

Wintering the Cowherd

The Situation

The greatest cost, effort, and responsibility of cattle producers is providing for the feed and nutritional needs of their stock. ND farm management analysis identifies calf crop percentage, weaning weights, and market prices as key profit drivers: however, operational and feeding costs has been identified as the primary difference between high and low profit producers. With significant consequences associated with inadequate nutrition, the challenge is to most economically meet the nutritional needs through feeding strategies, feed sources, and feeding precision.

Extension Response

Producers needs to address the herd's feed/nutritional needs while managing feed/production costs is being addressed collaboratively through Extension Agents, Specialists, and allied industry. Information has been delivered through producer meetings, timely news releases, tour presentations, and agent in-service trainings. Additionally a basic nutrition reference was compiled and over 300 individual producers have been consulted.

Educational emphasis has been on alternative feeding methods and feedstuffs, the integration of cattle and cropping through expanded farmed forage, residue use, cover cropping; marginal land use and hay land productivity. Greater use of forage testing has been promoted through assistance in submitting and interpreting feed analysis, and using computer programs for ration evaluation, prediction of animal performance, and feeding cost estimation.

Impacts

A trend continues for expansion of existing producers tempered by forage conditions and market volatility. Available grazing resources are being fully utilized with land rentals reflective of demand. Substantial increase in the past year have been seen for planting annuals for hay and a

growing trend in corn for silage. The use of mixed rations and delivery is rapidly being adopted by operations of scale now growing silage, utilizing residues, and feeding byproducts to provide for and manage winter feeding costs. Associated with these trends have been equipment dealers adding and marketing expanded lines of feed processing and mixing equipment in the region.



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Non-Extension Collaborators

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Resource Links

[https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/northcentralrec/livestock-extension Cow Nutrition and Feeding \(PowerPoint\)](https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/northcentralrec/livestock-extension/Cow%20Nutrition%20and%20Feeding%20(PowerPoint))