

STATION #10: BEEF MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

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STATION PURPOSE:

This station will allow students to tie information gained from the other stations of this competition together. Students will use their knowledge to provide various solutions to a given beef management challenge. They will also gain the ability to weigh solutions against consequences.

STATION STRUCTURE:

This station will be an informal discussion with team members and the judge sitting at a table. The contest official will assume the role of a manager who needs advice about his or her cattle operation. This beef enterprise may be made up of one or more of the following; commercial or purebred cow/calf operation, stocker or backgrounding program and/or feedlot unit. The team will assume the role of a hired consultant to provide advice for the fictitious beef enterprise.

The manager will describe to you his situation, concerns or questions. Your job will be to advise this person, pointing out the possible drawbacks and strengths of his situation and the decisions that he is considering. You may also be asked to offer advice to the producer about what goals and action plans he may want to consider. The conversation will be free-form and active. The team should interact with the manager taking a leadership role in the flow and direction of the conversation.

Your team's score will be based on your ability to determine the various ways in which a decision may impact the profit of a beef enterprise, your knowledge of how the various areas of beef management interrelate and your ability to communicate these ideas to the official.

AREAS OF STUDY:

A firm understanding of how the nine other stations of the Beef Extravaganza interrelate and impact each other. It is also necessary to understand how each area contributes to the overall success of a beef enterprise.

For Example:

- How does the health station (station 1) relate to decisions made about nutrition (station 2)?
- How would a decision to market grade and yield (station 3 – marketing) impact your bull selection decisions (station 4 – seedstock merchandising)?
- If I decide to expand my grazing opportunities (station 2 - nutrition), then what should I consider about pasture design and how that impacts the environment (station 7 – industry issues)?

Example Scenario

Assume that a producer sets a goal to increase the weaning weights of his calves by 50 pounds. He hopes that this will improve profitability of the commercial cow-calf enterprise that he/she owns. There are several paths that the manager may choose to accomplish this goal. Each path has its own advantages and drawbacks. For example:

1. He/She may choose to buy bulls with larger weaning weight EPDs. However, the bulls may cost more than the weight is worth. Growthier bulls may cause greater levels of dystocia and in turn the need for increased labor.
2. He/She could consider creep feeding, but this will increase feed costs, and may cause the cow's milking ability to slow earlier than anticipated.
3. He/She may choose to wean later than usual, but then perhaps cow condition will be decreased causing rebreeding problems or over utilization of pastures.

Teams would assume the role of the advisor and explain each of the above paths for the producer to reach his or her goal. They would probe the manager for production and management information about his or her enterprise to assess the feasibility of each choice. This would be an informal dialog between the team members and the judge.

The below letter should be used in preparation for this station.

3 OAKS CATTLE RANCH

STORY CITY, IOWA 50011

December 12, 2014

Dear Consultant Team:

Thanks for meeting with me to visit about my operation. I have included the information which you had requested about my operation and included it below to help with our discussion.

My overall concern is that my net return does not seem to be as high as it could be. I would like to gain your advice as to changes I should consider and what the implications of those changes might be.

1. Reproduction Program

Calve in March
Natural service
Calving season = 100 days
BW = 100 pounds

2. Growth performance

WWT = 500 pounds.
Wean at 7 months of age on average

3. Markets

Cows sold if they don't calve in April
Calves sold 1 to 2 weeks after weaning

4. Breeding Program

Mixed breed cows, semi-rotational cross breeder
Selection for growth.
% calf crop (of cows calve) = 95%
Cows culled if don't calve; when cows go to grass.

5. Feeding Program

Continuously graze from May through September
Summer supplement hay, grain if needed
Dry lot, stored feeds Nov. through April

Thanks for your help. I look forward to hearing from you.

R. L Herd