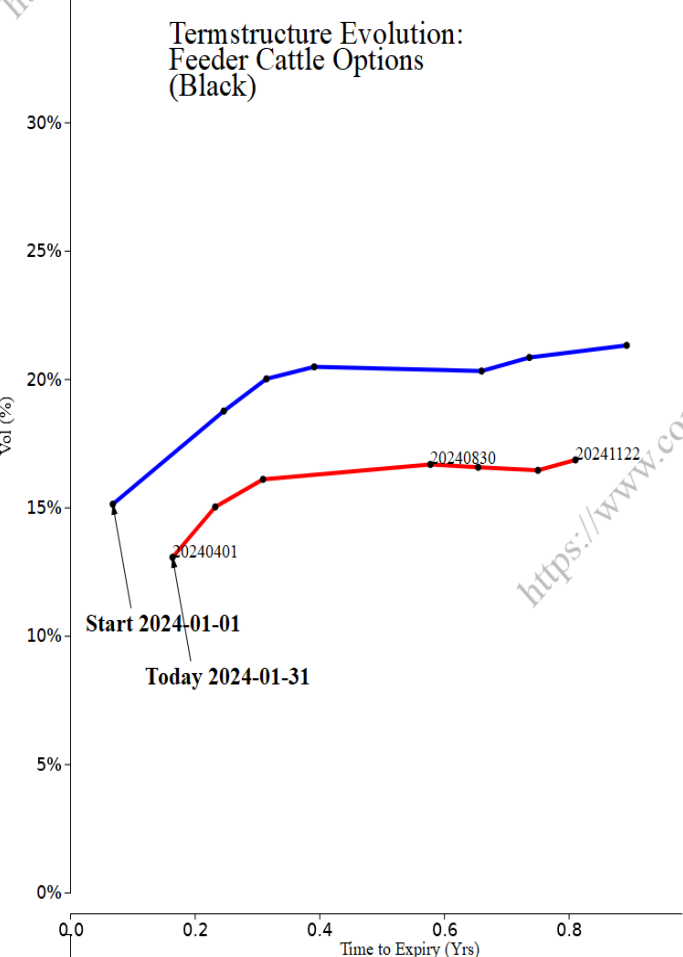


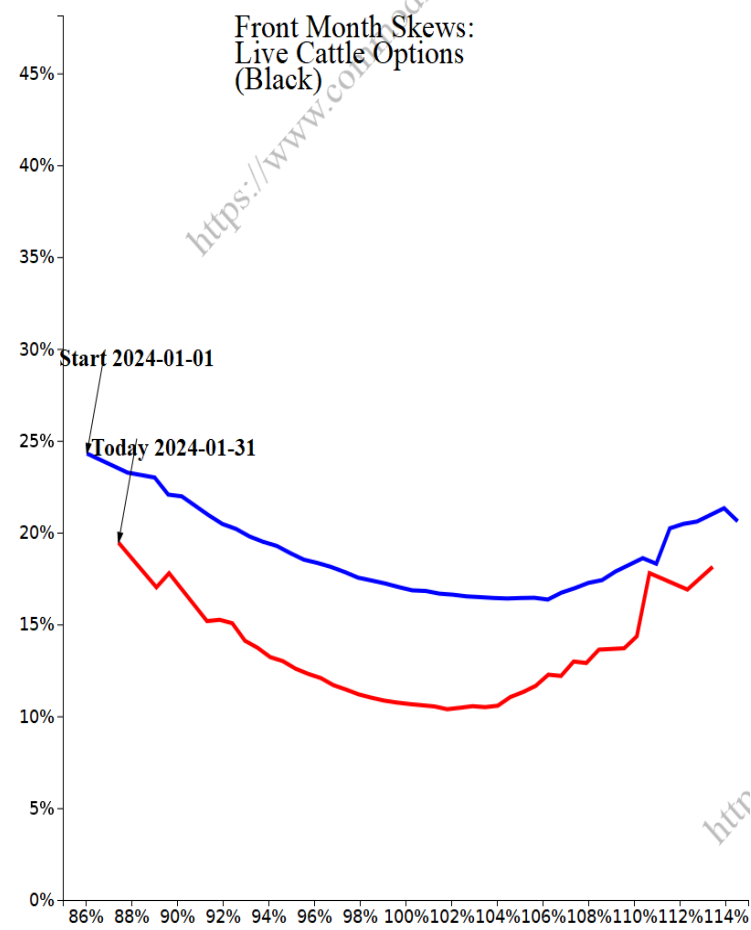
