

For Immediate Release
FAIR PLAY, SC
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Have You Created A Management Plan For Your Beef Operation?

Cattle management is a complex situation; the really hard part is making the complex simple. Successful beef operations depend on attention to detail, yet many are guilty of hoping things will work out rather than exerting some simple management control. *Hope* and *Control* are two words key to optimizing production and maximizing profit. We can *hope* for a 90%+ calf crop weaned with an average 12 month calving interval. We can *hope* for no calving problems and cows that breed back quickly. We can *hope* to wean 600#+ crossbred calves in demand by the beef industry. Or we can use our management to *control* the cow herd and ensure profitable results.

We need a written plan which reminds us of details and provides a step-by-step procedure to get desired results. However, a plan is not a straight-jacket. To be useful we constantly review, criticize and update our plan. But, if we don't have a plan, how do we know what to change or what went wrong when results are not as desired? There are many items which could be included in your plan and we will discuss only a few of the essentials. Remember it is your plan and it must be individualized for your herd. No two operations are exactly alike and a plan developed for one will probably not work on another.

(1) REVIEW YOUR PRESENT SITUATION. *How many cows do you have and of what age groups? What is your percent calf crop weaned - for cows calving and for cows in last year's breeding season? What is the herd average calving interval? How many cows exceed this average? When do your cows calve? How many pounds of calf per cow in the herd do you have to sell? What breeds are represented in your cows; in your bulls? Do you have logical crossbreeding program? PLUS other questions you deem important.* Be as specific as possible

when answering these questions, but get something down on paper. An estimate is certainly more valuable than no information at all. If you cannot accurately answer these questions, it will already have pointed out deficiencies in your management that are possibly correctable with a simple record keeping program.

(2) REVIEW YOUR GOALS FOR THE HERD. *How many cows do you want to have? What is a logical percent calf crop weaned? What weaning weights are realistic? What should be the length of your calving season? When should your cows calve? What is a productive crossbreeding program for your environment?* Seriously set some goals for your herd. If you don't have goals, you may be no further along in 5-10 years than you are now.

(3) INVENTORY YOUR RESOURCES. *How much land do you control? What is the carrying capacity of your land? How much feed (pasture and stored feed) can you produce or economically purchase? Specifically what kinds of feed, including pasture, are available? What is your labor situation? What is your financial situation? Can you buy/rent more land; cows?* Be realistic. Plan pasture carrying capacity for an average year, not the best year. Prepare for the drought that will surely come. Critically evaluate yourself and your available help as to strengths and weaknesses.

(4) RECONSIDER YOUR GOALS. *Are your goals realistic with the resource constraints you identified? Are your goals attainable? Do your goals make economic sense? Do you have the management expertise to reach your goals?* Many times goals will need to be changed after a careful review of resources. Maybe your goals are unrealistic or unattainable with resources you control or can purchase/rent.

(5) DEFINE METHODS TO REACH GOALS. *How do you change your calving season to a different time of year? How can you shorten your calving season? How fast can you go with either? How much more/less pasture/feed will you use? What management changes will*

you make? What breed of bulls do you buy? There are large amounts of reliable research data to aid you in planning changes to your program. Many alternatives can be “penciled out” to give an accurate estimate of what can be expected from your management changes. Seek lots of advice from Beef Extension, your Veterinarian and successful neighbors and friends.

(6) CALCULATE COSTS AND RETURNS. *Where do dollars spent yield the greatest return in profit? Can you spend less in certain areas without decreasing returns? How do you allocate obviously limited resources to make the most progress?* There is almost always a difference between maximum performance and optimizing profit. There are two ways to make money in any business venture. One is to hold gross income constant and decrease expenses. Easy to say, but that is hard to make pay in most situations. The other is to increase expenses while increasing gross income to a much larger proportion. Oftentimes it is not about spending dollars as many management changes do not require expense but just mental effort on your part.

(7) CONTINUALLY EVALUATE SUCCESS. *Did you get the expected results in more cows pregnant; heavier calves; higher price; less expense per cow or whatever goal you set? Has your situation changed from what it was and in the direction of your goals?* If your results are not as expected, criticize your plan, change it and make it better. If you have established realistic objectives you should evaluate every change in performance by how close you are to reaching your goals. Once one goal has been reached - set a new one. It may be simply a higher or greater increase in performance or a complete change in your management philosophy. Remember, the performance of your cattle operation is never static. It is either going forward or backward, but never standing still. Make sure you **Control** what happens. Increases in profit will not come about by **Hoping** for them.

The folks at Spitzer Ranch hope you had a very MERRY CHRISTMAS and wish you a BLESSED and PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR! They would like to remind you of their

PROFESSIONAL CATTLEMEN'S BRANGUS BULL SALE, SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2014. If you wish your name added to their mailing list for Newsletters and/or a Bull Sale Catalog call 864/972-9140, write SPITZER RANCH, 1511 HWY 59, Fair Play, SC, 29643 or send an email note to spitzeranch@mindspring.com. Their WINTER 2014 NEWSLETTER and the CATALOG will be available at www.srbulls.com soon after February 1, 2014

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