



BeefTalk 708: Do the Cows Fit the Operation?

SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Integrated Resource Management (IRM)

“Dedicated to improving the economic efficiency of cattle operations through effective resource management”

IRM Pocket Reference, 2001,
National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

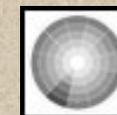
Are the dedicated resources and activities that are present within the cattle operation optimal in regard to the economic efficiency of the operation?

Generally, facts do not change and the application of facts to life determines success. In other words, life is more than luck.

One needs to plan, implement, evaluate and replan to stay in touch. That was the essence of the integrated resource management program that was very successful with the help of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and the cooperative efforts of the land-grant universities across the U.S.



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The program focused on beef financial and production data collection and evaluation followed by appropriate managerial adjustments. Integrated resource management (IRM) is “dedicated to improving the economic efficiency of cattle operations through effective resource management” as noted on the cover of the IRM pocket reference that was published in 2001 and sponsored by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

As with many programs, the covers change but the core concepts do not, thus the facts. The IRM pocket reference was a good source of information for the beef producer. Because breeding time is just around the corner, the manual has several good points regarding rebreeding cows.

Cow condition is the primary indicator of the success of the upcoming breeding season. As a rule of thumb, after paging through the IRM pocket reference, successfully breeding a set of cows that have a condition score of 3 or lower is not going to happen. Condition score 3 or lower cows are cows that have little to no fat cover, with prominent backbone, hips and ribs evident and, in the extreme case, are emaciated.

These cows are not candidates for rebreeding and, if prominent within a herd, there needs to be a serious discussion with those who can offer some help. Poor nutrition and subsequent health issues would more than likely be the foundation of the problem and immediate action must be taken to correct the problems.

However, those herds are not the point of this discussion. Because body condition changes gradually from extremely thin to fat as the cows add condition, the cows will advance from those borderline condition score 4 cows to a

condition score of 5 or 6. Moderately conditioned cows (condition score 5 or 6) do not have obviously visible ribs, the backbone and hips are smoother and there is no obvious visual evidence of individual bones.

These cows appear physically fit, move well and are alert and content. These are cows that should be present in cow herds across cattle country and reflect the ability of cattle producers to match cow type to the production environment.

There is not one cow type to fit all environments. The evaluation of body condition and the analysis of the cost of feed to maintain the desired body condition are critical IRM points. The first point, which is having the cows in body condition scores of 5 or 6, will assure good pregnancy rates. The IRM pocket reference indicates that pregnancy rates for body condition score 5 cows should be around 86 percent and 93 percent for body condition score 6 cows.

Are producers meeting that criteria? If one visits the benchmarks for those North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association beef producers involved in the North Dakota State University Extension Service's CHAPS program, the current benchmark is 93.6 percent.

The implication would be that the average cow within those herds would have a body condition score of 6. The validation of the first point is positive and indicative of good management. Also, keep in mind that cows do not need to be fleshy, condition score 7 or greater cows to rebreed. In fact, there would not be a positive return on the feed bill if the cows are overfed.

Just like in any life form, obesity carries additional health risks and should be avoided. That does bring a good point and leads a producer to the question and the focus of the IRM program as stated earlier, which says "dedicated to improving the economic efficiency of cattle operations through effective resource management."

Are the dedicated resources and activities that are present within the cattle operation optimal in regard to the economic efficiency of the operation? That question still remains for many beef operations because additional managerial resources dedicated to proper data collection and followed by the correct financial and economic analysis of the operation are needed.

Do the cows fit the operation? Pregnancy evaluations will answer the production question. At 93 percent pregnancy rates, the answer is yes. Anything less than 85 percent should raise an eyebrow.

However, the economic question often remains open.

May you find all your ear tags.

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

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