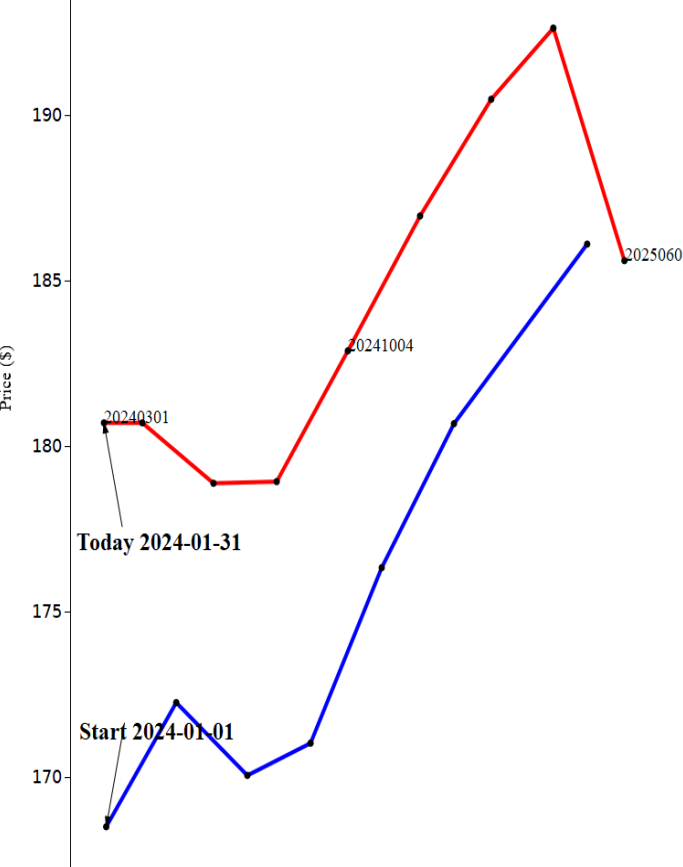
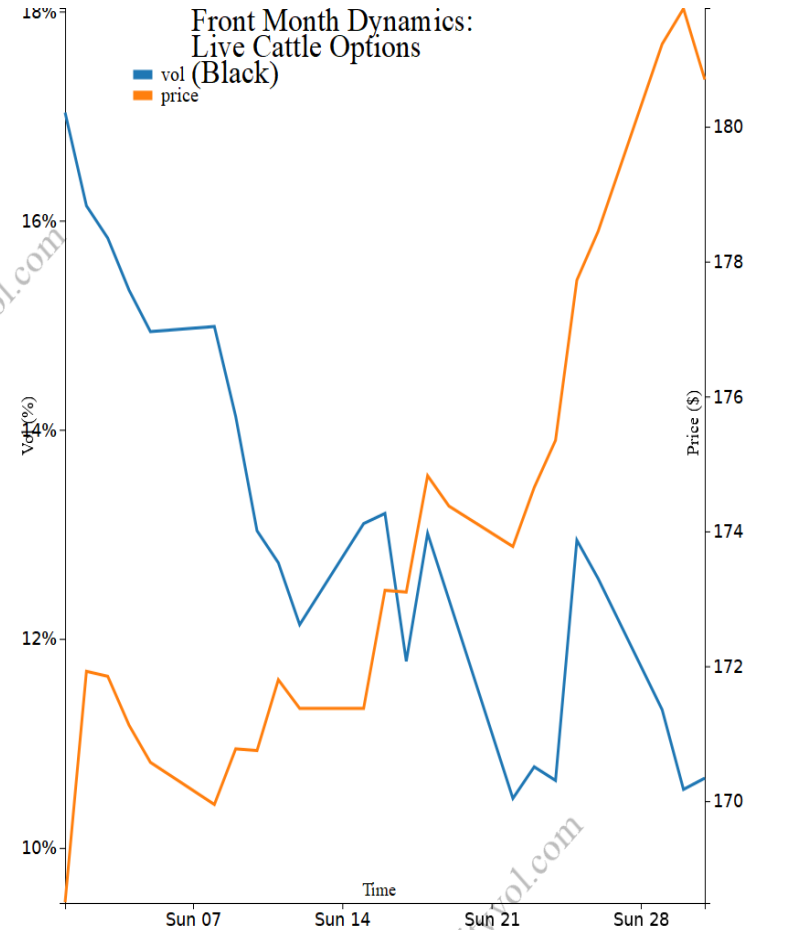
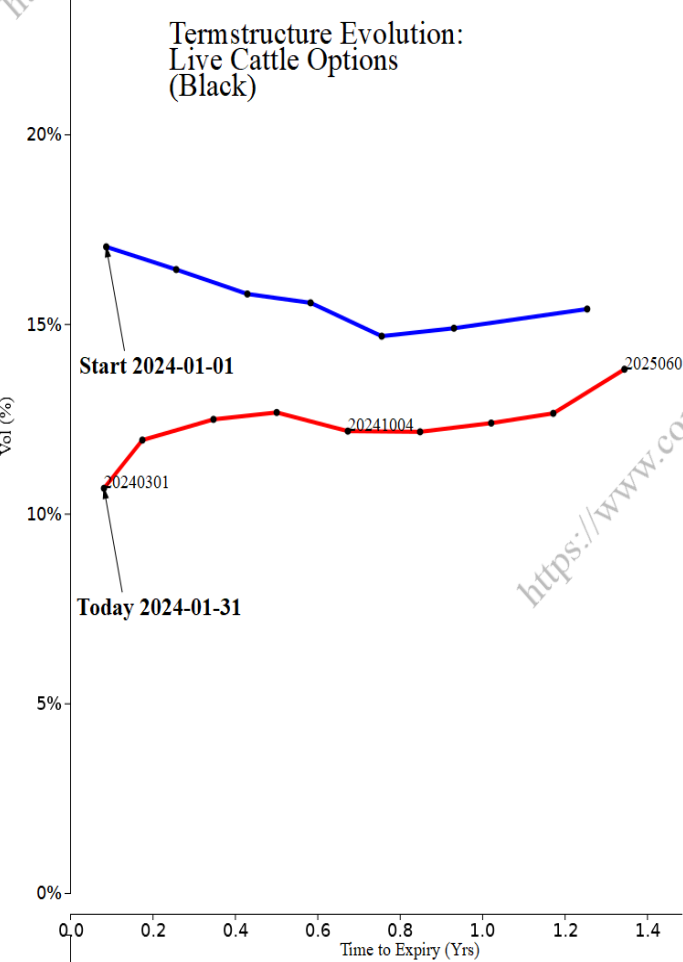


