

July 13, 2011

Beef Field Day

There will be a Statewide Beef Field Day on Sat. July 30 at the Auburn University Beef Teaching Unit starting at 8:00 A.M. The registration fee is \$25 by July 20th and \$35 onsite registration. The agenda will include demonstrations on proper tattooing, freeze branding and administering health injections. In addition, they will discuss seed stock marketing, online interactive advertising, and bull calf evaluations.

Stocker Conference

Alabama conducts a stocker conference every third year and this is it. It will be held at the E.V. Smith Research Center off I85 at Shorter, Alabama a few miles out of Auburn. The one day program has speakers on deworming, mineral programs, economics, grazing, shipping fever, by-product feeds, and a producer panel. Registration is \$75 per person or \$100 per couple. For a complete agenda and registration form call me 256-766-6223.

Armyworms

At this writing there are reports of armyworms in pastures in Walker and Lawrence Counties, therefore you will need to monitor your pastures closely in the weeks ahead.

Disaster Assistance

The USDA has made available \$3.8 million in financial assistance through the EQUIP program to assist producers recovering from the tornadoes in April. Eligible counties include all northwest Alabama counties. Contact your local NRCS office for more information 256-764-5833.



Hay Contest

As many of you know, Paul Austin has done well in the Southeastern Hay Contest at the Sunbelt Expo in Moultrie, Georgia. Anyone can enter the contest for \$15 which includes a complete hay analysis on the hay sample. For a complete copy of the rules and regs contact me at 256-766-6223.

Mailing List

If you Do Not want to continue receiving this newsletter, call the office and let us know 256-766-6223.

Horse Owners

Auburn is hosting a Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference in Auburn on July 21-23. You may register for all or part of the conference. For more information go to:
www.southeasternequestriantrails.com.

Scale Certification

The USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration recently amended some of its rules regarding when scales used to weigh livestock as well as feeds have to be certified. The rule says that the scales must be certified twice a year at least 120 days apart. By not following this rule you could be subject to a \$20,000 fine. For more information go to www.gipsa.usda.gov.

Cattle Mineral

If you want to save some money on your cattle mineral program then try mixing 50% dicalcium phosphate and 50% trace mineral salt. Feed free choice to the cattle herd. They will get what they need and eat about half as much as a commercial mineral. Several county producers have used this mix for a long time. Use this mix during non grass tetany season, from June to December.

Prostate Cancer

Our office has been involved in an educational effort to make sure men over 50 get an annual prostate exam and begin logging their PSA number. Everyone is different and early detection is important. See enclosed page for additional information.

Vet Assistance

Pfizer Animal Health has provided vouchers to veterinarians to provide \$100 in support of a vet fee for assessment of livestock injured during the tornadoes. Ask your vet about this program.

Timber Assistance

The Alabama Recovery Task Force is holding 6 meeting across the state to address the persisting needs of forest landowners who were affected by the April storms. The one in our area will be Tuesday July 19th at the Cullman Extension office 402 Arnold St. NE Cullman. The meeting begins at 6:30 P.M. and ends at 9:00.

Farm Transportation

The Federal Department of Transportation is looking at and asking input about more rules and regs concerning moving farm products. They will examine things like commercial driver's licenses, limiting mileage, obtaining a medical card for the driver and maintaining hours of service records. This is just one of many reasons you need to be a member of your agricultural support groups and organizations as they represent your interest in these matters.

Slow Moving Vehicle

Remember the state law states the SMV sign is required on the back of every vehicle that has a "maximum potential speed of 25 mph".

