

*Heifer Selection  
for  
Improved Lifetime Productivity*



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# *Heifer Selection for Improved Lifetime Productivity*

- ✦ Cow herd or individual heifer?
- ✦ Heifer's lifetime **Productivity**? Or cow herd's annual or long-term **Profitability**?
- ✦ Why so much emphasis on heifer pregnancy? **Fed in or bred in?**
- ✦ Whole ranch profit or bragging rights?
- ✦ Productivity or Profitability? **Both!**

# *Heifer Selection*

for the

Productivity

and

Profitability

of

Your Future Cow Herd

# *Four Areas to Manage*

✦ Production

✦ Economics/Finance

✦ Marketing

✦ People





# *Three Ways to Improve Profit*

☀ **Increase turnover**

☀ **Decrease overheads**

☀ **Improve gross margin**

**- Total returns - Direct costs**

# *Whole Ranch Profit*

**It's Profit per Acre  
or Whole Ranch Profit  
that you strive to improve—  
not Production or even  
Profit per Cow.**



# Major Determinants of Profits

- ✦ Enterprise mix and choices
- ✦ Overheads (Including People)
- ✦ Stocking Rate
  - Cow Size and Milk Production
  - Grazing & Pasture Management
- ✦ Fed Feed vs. Grazed Feed
- ✦ Calving Season
- ✦ Realized Herd Fertility
- ✦ Wise Input Use for Optimum Production
- ✦ Marketing

# Reduce Overheads Market Well

## Improve **Three *Key Ratios***



Acres per Cow

Cows per FTE

Fed Feed vs  
Grazed Feed



**So**  
***For Profitable Decision  
Making***  
***(Selecting Replacement Heifers)***  
***Become a Systems  
Thinker***

# *Adaptive Grazing*

✦ Short Graze Periods—followed by

✦ Lengthy Recovery Periods.

✦ Short and Long are different for each situation—season, rainfall, climate, plant regrowth rates, objectives, etc. That’s why it’s called “**Adaptive**.”

# *Adaptive Grazing*

*Will improve the land—the soil*

✦ Increase Carrying Capacity

✦ Greater Stocking Rate

✦ Better Animal Performance

– Fertility

– Growth

– Health



# *Summer—SE Montana*





# *April—Missouri*





# *April—Mississippi*






# *April—Mississippi*





# *April--Texas*





# *Continuous Improvement of Livestock*

Begins with





*Cows selected for this!*





A little hay and a lot of cured grass



# *Match Cow Size & Calving Season to Available Resources*




## Connected to:

Carrying Capacity  
Fed Feed vs. Grazed Feed  
Overheads  
Grazing Management  
Labor & Facilities  
Herd Fertility



They really will eat it.





Change the  
Calving Season  
to be more closely  
in Sync with Nature

# Increase grazing days and Reduce feeding days.





# *Minimal Development of Replacement Heifers*



# *Reduce Inputs then Cull the Right Cow*

✦ Open

✦ Dry

✦ Requires individual attention or help

✦ Wild

✦ Poor calf

✦ Ugly (your definition)



# *Select the Right Bull*

*---Be Really Careful!*

- ✦ Mature Size— “Moderate” or Small
- ✦ Milk—Most ranchers have and want too much
- ✦ Excellent Cow Fertility
  
- ✦ Care Requirement—Do you have to feed them to keep them in condition? If so, do you want their heifer calves?

- ✦ Raise replacement heifers from bulls and cows that fit my environment.
- ✦ **Cut inputs and then----- “cull the right cow.”**
- ✦ Longevity is a result of fertility and fertility is a result of environmental fit.



*Production and Marketing  
Must Work Together.*



## *Two Ideas after cutting inputs.*

### **Heifers:**

✦ Short exposure—lots of heifers

- Opens make good feeders
- Pregnants make good cows

### **Cows:**

✦ Short calving season

- Long breeding season. **What?**



# *Short Calving Season*

Leave bulls with cows until  
preg check time





# *Adapted Cows Calving Season Grazing Management*



**Interconnected Effects:**  
Grazing Management  
Fed Feed vs. Grazed Feed  
Carrying Capacity  
Labor & Facilities  
Overheads  
Herd Fertility



## *Results:*

- ✦ Appropriate Cow Size (typically smaller) and Stocking Rate (usually greater) happens.
- ✦ Profitable “open” heifers.
- ✦ Less fed feed. More grazing.
- ✦ Drought planning flexibility.
- ✦ Market opportunity for Bred Cows.
- ✦ Increased profitability.





## *Thoughts to Consider:*

- ✦ Prioritize for Profit not Convenience.
- ✦ Think **Soil** before Plants and Animals.
- ✦ Think Return per Acre not per Cow.
- ✦ Heifer Breeding less than 30 Days.
- ✦ Don't Overdevelop Rep. Heifers.

## *Thoughts: cont.*

- ✦ Docile, Fertile, Productive Cows.
- ✦ Carefully Select Seedstock Provider.
- ✦ Select Bulls whose Daughters Fit.
- ✦ Don't Pamper Bulls.
- ✦ Don't Overdevelop Rep. Heifers.
- ✦ Reduce Overheads



## *Thoughts: cont.*

### ✦ Cow herd

- Trouble Free.
- Good Reproduction.
- Adapted to your Location and Management.
- Low Input—graze most of the year.