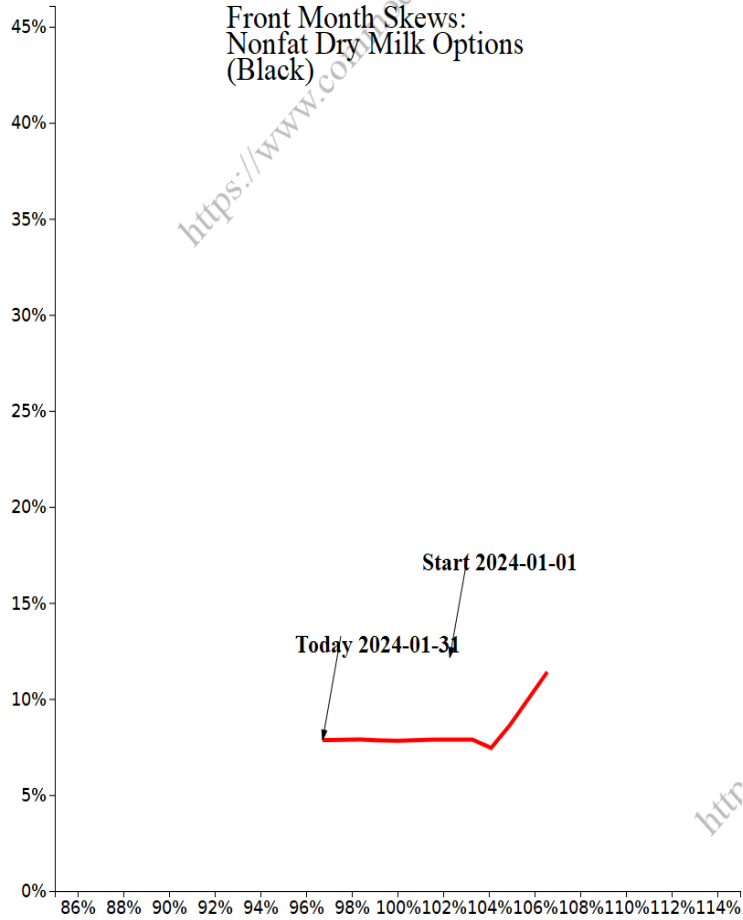
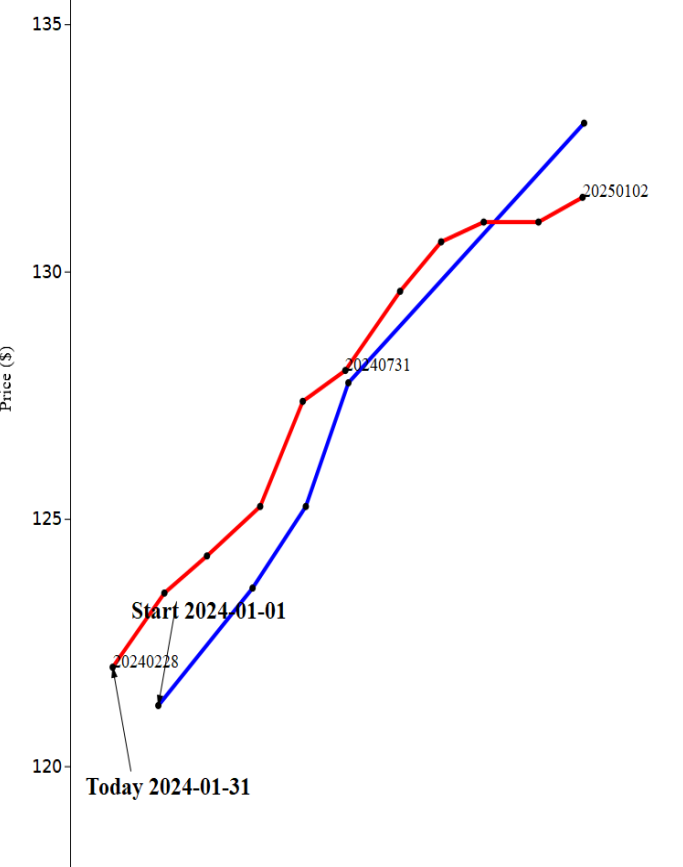