Sincerely,



Randall Armstrong
County Extension Coordinator



TIMELY INFORMATION

Agriculture & Natural Resources

Annual Beef Cow Pregnancy Examination

Soren Rodning, DVM, MS, Extension Veterinarian and Assistant Professor
 Walt Prevatt, PhD, Extension Economist and Professor
 Robert Carson, DVM, MS, Professor and Food Animal Section Head
 Josh Elmore, PAS, Advisor III, Natural Resource Programs Michelle
 Elmore, Extension Animal Scientist/Beef Cattle Improvement
Alabama Cooperative Extension System and Auburn University

Reproductive efficiency is an important factor in determining the profitability of a cow-calf farm. A beef cow needs to produce a calf every year to be an economically viable member of the herd. An important management tool that is guaranteed to improve the reproductive efficiency of a beef herd is an annual pregnancy examination for every cow. By determining the pregnancy status of beef cows, producers can remove the reproductively inefficient cows from the herd which results in a combination of increased pounds of calf production per cow and lower costs per pound of calf production. In a herd with a defined breeding season, the identification and removal of open (non-pregnant) cows and replacement heifers allows more prudent utilization of valuable feed and pasture resources for productive animals. In addition, the culling of open, subfertile cows and replacement heifers improves overall herd fertility in subsequent years (Table 1), as well as improving pounds weaned per exposed cow and thus income per cow. Identifying open cows early provides more time for investigation and elimination of fertility problems associated with infectious disease, inadequate nutrition, poor bull fertility, and many other reasons before the next breeding season. Pregnancy diagnosis and fetal aging also allows you to group cows according to estimated calving dates to more effectively meet the management and nutritional demands of gestation, calving, lactation, and rebreeding.

Table 1. Improving overall herd fertility through annual pregnancy examination and culling of open, subfertile cows. Notice how the increase in herd fertility was sustained over the years by removing subfertile animals.

Pregnancy percentage by year

Herd	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
1	75	97	96	93	98
2	64	56	84	89	
3	59	66	79	92	85
4	85	90	94		
5	82	94	93	93	
6	74	76	86	94	98
7	49	89	92	89	89

Source: Texas A&M AgriLIFE EXTENSION Publication B-1077

Increasing the percentage of cows pregnant results in a higher weaning percent which directly influences cattle performance and profits. Table 2 assumes an average feeder calf weight of 500-pounds per calf, various weaning percents (75%, 80%, 85%, 90%, and 95%), feeder calf production costs of \$500 per brood cow, and \$1.35/pound feeder calf price. As can be seen in Table 2, a higher weaning percent increases the average pounds of calf production per brood cow (column 3). The higher the average pounds of calf production per brood cow, the lower the feeder calf breakeven price ($\$500/375 \text{ lbs.} = \$1.33/\text{lb}$ versus $\$500/400 \text{ lbs.} = \$1.25/\text{lb.}$, etc.). Note that feeder calf breakeven price is \$1.33/lb with a weaning percent of 75%, but the breakeven price decreases to \$1.05/lb if weaning percent increases to 95%. This represents a decrease in breakeven price of $-\$0.28/\text{lb}$ from the base ($\$1.05/\text{lb.} - \$1.33/\text{lb.}$). Correspondingly, the profit per brood cow was \$6 and \$141, respectively.

This represents a difference, or an improvement in profit, of \$135 per brood cow (\$141 - \$6) when weaning percent increases from 75% to 95%. For a one bull unit of beef cows (approximately 30 head) that equals \$4,050 of additional income, which is the amount that the cattle farmer in this example could afford to spend to improve his weaning percent from 75% to 95%. Deducting the costs associated with increasing the cowherd's weaning percent from 75% to 95% from \$4,050 will result in the total profit from improving reproductive performance. In short, an annual pregnancy examination is almost always an excellent dollar return.

Table 2. Feeder calf breakeven price per pound and profit per brood cow for various weaning percents¹.

Weaning Weight (Lbs./Calf)	Weaning Percent (%)	Pounds Weaned per Exposed Cow (Lbs./Cow)	Feeder Calf Breakeven Price		Profit per Brood Cow	
			(\$/Lb.)	(\$/Lb.)	(\$/Hd.)	(\$/Hd.)
500	75%	375	\$1.33	-\$0.28	\$6	-\$135
500	80%	400	\$1.25	-\$0.20	\$40	-\$101
500	85%	425	\$1.18	-\$0.12	\$74	-\$68
500	90%	450	\$1.11	-\$0.06	\$108	\$-34
500	95%	475	\$1.05	Base	\$141	Base

¹Assumes an annual calf production cost of \$500 per brood cow and average calf market price of \$1.35/lb.

