

Cattle Breeds and Grazing Systems Make for Good Discussion

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If you were to ask what production topics create a lot of discussion in the beef business, you'd find that two topics surface repeatedly: cattle breeds and grazing systems. Both topics are laden with data, but that data is mixed heavily with opinion.

Personal interests and bias tend to bleed into the discussions. The choice of breed and grazing system are held dear to the rancher's heart. And as owner, certain rights are still bestowed on those who actually own cattle and land.

To see how dear owners hold these rights, view the North Dakota Stockmen's Association Web site. The individual right to own and enjoy the use of private property is fundamental to that organization. This right is the cornerstone to a free society and the association firmly opposes any infringement on its lawful use.

In addition to the right to use private property, the North Dakota Stockmen's Association strongly asserts the fundamental principal of free enterprise and the free marketplace as the first choice of determining economic impacts. As such, any interference to the constitutional right of an individual to own and control private property is simply unacceptable.

This same spirit of independence is exercised in the diversity of how cattle are managed. Cattle breeds are numerous. It doesn't take much trouble to find 50 or more breeds of cattle.

Diversity has been close to the heart of producers for decades. Regardless of particular traits of excellence within a breed, these traits have migrated from breed to breed. As a result of a free market, individual breeders have been rewarded according to real market value, not someone's perceived value.

This migration will certainly separate the elder producers from the up-and-comers. The elders are writing the next chapter in beef breed history while the up-and-comers are busy with current affairs and debates. A free market truly intensifies breed choices, which are the key to independence and individual producer sustainability.

The breed discussion is popular, but a discussion of land and its management is likely to inspire among produc-

ers a spirit of pride and independence. There is nothing held in greater regard than the very land we walk on, care for and pass on to the next generation. The self-ingrained motto for any successful rancher centers on achieving or discovering ecological balance for the given set of resources entrusted to the rancher's care.

The ecology of striving for the optimum interrelationship between all living things and their respective environments, is not defined by mandated programs or practices. Rather, successful ecological balance involves the astute applications of biological principals by a resource owner who is allowed to manage and operate within the scope of a free market.

Given the complexity of ecological principles, it is little wonder debate can quickly flare. What works in one place may be only a partial answer to effective management elsewhere. These differences can create a lively discussion, particularly in regard to grazing systems.

Currently, at the North Dakota State University Dickinson Research Extension Center, a considerable effort is taking place to help sort the many thoughts, opinion-based or data-based, that encompass the concept of developing grazing systems. These systems are designed to meet the needs of the land, the plants and the cattle, regardless of time of year. These systems will directly impact and interact for the financial and lifestyle expectations of the rancher.

A prerequisite of the discussion is that all six-shooters will be checked at the bar, and the right to use and enjoy private property will be exercised. Enjoy your land and cattle.

May you find all your 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 BT0179.

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