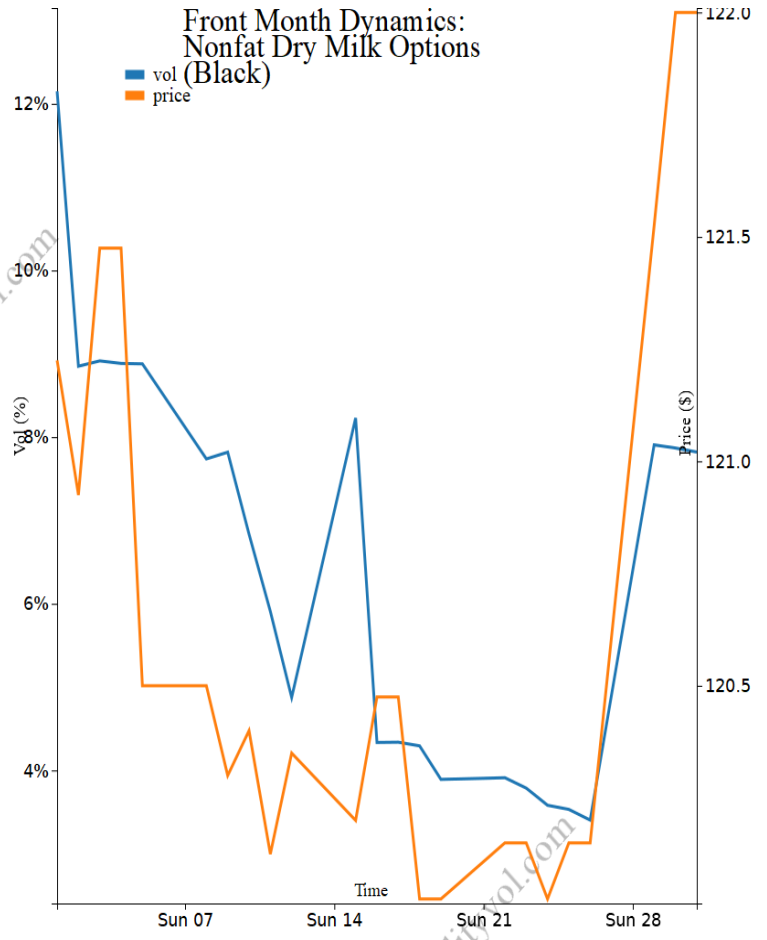
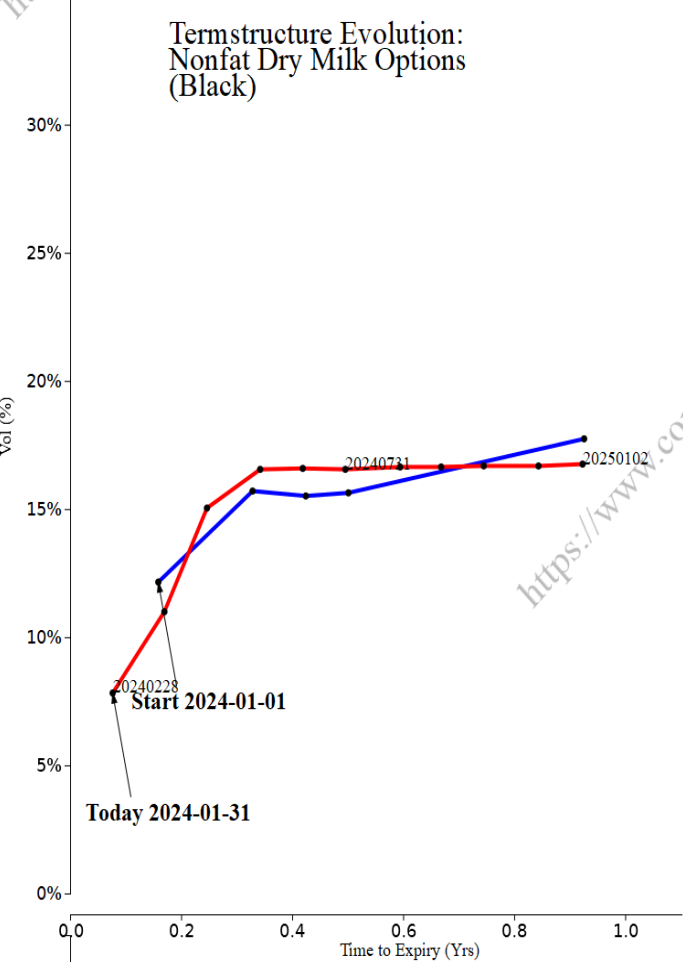