Despite all the benefits associated with beef cow annual pregnancy examinations, according to the February 2009 USDA National Animal Health Monitoring System (NAHMS) Beef Report only 10% of cow-calf farms in the Southeastern United States perform pregnancy examinations. Considering the cost of not identifying pregnant versus open cows, this is a tremendous opportunity to improve the production efficiency and economic viability of our cow-calf herds, especially considering the currently high input costs and high cull cow prices.

According to the USDA NAHMS Report, approximately 60% of the respondents that did not perform regular pregnancy examinations cited time and cost as reasons for not annually checking the pregnancy status of beef herds. However, pregnancy diagnosis is a procedure that pays for itself. Assuming a 50 cow herd at \$5.00 per head for pregnancy examinations, a 90% conception rate, with a minimal \$300.00 annual cow input cost and you spend \$250.00 to save \$1,500.00. If you can find the time and have a controlled breeding season, an annual pregnancy examination will pay for itself every time.

Conclusion

Reproductive efficiency is one of the most important factors in determining the profitability of a cow-calf farm. Especially with rising input costs, reproductive efficiency is more critical than ever. Fortunately, cull cow prices are also higher than they have ever been. Now is a good time to take advantage of these high cattle prices by finding the open cows in your herd, wean their calves early if needed, and prepare to sell the open cows when body condition and market prices are optimal.

Contact Dr. Soren Rodning (334-844-7502), your veterinarian, the Alabama Beef Cattle Improvement Association, and/or your Regional Animal Science and Forages Extension Agent to discuss the best time and method for annual pregnancy diagnosis in your herd.

ALABAMA A&M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITIES, AND TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY, COUNTY GOVERNING BODIES AND USDA COOPERATING

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

Cutting Costs, Not Corners: Managing Cattle in Tough Times

The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

R. Lawton Stewart, Jr.¹, Ronnie E. Silcox²,

R. Curt Lacy³, Dennis W. Hancock⁴,

Glen H. Harris⁵, Roger W. Ellis⁶

Introduction

The beef cattle industry is going through quite a dynamic time. Feed prices are volatile, and the economy has affected the demand for beef and the ability for many producers to borrow money to run their operations. Many producers have chosen to exit the business while others are struggling just to break even. The average production cost of a 500-pound steer in 2008 was \$142/cwt – not a number that can sustain beef production.

While costs have recently abated some, the reality is that long-term prices are expected to increase rather than decrease. As a result, cattlemen need to evaluate their systems and determine where they can cut costs in order to become profitable. At times like these, the key is to evaluate the entire system and look for places to improve efficiency without sacrificing performance. Fundamentally, there is a difference between cutting costs and cutting corners.



Cutting costs allows producers to survive during trying times and also teaches valuable lessons that may actually increase profits in future years. Cutting corners, on the other hand, may save some money in the short-run but ultimately will have very detrimental effects. A recent survey (Figure 1) of more than 200 successful producers and production specialists indicated that management priorities focus around five major concepts: Nutrition, pasture management, financial management, health, and genetics.

The hardest part of evaluating a management system is knowing where to start. Before any of these areas can be addressed, there

must be an avenue of tracking inputs (i.e., keeping records). Records must be kept in order to make progress in management because if something is not recorded, it cannot be changed.

