

## EVALUATION OF A LATE SUMMER THIRTY DAY BREEDING/LATE SPRING CALVING PROGRAM FOR NORTH DAKOTA BEEF PRODUCERS 1994 PRELIMINARY REPORT

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### SUMMARY

North Dakota cow calf producers need to be cost conscious and production wise. Most beef cow management focuses around production. Understandably so, since total output or the level of beef production is under total control of the producer. Producers generally accept the limitations imposed by the various biological types of cattle. Then they are free to concentrate on improving or maintaining production levels within their respective herds. Astute producers also conclude that cost containment is under their control. Although some inputs seem out of control, generally total costs are manageable.

Producers today can reach production goals that were once considered unattainable. North Dakota herd managers have attained 99 percent pregnancy rates and 96 percent weaning percentages. These same herds subsequently weaned 678 pound calves as documented by the Cow Herd Appraisal of Performance Software (CHAPS). This all translates into 623 pounds of marketable product for each cow maintained in the breeding herd. Not all producers have attained these production levels, but there is no question that these levels of production are attainable. These producers are production wise.

Cost conscious producers also need to set goals. For those herds involved within the North Dakota State University Extension Service's Integrated Resource Management program (IRM), total cow costs involved in producing 568 pound weaning weights were \$356. These producers pulled off \$73 per cow in family living costs and netted \$76 cash income per cow after family living in 1993. To reach levels of cost containment not currently considered achievable, producers need to thoroughly break apart the \$356 in cow costs. The challenge to producers is to

maintain 678 pounds of product per cow at weaning, and keep costs at \$356 per cow.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVE

This project is being designed to evaluate production costs and herd performance for late spring (early May) calving in contrast to the traditional spring (late March, early April) calving in southwestern North Dakota.

## INTRODUCTION

North Dakota cow calf producers need to be cost conscious and production wise. Much of beef cow management focuses around production. Understandably so, since total output or the level of beef production is relatively under total control of the producer. Producers generally accept the limitations imposed by the various biological types of cattle and concentrate on improving or maintaining production levels within their respective herds. Astute producers also conclude that cost containment is under their control. Although some inputs seem out of control, generally total costs can be managed.

Producers today can reach production goals that were once considered unattainable. Reviewing North Dakota herds that process through the Cow Herd Appraisal of Performance program (CHAPS), herd managers have attained 99 percent pregnancy rates, 96 percent weaning percentages and 678 pound weaning weights. This all translates into 623 pounds of marketable product for each cow maintained in the breeding herd. Not all producers have attained these production levels, but there is no question that these levels of production are attainable. These producers are production wise.

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Some real questions are involved in controlling costs. Feed costs are and will continue to be major components of cost. Those producers involved with IRM had \$93 summer feed costs and \$144 winter feed costs per cow. Feed

costs accounted for two thirds of the total production costs. These same producers had \$297,495 invested to maintain a 165 cow herd, but only carried \$41,085 debt on the herd. Net income per cow in 1993 was \$104, which is a 5 percent return on the dollars invested in the cow herd.

Most cattle operations have fairly static management calendars due to the difficulty of keeping a cow on a 365 day calving interval and managing the labor demands of calving around other farm/ranch enterprises. However, quantity and quality of feed required and total dollars invested in facilities and equipment are heavily influenced by the selected calving season. Therefore, this study is to evaluate production costs and herd performance for late spring (early May) calving in contrast to the traditional spring (late March, early April) calving in southwestern North Dakota.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

Two herds of cattle will be developed at the Dickinson Research Extension Center. One herd will be maintained under late March calving/early April calving. The other herd will be managed for early May calving. Both herds will be fed NRC requirements when confined. The early calving herd will be drylot calved and turned to Crested Wheat pasture with calves and the late calving herd will be flushed on Crested Wheat grass precalving and calved on pasture. Both herds will be managed in summer grazing systems. Data will be analyzed through SAS and combined with current CHAPS and FARMS data to simulate cost effective cattle production systems.

## **RESULTS**

Preliminary data has been presented in the introduction. The production and cost data was obtained from the NDSU CHAPS and FARMS program. Special thanks goes to Dr. Harlan Hughes for the cost data. Future data will combine the CHAPS and FARMS data, as well as utilizing the data obtained from the early and late calving herds.

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