

Pasture and Range, the Second Priority for Cow-calf Producers

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In the world of beef, it is important to evaluate and ask if our priorities are in the right order. This is true in all businesses and beef is no exception.

However, setting priorities is only part of the equation. The next step is to make sure one sets aside enough time to reflect on how to effectively accomplish life among the noted priorities.

The facts are very straight forward for all of us. We need to realize that few of us really have adequate resources or unlimited opportunities.

However, one common denominator all producers have is time. We all are given exactly the same amount of time every day.

Some of us set our priorities and move through the day with noted accomplishments. Others simply let the day pass and allow the passage of time to determine our accomplishments for the day.

We all need some of those quiet days, when time is our only companion. The most productive use of time, however, involves acting on a set of priorities to accomplish a positive outcome for the operation.

Beef priorities were documented in a recent publication titled "Priorities First: Identifying Management Priorities in the Commercial Cow-Calf Business" by Tom Field, Ph.D., Fort Collins, Colo. Field summarized the producer's need to utilize information to self-evaluate his or her operation.

While identification and documentation of priorities are important, action should not be impetuous. Simply doing what the neighbor does may lead only to group auction sales rather than periodic singular auction sales.

Rather, as noted earlier, the one resource we all equally have is time. It is important to utilize time to reflect on industry priorities. Use that time to identify and improve your opportunities within your operation.

In recent BeefTalk articles, the first priority, herd nutrition, was discussed and the various priorities set by producers were applauded. One red flag was raised when bull nutrition was ranked alongside dry-cow nutrition. Both would represent missed opportunities within a producer's business.

Continuing on down the list, the second priority identified for cow-calf producers and specialists was the category of pasture and range. This probably was not surprising to anyone.

The high ranking for range and pasture is very reflective of the nature of the cattle business, which is a land-based business designed to capture and harvest the natural resources bountiful within land-based enterprises. Through the cow, these resources are converted to harvestable value, which primarily is protein for human consumption, along with myriad other products utilized by consumers.

The 2006 report by the North Dakota Farm and Ranch Business Management program (<http://www.ndfarmmanagement.com>) showed the average cost for summer pasture was \$80.30 per cow/calf pair when the herds were sorted on net return per cow/calf pair. The low 20 percent spent \$85.08, the middle 40 percent to 60 percent spent \$89.96 and the 20 percent that had the greatest net return spent \$67.60 per cow/calf pair.

In terms of animal unit months (aum), the low 20 percent averaged 6.05 aum, the middle 40 percent to 60 percent averaged 5.88 aum and the high 20 percent averaged 6.05 aum. These are interesting numbers and the need to reflect on them is real.

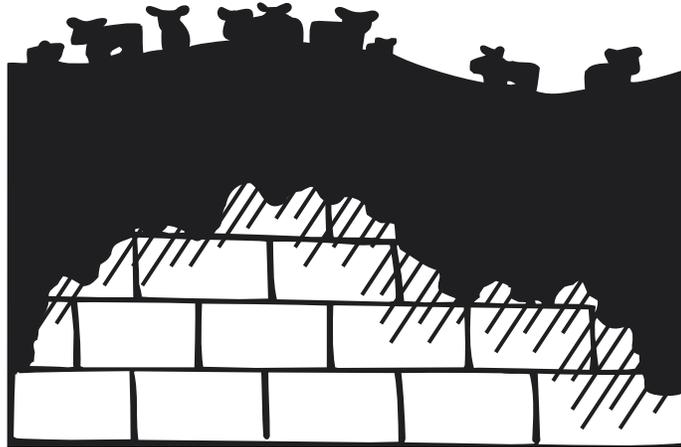
Certainly, it is good that pasture and range ranked second behind nutrition as priorities for the beef producer. It is important that 73 percent of the cow-calf producers consider pasture and range as a foundation to the business. However, the utilization of pasture and range resources needs to be thought through.

Now is a good time to grab some of that time we all have and ponder on how effective our pasture and range utilization is. This examination should include the short-term and long-term health of grassland resources. More later.

May you find all your ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at <http://www.Beeftalk.com>. For more information, contact the NDB-CIA Office, 1041 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to <http://www.CHAPS2000.com> on the Internet.

Pasture & Range



Foundation to the Herd