

End of Year Report Card for Your Beef Cattle Operation

Allison Brown, Livestock Agent, Alexander County



Tax time is nearing and soon you will be gathering your boxes with receipts and log books together. This chore is a dreaded time in most farming families with no exceptions in mine! However, this can also be an opportunity for you to really examine your beef cattle operation for the year. Since you have most of the information already gathered, this would be an excellent time for you to use a beef cow-calf enterprise budget spreadsheet.

The University of Wisconsin Extension has developed and released a new beef cow-calf enterprise budget spreadsheet. After entering your information into the spreadsheet, it will provide you with information that can be used to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement within your farming operation. The spreadsheet can also be used for doing projections, and looking at how potential changes can impact the cow-calf enterprise's cash flow.

The enterprise budget is designed to calculate profit or loss and break evens on a whole herd, per cow, and per cwt of feeder calf sold basis when complete information is entered. It is designed to allow user defined parameters for calculating many overhead expenses.

Examples are included in each section, and users can modify by adding, removing or renaming items to fit their operation. Directions and guidelines for using the spreadsheet are located in an Adobe Acrobat file that can be accessed at the top, near the center of the spreadsheet.

<http://fyi.uwex.edu/wbic/cowcalf/> then scroll down to Economic Tools and click on the budget spreadsheet link.

Don't let all of your tax preparation go to waste. A few more minutes and you can know exactly how much each cow is costing you and what you need to make on each calf in order for her to turn a profit.

Area Beef Conference

Our Area Beef Conference will be held **Thursday, January 5, 2017 at the Wilkes County Agricultural Resource Center** located at 416 Executive Drive, Suite B, Wilkesboro, NC 28697. The Conference begins at 3:30 pm and ends at 6:45 pm with a sponsored meal.

Speakers for this event include:

Bryan Blinson – “NC Cattlemen’s Association Activities”

Ronnie Holman - “Strategies for Ranching on Leased Land”

Dean Askew – “Producing Haylage as Forage for Beef Cattle”

Dr. Matt Poore - “The Importance of Nutritional Management of Beef Cows During Drought”

Don't miss out on this educational opportunity. If you would like to attend this event, please call your local Extension Center to reserve your seat by January 3, 2017.

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Extension

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Cattle Call



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Feeding the Herd in a Drought

Seth Nagy, Livestock Agent, Caldwell County

Livestock in western NC are being impacted by the current drought. There has been little rainfall in our region since mid-summer. Pastures have been eaten down, forcing farmers to start feeding hay early.



Now is the time for livestock owners to have a good plan for winter feeding and obtain hay they need now or very soon. Because the drought has also impacted Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama, I expect a shortage of hay in the entire region. The flooding in the eastern part of the State has also impacted the hay supply in a negative way.

Of course, all hay is not equal. Some hay has better quality than others. To determine forage quality, your local County Extension Center can help farmers sample their hay for quality testing. The forage analysis is performed at the NC Department of Agriculture - Food and Drug - Forage testing lab. The test results provide protein and energy content of the hay. These results can be used to develop a customized winter feeding program for growers.

To calculate the hay needed for winter feeding, farmers need to know the number of head, as well as the average weight, of the animals. This information, along with how much hay is on hand, can be used to determine if there will be a shortage and if hay should be purchased.

If quality hay is not available, there are other possible feeds, such as corn silage or by-product feeds. By-product feeds are a broad range of stuff left over from other processes. This includes spent grains from the beer brewing process, orange peelings from juice making, corn gluten from ethanol manufacturing, whole cottonseed separated during cotton ginning, soybean hulls which are removed before the beans are crushed for soybean oil, and many, many more by-products. Typically, by-product feeds are higher quality than hay. However, it often takes a slight change in management or balancing of minerals for these products to make a balanced diet.

Although farmers are familiar with feeding hay, weeds can be a potential issue. When hay comes from far away, there may also be viable weed seeds in the hay. New weeds are a potential issue with hay shipped from far away. This is a common way weeds are spread. There are some local farmers that can attest to having new weed problems after importing hay. This is especially true when lower quality hay is moved around.

Besides weed seed, insects can be moved around, too. There are many documented cases of fire ants being moved with hay that is stored outside in contact with the ground. Long story short, be careful when bringing in hay. You may be getting more than you paid for.

To help farmers locate hay, the NC Department of Agriculture maintains the Hay Alert website (www.ncagr.gov/hayalert). This website can be used to advertise hay for sale. This is similar to many other online sites used to connect buyers and sellers. The site also includes trucking companies available to help move hay.

If you need help developing a winter feeding program or assistance determining your forage needs, Extension can help. Contact your County Extension Center for more assistance.