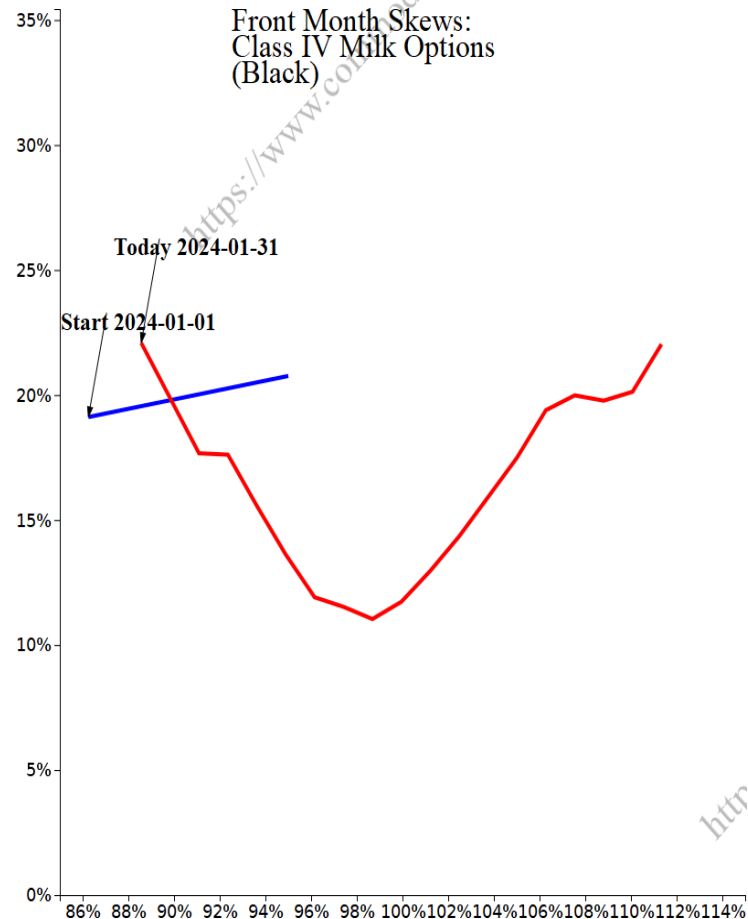
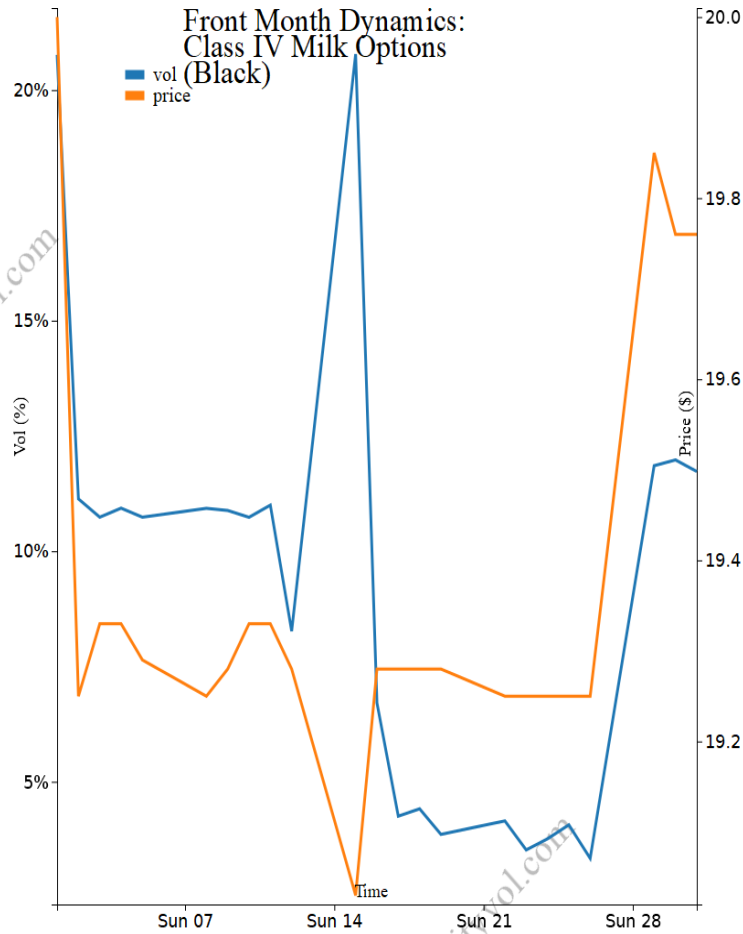
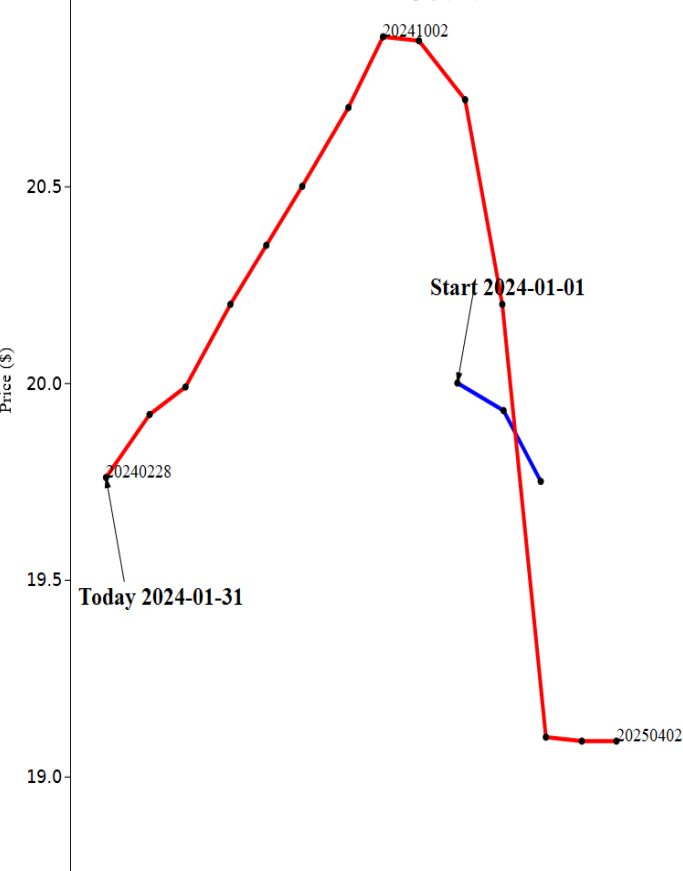
