Heifer Selection
for
Improved Lifetime Productivity

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Heifer Selection for Improved Lifetime Productivity

- Cow herd or individual heifer?
- Heifer’s lifetime Productivity? Or cow herd’s annual or long-term Profitability?
- Why so much emphasis on heifer pregnancy? Fed in or bred in?
- Whole ranch profit or bragging rights?
- Productivity or Profitability? Both!
Heifer Selection

for the

Productivity

and

Profitability

of

Your Future Cow Herd
Four Areas to Manage

- Production
- Economics/Finance
- Marketing
- People
Three Ways to Improve Profit

- Increase turnover
- Decrease overheads
- Improve gross margin
  - Total returns - Direct costs
Whole Ranch Profit

It’s Profit per Acre or Whole Ranch Profit that you strive to improve—not Production or even Profit per Cow.
**Major Determinants of Profits**

- Enterprise mix and choices
- Overheads (Including People)
- Stocking Rate
  - Cow Size and Milk Production
  - Grazing & Pasture Management
- Fed Feed vs. Grazed Feed
- Calving Season
- Realized Herd Fertility
- Wise Input Use for Optimum Production
- Marketing
Reduce Overheads
Market Well
Improve Three *Key Ratios*

- Acres per Cow
- Cows per FTE
- Fed Feed vs Grazed Feed
So
For Profitable Decision Making
(Selecting Replacement Heifers)
Become a Systems Thinker
Adaptive Grazing

Short Graze Periods—followed by Lengthy Recovery Periods.

Short and Long are different for each situation—season, rainfall, climate, plant regrowth rates, objectives, etc. That’s why it’s called “Adaptive.”
Adaptive Grazing
Will improve the land—the soil

- Increase Carrying Capacity
- Greater Stocking Rate
- Better Animal Performance
  - Fertility
  - Growth
  - Health
Summer—SE Montana
April—Missouri
April—Mississippi
April—Mississippi
April--Texas
Cows selected for this!
A little hay and a lot of cured grass
Match
Cow Size & Calving Season
to Available Resources

Connected to:
Carrying Capacity
Fed Feed vs. Grazed Feed
Overheads
Grazing Management
Labor & Facilities
Herd Fertility
They really will eat it.
Change the Calving Season to be more closely in Sync with Nature
Increase grazing days and Reduce feeding days.
Minimal Development of Replacement Heifers
Reduce Inputs  then
Cull the Right Cow

- Open
- Dry
- Requires individual attention or help
- Wild
- Poor calf
- Ugly (your definition)
Select the Right Bull
---Be Really Careful!

- Mature Size—“Moderate” or Small
- Milk—Most ranchers have and want too much
- Excellent Cow Fertility

- Care Requirement—Do you have to feed them to keep them in condition? If so, do you want their heifer calves?
Raise replacement heifers from bulls and cows that fit my environment.

Cut inputs and then------ “cull the right cow.”

Longevity is a result of fertility and fertility is a result of environmental fit.
Production and Marketing Must Work Together.
Two Ideas after cutting inputs.

Heifers:

- **Short** exposure—lots of heifers
  - Opens make good feeders
  - Pregnants make good cows

Cows:

- **Short** calving season
  - Long breeding season. What?
Short Calving Season

Leave bulls with cows until preg check time
Adapted Cows
Calving Season
Grazing Management

Interconnected Effects:
Grazing Management
Fed Feed vs. Grazed Feed
Carrying Capacity
Labor & Facilities
Overheads
Herd Fertility
Results:

🌟 Appropriate Cow Size (typically smaller) and Stocking Rate (usually greater) happens.
🌟 Profitable “open” heifers.
🌟 Less fed feed. More grazing.
🌟 Drought planning flexibility.
🌟 Market opportunity for Bred Cows.
🌟 Increased profitability.
Thoughts to Consider:

- Prioritize for Profit not Convenience.
- Think **Soil** before Plants and Animals.
- Think Return per Acre not per Cow.
- Heifer Breeding less than 30 Days.
Thoughts: cont.

Docile, Fertile, Productive Cows.
Carefully Select Seedstock Provider.
Select Bulls whose Daughters Fit.
Don’t Pamper Bulls.
Reduce Overheads
Thoughts: cont.

🌟 Cow herd

- Trouble Free.
- Good Reproduction.
- Adapted to your Location and Management.
- Low Input—graze most of the year.