Understanding and Controlling Basic Input Costs in the Cow Herd

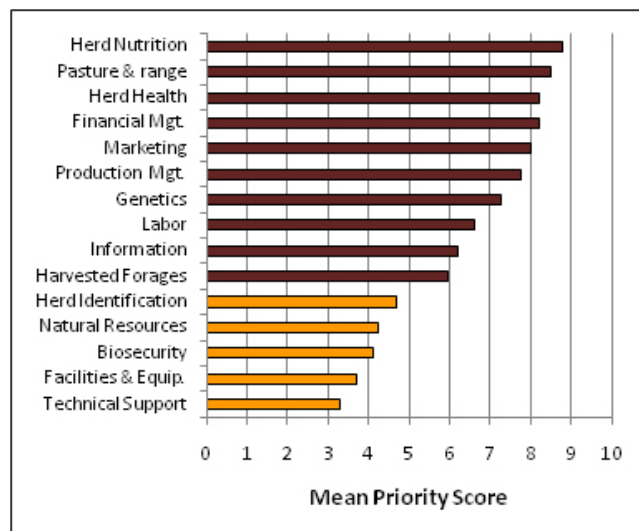
When trying to determine which costs to reduce, producers can improve results when making difficult management choices. by following these five steps:

Before allocating expenditures, cattlemen must first determine the amount of capital they have to spend. This money will come from one or more of four places; cash/savings, sales of current assets (market livestock, hay, grains, etc.), sales of capital assets (breeding stock, timber, equipment, land), and borrowed capital.

The next two steps can be performed almost simultaneously. Determine the costs of cattle production by category and then sum these for a total cost of cattle production. Budgets for calculating these costs are available at www.secattleadvisor.com. Categories include pasture, pasture and facilities rent, purchased feed, hay (production, purchases or both), veterinary care and minerals, labor, repairs, operating interest, and fixed costs. Fixed costs will be comprised of annual payments, depreciation plus interest, or some combination of the two¹, taxes, insurance, and any other associated costs that occur regardless of the level of production. Use the items listed in Figure 2 as a guide.

Once the costs are determined by category they should be ranked in order from largest to smallest. Managers should begin by looking at the larger numbers and focus on reducing these areas first, which will make a larger impact on their costs than by focusing on a few smaller or trivial costs. For instance, in Figure 1, pasture, hay, and feed costs account for almost 70% of total cow costs while vet and mineral costs account for about 8%. By reducing total feeding costs by 10%, cattlemen can save almost as many total dollars as they can by completely eliminating their vet and mineral program. Moreover, the production risks incurred by reducing feed costs by 10% are much lower than eliminating vet and mineral expenses.

Figure 1. Cow-calf management priorities. (Source: T.F. Field, 2008).



Making Adjustments

The remainder of this publication addresses ways producers can reduce costs and still remain competitive. Two categories likely to emerge that should be addressed are pasture/feed costs and fixed payments. Pasture and feed costs are covered in the nutrition and forages sections. However, one item that can greatly reduce fixed payments is hay production.

For many medium or small-scale producers the ownership costs for hay machinery are so large that it is virtually impossible for them to ever make a profit, especially if the equipment is relatively new. Therefore, cattlemen who currently produce their own hay may want to consider either purchasing it or finding other ways to reduce their equipment costs.

Instead of raising hay, many cattle operations might be more profitable if they either hire someone else to harvest their hay, or purchase hay. Table 1 shows an example of calculating the cost of producing hay for a given number of cows. If similar quality hay can be purchased for less than the cost of production (green shaded cells), it may be more profitable to purchase hay. The complete budget worksheet can be accessed at www.secattleadvisor.com by clicking on "Decision-Aids/Budgets." If hay is purchased, more land is available to graze, possibly reducing total pasture cost. Stockmen who are committed to hay production may consider leasing or renting equipment instead of purchasing it. They may also consider sharing or partnering with other cattlemen on large purchases such as balers or bale wrappers.

Figure 2. Ranking of annual cow-costs
Source: UGA Cow-calf budgets, various years.