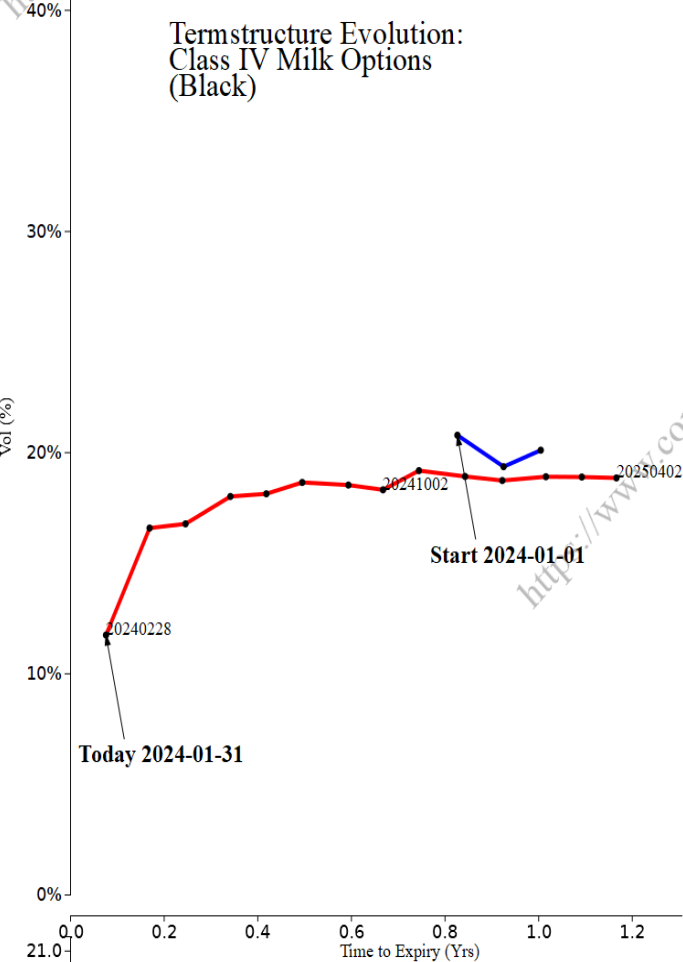
**Ags: Proteins, Meats and so forth**











