

Nutritional Management of Beef Cattle

Improving production through effective feeding strategies

Public Value Statement

Managing feeding strategies to reduce input costs results in financially viable and sustainable livestock operations that play a critical role in healthy local, state and national economies.

The Situation

There are 1.8 million cows and calves in North Dakota that contribute over \$1 billion to the state's economy. The ND Farm Business Management Program reported that feed costs in 2018 accounted for 45% of total direct and overhead expenses of \$634.54 per cow. Strategies that reduce feed waste and optimize utilization of feedstuffs are critical to help producers meet livestock performance goals in a cost-effective and efficient manner. Proper nutrition is an important component of a profitable and sustainable livestock operation.

Extension Response

Nearly 800 producers attended workshops and webinars designed to increase producer knowledge and understanding of nutritional and feeding management, with topics including: feed analysis and interpretation of results, alternative feeds, feed management during drought, winter feeding management, supplementation, stretching feed resources, ration evaluation, mineral supplementation, heifer development strategies, and weaning and backgrounding calves. Over 200 consultations were held with individual producers to address specific questions and concerns. In addition, training sessions and resources were developed specifically for NDSU County Extension agents to help facilitate producer interactions and requests for information. News releases were developed and media interviews were conducted to provide additional information and resources for stakeholders.

Impacts

Surveys distributed to participants indicated that producers estimated future cost savings ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 by implementing various changes in their operation as a result of program information. Producers submitted over 150 feed and forage samples that were used in ration development. Twenty-two percent of participating

livestock operations reported that they have made changes to their feeding programs, including using alternative feeds, improving facilities and feeding strategies, and sorting cows into production groups to better meet specific nutrient requirements.

Feedback

- "We are planning to improve our drought management plan and implement techniques to use hay more efficiently."
- "Using alternative feeds has allowed us to extend our limited hay supply."
- "Forage testing and ration balancing has saved our operation thousands of dollars and increased cow performance."



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