

Change and Productivity Should Move In Unison

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“The world is a great place and we are only a very small part of it.”

This statement is a summation of several responses I made at a recent classroom session involving Dickinson State University students. The conversation was initiated by a general discussion of issues within the cattle industry and the challenges facing producers today, young or old.

The general format of the discussion was a statement of our current efforts followed by a repeated question, “Why?” Why do we really need to change in response to things that seem to be not of our choosing? The intrusion of regulations, regardless of origin, simply complicates life.

A school setting is the most appropriate place for such a discussion. Unfortunately, the answers are not always that comforting.

The bottom line, we have changed and will continue to change. Change is not all bad. On a “seat of the pants” productivity index, the beef industry is more productive today than in past decades because of change.

I pulled off the shelf the book “Beef Cattle,” sixth edition by A.L. Nuemann and Roscoe R. Snapp published in 1969. The book was the text utilized in the beef production class at North Dakota State University in the early ‘70s. I also picked up the “IRM Pocket Reference” book, published in 2001 through the efforts of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association.

A couple of items pop out quickly. The older book simply has less data than the “IRM Pocket Reference” book. The process of producing beef would seem to have become more difficult, at least more detailed. In the past, a photograph seemed to cement a concept without much data.

One of many notable areas of change is herd health. In paging through the older book, the section on diseases discusses diseases that have been controlled through management and restricted movement. In some cases, the diseases simply have been eradicated.

Very limited knowledge was available on vaccination protocols, with most known diseases treated aggres-

sively by antibiotics of the day. Many of these same antibiotics are still around today. However, current treatment protocols certainly utilize newer formulations. Sections dealing with mucosal disease complex, shipping fever, pneumonia and diarrhea relied on these same aggressive antibiotic regimens, with little to no preventive vaccination programs. The underlying viruses simply were not known.

In stark contrast, the 2001 “IRM Pocket Reference” specifically lists the following manageable viral and bacterial diseases: infectious bovine rhinotracheitis virus, bovine parainfluenza-3 virus, bovine viral diarrhea virus, bovine respiratory syncytial virus, bovine rotavirus and coronavirus, bovine papilloma virus, rabies, brucella abortus, leptospirosis, colibacillosis, several clostridial infections, pasteurellosis, haemophilus somnus, campylobacter fetus, bacillus anthracis, moraxella bovis, staphylococcus aureus, tetanus, anaplasma marginale and trichomoniasis.

Quoting from the guide, “Immunization is a valuable and continually changing aspect of bovine herd health. Every production management system has a complex economic basis, multiple environmental factors, and individual management constraints that require customization of vaccination programs.”

The management protocols taught today have greatly changed since the early ‘70s, so has the industry. Issues today may seem difficult as evidenced in the implementation of new disease management and herd health systems

In the end, the world has changed. The beef industry has changed with the world. Both are still here, but more productive than ever.

May you find all your NAIS-approved ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0272.

**In dealing with today s
issues, before the gavel
sounds remember**



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complex economic basis, multiple environmental
factors, and individual management
constraints that require customization.”**

2001 IRM Pocket Reference, National Cattleman's Beef Association