

## Tagging Cattle Challenges Time Management Concept

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The discussion remains heated on animal identification. As the winter picks up and the meeting season clicks along, a very common request is for more information on what is new in the world of cattle electronic identification.

The Dickinson Research Extension Center is deep in the throws of the animal identification issue. The DREC actively was placing electronic IDs (EIDs) in calves this past fall. Currently, the tracing process is getting started and the total results are still in the future.

Numerically, the center physically tagged 3,323 calves and 944 cows at 28 different work sites for an average of 152 cattle at each site. These sites were spread across North Dakota. The team logged 3,762 miles and spent 56 hours and 28 minutes on the road, or an average of a little more than two hours to travel to and from each site.

Time management is an important part of any business equation involving agriculture. The time it takes to work cattle is no different. At the 28 sites, the team worked, on average, seven hours per site. The time was divided up into setup, working the cattle, teardown and cleanup.

The average total time spent working cattle was four hours and seven minutes per site, with an average of 1.1 minutes per animal worked (including both cows and calves). The efficiency of the team improved as the season went along. Regardless of the time spent working cattle, setup, cleanup and teardown time also must be noted.

The team utilized the For-Most portable hydraulic double alley with a 750 chute. The system, as described by For-Most, has a 14-foot adjustable double alley, adjustable overhead grill and a 4-foot funnel section to a 9-foot single alley behind the model 750 squeeze chute and scale.

Cattle were fed into the For-Most system through a portable Wilson Wheel Corral, a series of hinged panels that unfold from the travel position to a complete corral for 140 head of calves (600 pound) and can be set up by one person in seven minutes (as described by Wilson). The team found setup time was quick and easy, utilizing available hydraulics and skill and experience with fifth-wheel driving.

Two pulling units were required for delivering the needed equipment. An extra pickup was utilized to haul the required computer and electronic equipment. Although equipment placement time was actually minimal, the total setup time (allowing for conversation, location decisions and electronic setup) averaged 56 minutes per site. The teardown time was 34 minutes per site, a reverse of the setup time minus the need to decide where to put everything.

In addition, cleanup time was necessary. Cleanup time is the time required to wash and disinfect all the equipment and have the equipment ready and serviceable for the next site. Cleanup averaged an hour and 27 minutes per site.

In the typical cattle operation, time is critical. In the sense of the mobile facility, the facility works, but, as always, look at the whole picture before making a conclusion.

The final discussion over individual cattle EIDs is far from over. The center could work 200 cattle in a civil 10 hour day. The day breaks down to an hour for travel to the work site, an hour for setup, an hour for lunch, a half-hour for two break periods, a half-hour for teardown, an hour and half for cleanup, an hour to travel home and three and a half hours to work the cows.

I'm just not sure there is enough time in the day to get every cow and calf tagged, at least at the ranch level. The saga continues; you also must count all the overhead time and costs.

May you find all your USAIP ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at [www.BeefTalk.com](http://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](http://www.CHAPS2000.com) on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0229.

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## **A Typical 10 Hour Mobile Cattle Working Facility Day**

An hour travel to the work site

An hour to setup

Three hours to work cattle

An hour for lunch

Half-hour to finish working cattle

Half-hour for tear down

An hour and a half for clean up and facility disinfection

An hour to drive home

Half-hour for breaks and conversation

Total Cattle Worked = 200