

Making a Difference

2016 Jim Wells County Beef Cattle and Range Management Rogelio Mercado, County Extension Agent-Agriculture

RELEVANCE

Beef cattle play a vital role in the livelihood of land owners and managers in Jim Wells County (JWC). However, county inventory has fluctuated from 25,000 head of mother cows in 2007, down to less than 10,000 head in early 2014. Drought conditions experienced from 2011-2013 were a major factor in local producers reducing, and in some cases liquidate all of their herds. During 2014, all time highs in the cattle market were experienced as the national cattle herd also saw a dip in numbers that dated back to the early 1950's. During this time, most beef cattle producers were faced with empty pastures and the inability to restock due to increased cow prices and low availability of replacement cattle. These conditions created the need for new program ideas and topics for producers to become more informed and efficient in their operations.

RESPONSE

Using data gathered from previous year's surveys and evaluations, and input from local industry groups, the JWC Extension Beef Committee participated in developing and planning two major educational programs which incorporated topics identified thru the survey process. Based on comments in customer satisfaction surveys, the group modified meeting locations, time and length of presentations to better suit the need of clientele. Agent Rogelio Mercado also collaborated with the JWC Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) and the South Texas Grazing Land Coalition (STGLC) in conducting their annual educational programs for beef cattle producers. Below is a summary of these four programs.

- **Beef 706:** Thirty-six beef cattle producers participated in a first ever, South Texas Beef 706 Program.
 - **Part I** – May 23, 2016: A feeder cattle selection and marketing clinic was held at Gulf Coast Livestock Auction in Alice, Texas. Participants were teamed up into six groups and asked to evaluate seven head of feeder cattle. A mock auction was conducted and each group purchased a calf to follow thru the program. The feeder cattle were shipped to the King Ranch Feed Yard for the next 154 days.
 - **Part II** – October 25, 2016: The cattle were shipped to Kane's Meat Processors in Corpus Christi, Texas. Participants received information on live cattle grading and evaluated the cattle prior to slaughter. A tour of Kane's followed providing the participants with an inside look at beef processing, value-added carcass fabrication, bi-products, packaging, and food safety practices.
 - **Part III** – November 1, 2016: One half of each carcass was shipped to the Meat Science Lab at Texas A&M University in Kingsville. Each group received additional information on carcass quality and yield grading and then had the opportunity to grade the carcass of the calf they had purchased in Part I of the program. A hands-on workshop was then conducted to cut and fabricate each carcass. Weight data was collected on the cuts, lean trim, fat trim and bone to collectively assess a cut-out value of each calf.
 - **Part IV** – November 2, 2016: Program participants attended a final seminar at the Kleberg Wildlife Center in Kingsville to summarize the economic data on the cattle they had purchased. Mercado prepared and presented the final statistics for each calf and announced the winning team.

- **Ranch and Range Field Day:** Agent Rogelio Mercado assisted the JWC Extension Beef Committee in conducting their Annual Ranch and Range Clinic on Saturday, September 3, 2016. The event was hosted by Mr. Richard Shimer at his family's new 1000 acre ranch located five miles north of Alice. Over 80 people participated in the program. Topics included beef cattle market, fever tick, land owner issues, long term weather patterns, hay quality and selection, feral swine control and chute side best management practices.
- **Beef Cattle Marketing Seminar:** Agent Rogelio Mercado assisted the JWC SWCD in hosting their annual educational program for area beef producers on Thursday, August 18, 2016. This year's program was held at Gulf Coast Livestock Auction and focused on the valuation of the cull cow. Auction barn owner, Mr. Eddie Garcia, provided a live demonstration and discussion on how cull cows are valued across the ring and how to increase the value of their cull cows. Fifty beef producers attended the event.
- **Non-Traditional Rancher Field Day:** Agent Rogelio Mercado assisted the STGLC in hosting a "Non-Traditional" Rancher Field Day on Wednesday, October 26, 2016. The event was held at 3E Brand Meats in Ben Bolt, Texas. Presentations on Natural vs Organic Products, Creating Niche Markets, and Marketing Strategies were among the topics in the program. Well over 60 people participated in the program.

RESULTS

These programs provided beef cattle producers with timely information on topics relative to a dynamic, yet challenging year in the beef cattle industry. Program evaluation and input was solicited on two of the above named programs. Below is a summary of the evaluation results.

- **Beef 706:** A retrospective post survey was given to the participants at the end of the event. Twenty-two out of thirty-six participants completed survey. The survey respondents either own or manage 34,289 cattle and 840,278 acres.
 - On average, the respondents indicated they had a 2.6 fold increase in knowledge regarding 5 beef management areas, including feed yard performance, BQA, and beef cattle evaluation and value.
 - 100% responded that what they learned would help them in their businesses, with 90% expecting to make changes in their production practices based on the information and skills they learned.
 - 100% of the respondents indicated that what they learned would either save them or make them more money with an average of \$31.82/head, ranging from \$10 - \$50. When applied to the total number of head managed or owned by these participants, the program had an overall economic impact of \$1,091,013.64.
 - Overall the survey respondents scored the program 9.35 (excellent) on a ten-point scale.
- **Ranch and Range Clinic:** A customer satisfaction survey was given to the participants after the event. Forty-five usable surveys were submitted.
 - 100% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the information being what they expected.
 - 100% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the information being easy to understand.
 - 98% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the timeliness of information given on each topic.
 - 98% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the helpfulness of the information in decisions about your own situation.
 - 100% of respondents were mostly or completely satisfied with the relevance of the examples used.
 - 80% of respondents plan to take actions or make changes based on the information gained from this activity.
 - 95% of respondents anticipate benefiting economically as a direct result of what they learned from this Extension activity.

PARTNERSHIPS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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