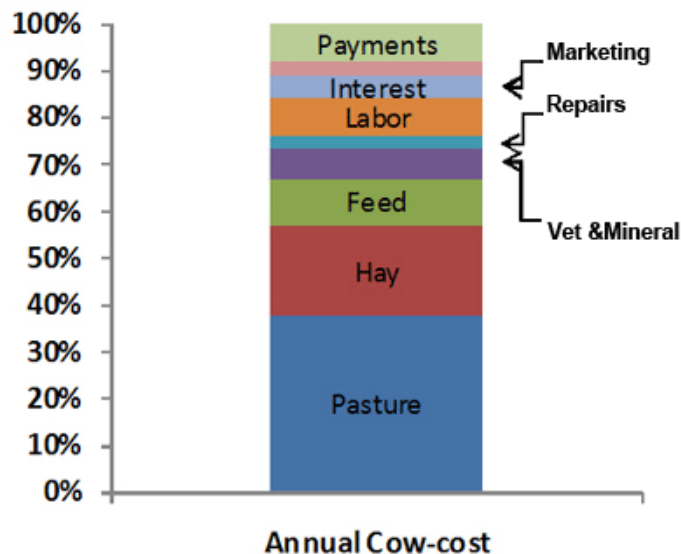


Table 1. Calculating cost of hay production (assuming six tons per acre production).

	Number of Cows					
	35	50	100	200	300	500
Tons/cow	2	2	2	2	2	2
Acres required	12	17	34	67	100	167
Total VC ^a	\$470	\$470	\$470	\$470	\$470	\$470
VC/Ton	\$80	\$80	\$80	\$80	\$80	\$80
FCa	\$8,750	\$8,750	\$8,750	\$8,750	\$8,750	\$8,750
FC/ton	\$125	\$88	\$22	\$22	\$15	\$9
TC ^a	\$14,350	\$16,750	\$24,750	\$40,750	\$56,750	\$88,750
TC/ton	\$205	\$168	\$124	\$102	\$94	\$89
TC/1,000# roll	\$103	\$84	\$62	\$51	\$47	\$45
TC/Cow	\$410	\$336	\$248	\$204	\$188	\$178

^a VC = variable cost, FC = fixed cost, TC = total cost.

PROSTATE HEALTH & PROSTATE CANCER :



WHAT DO WE KNOW ?

1. The prostate is located just below the bladder and in front of the rectum in men.
2. Symptoms of prostate health problems are: difficulty in starting urination; weak or interrupted flow of urine; difficulty in emptying the bladder; need to urinate often; pain or burning during urination; blood in the urine or semen; pain in the lower back, hips, or pelvic area; and painful ejaculation
3. BPH (Benign prostatic hyperplasia) or an enlarged prostate may make it hard to urinate or cause dribbling. May feel the need to urinate a lot especially at night
4. Prostatitis is a bacterial infection in the prostate. It can cause fever, chills, or pain in the lower back and between the legs and it may hurt to urinate. You will need antibiotics.
5. Chronic Pelvic Pain Syndrome (CPPS) occurs mostly in young to middle-aged men causing pain in the lower back, between the legs, or at the tip of the penis. Men with this problem have painful ejaculation and need to urinate frequently. Antibiotics are helpful.
6. Herbs such as Saw Palmetto may help your symptoms, but there is no research that proves that it is curing the root cause of your problem, such as the infection or enlargement.
7. Prostate Cancer is the most common cancer among men.
8. Each year in the USA, more than 200,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer and about 30,000 men die from this disease each year.
9. Prostate Cancer risk factors include: Age, Family History, Race, and a high fat diet
10. Prostate Cancer in the early stage has no symptoms, so you do not know if you have it unless you get screened. If you wait until symptoms show-up it will be at a more advanced stage.
11. Treatment for prostate cancer works best when the disease is found early and has not spread to other parts of your body. Early detection is very important.
12. You can survive prostate cancer. The key is early detection !!!
13. If you are 45-50 or older you need to talk to your doctor or a urologist to get blood drawn for a PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) test (the level of PSA in your blood). PSA is only made by the prostate.
14. If you have a family history of prostate cancer or you are African American then you need to have a PSA test starting by age 40
15. Men as young as 38 have been diagnosed with prostate cancer.
16. The PSA test will give you your baseline number so that each year when you have the PSA test done you can compare the numbers. Each individual has unique numbers.
17. If your PSA goes up .75 then you may need to be checked for prostate cancer. It could be an enlarged prostate or an infection, but you need to be checked to be safe.
18. It is also recommended that after the blood is drawn for a PSA test that you have a DRE (digital rectal exam). The doctor puts a gloved finger into your rectum and feels of the walnut size prostate for hard or lumpy areas. If it feels rough like a coral reef, then this indicates cancer.
19. The DRE is what most men do not want to get done. Sometimes we have to do things that we do not enjoy, because it is for our health.
20. The PSA alone helps to detect 63% of cancer, but the PSA & DRE test together help to detect 89% of prostate cancer. (More on other side)