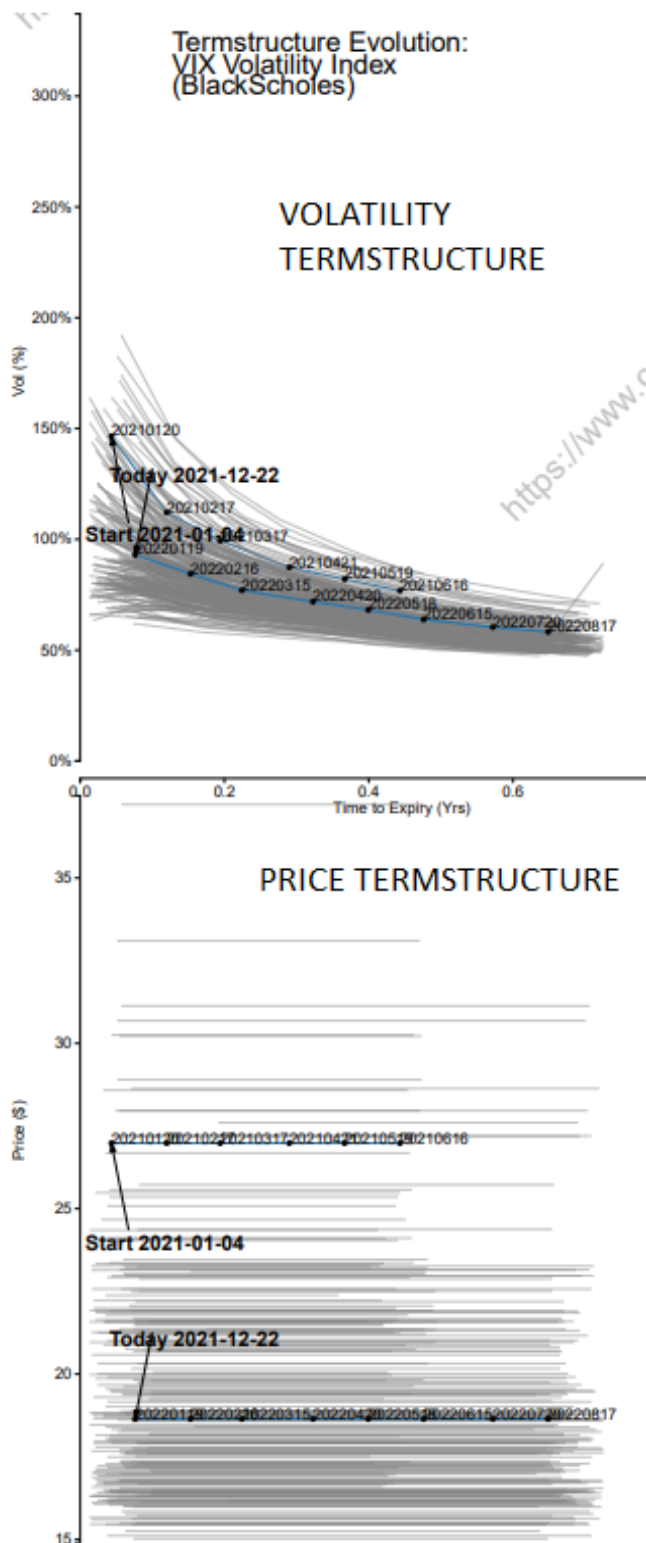
**Explanation:**

The document is composed of two parts. There is a tabular portion which summarizes the changes in front month futures prices and the changes in the at the money front month implied volatility. The results are presented as raw differences and percentage changes. The plots in this document try to give a feel for the evolution of the futures and options for each product type. The skew/termstructure/xyplots are broken out by major asset classes: Indexes, Fixed Income and so on.



## At the Money Volatility and Price Term Structures:

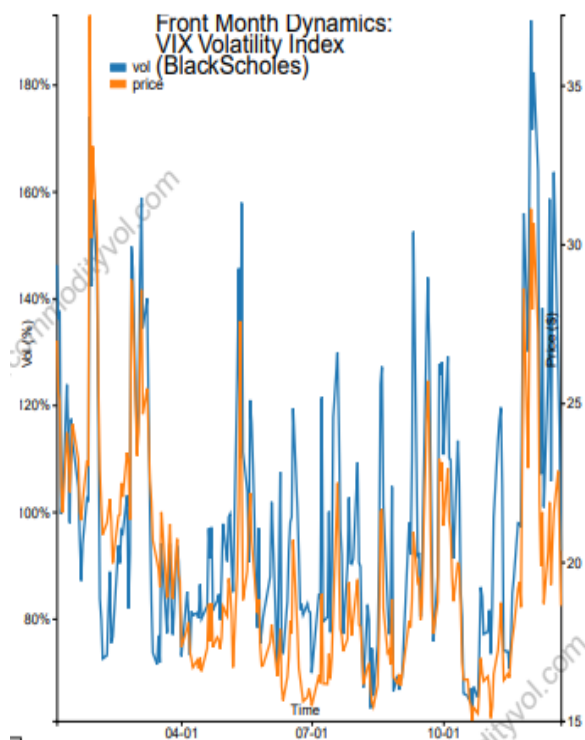
Stacked on top of the other on the left hand side, see the termstructures of vol and the (underlying) futures contract price.



The starting curve is the termstructure at the beginning of the period. This curve is labelled start and is typically colored blue. The ending curve is typically colored red and denoted by the text: Today. The greyed out lines are the termstructures for each day of the period. The hope is that the range of movements becomes apparent.

## Front Month At the Money Volatility and Front Month Price Over the Year:

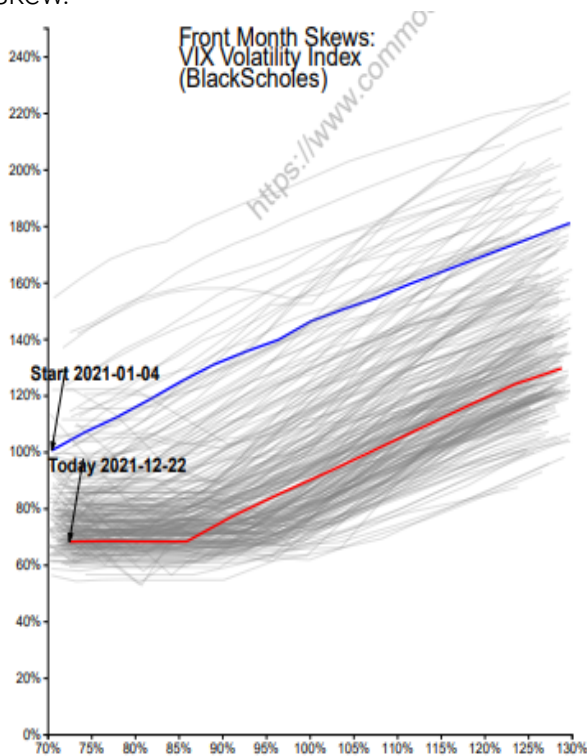
On the right hand panel we have the price and implied volatility of the front month contract.



At the money implied volatility is shown in blue and the axis on the left should be used to read off the values. The front month futures price is in orange and the right hand axis is where its value can be read.

## Front Month Skew:

On the right hand in the bottom panel we have the starting front month skew and the ending front month skew.



The front month skew is shown for the starting date. The starting curve is labelled as 'Start' and captioned with the date. The starting curve is blue. Conversely, the ending curve is shown in red and labeled Today. The y-axis shows the implied volatility and the x-axis shows the moneyness. The moneyness is a way to normalize the skew so that it is comparable across time.

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