21. Suggestion- If you go regularly to have a colonoscopy, then ask the doctor to do a DRE while you are under. You will never know it and the doctor can check out the prostate more thoroughly. Most get a colonoscopy every 5 years. A DRE every 5 years is better than no DRE.
22. After a PSA & DRE your doctor may advise you to have a biopsy. During the biopsy they will take out small tissue samples. You hope that all samples come back benign and not malignant.
23. If you choose not to follow your doctor's advice and have the biopsy, you need to know that prostate cancer usually spreads to the pelvic area and into your bones. Within 5-10 years you will most likely have bone cancer which is a very painful death.
24. The doctor will determine your Gleason Score (how aggressive is your cancer) from 2-10 with 2-4 being slow; 5-7 being moderate; and 8-10 being fast
25. Stages of cancer: T1=can't feel it; T2=can feel it; T3=spread outside prostate; T4=spread into bones
26. There are several treatment options available to men. These would be discussed with a radiation oncologist to determine which is best for you.
27. Some treatment options are: surgery to remove the whole prostate and some nearby tissue; radiation therapy to kill cancer cells and shrink tumors; brachytherapy insets radioactive seeds in the prostate; cryosurgery freezes the tumor; hormone therapy
28. The prostate can be surgically removed using the da Vinci Surgical System. It is less invasive so the recovery time is shorter. This is called Robotic Prostatectomy. www.prostatecancerrobotic.com
29. Watchful waiting or active surveillance may be used if the cancer is growing slowly and not causing problems. Older men with other health problems often choose this option.
30. Man-to-Man is a forum for men to learn about prostate cancer diagnosis and treatment options and coping and everyday living supervised by the American Cancer Society. Call 256-767-0825 for information on the next Shoals Area meeting.
31. Treatments sometimes cause incontinence or impotence. There are therapies and aids to improve these problems if these do occur. The benefits of treatment usually outweigh the risks.
32. As of January 2011, Medicare covers the annual PSA & DRE screenings for men age 50 or older. For more information Call 256-765-2345

WHAT CAN YOU DO ? Do it for your family ? :

1. Make an appointment with your doctor or a urologist
2. Talk to doctor about having a PSA & a DRE screening test
3. Ask for a copy of your test results and put medical file in a safe place
4. Schedule it as an annual appointment – All should have a annual check-up
5. Educate yourself first, but then help educate your sons, grandsons, nephews and other men
6. Keep your waistline below 40 inches; Eat lots of veggies & fruits; Exercise daily



FOR MORE INFORMATION : Healthy eating tips go to www.ChoseMyPlate.gov

American Cancer Society: Call day or night 1-800-227-2345 or visit www.cancer.org

Prostate Cancer Foundation: Call 1-800-757-2873 or visit www.pcf.org

American Urological Association Foundation: Call 1-866-746-4282 or www.auafoundation.org

Cancer Information Service (CIS): Call 1-800-422-6237 or visit www.cancer.gov

National Institute on Health: www.nihseniorhealth.gov This is a senior-friendly website

(You can click on a button to have text read out loud or to make the type larger.)