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CATTLE PRODUCTION

In my opinion, one of the biggest mistakes new landowners make is getting into the cattle business before they are properly informed. Many have little or no experience and get educated through costly mistakes (more "on the job training" OJT). Study your lesson before starting into the business. Learn what cattle are in demand, what the current and potential prices are, how much management will be required, ie. registered vs. commercial cattle, how adapted are they to the environment, and maybe the most important factor ─ how much forage do you have or can you potentially produce to maintain a given number of animals.

Other initial concerns include: grass type and production potential, good fences, dependable water source(s), pens and corrals, and brush and weed density.

There are no two years alike in the cattle business. However, you have to develop a general plan, but be ready to adapt and diversify as needed. Always have an alternative in mind. If it gets dry and liquidation is an issue, have a plan in mind. If forage is abundant, know how you will utilize it. Develop a working relationship with professionals in this field and visit with some of the top producers in your area. Learn from their expertise and errors.

Getting started in the cattle business can be a very traumatic experience for a new landowner. Who do you trust to help you find and/or purchase your first animals if you are not experienced in this area? Again, talk to the trained professionals in the county including state and federal personnel, local veterinarians, leading cattle producers, and auction barn owners to name just a few.

Choosing the breed for your operation depends on personal preference somewhat like Chevrolet, Ford, or Dodge. What do you like? What are your production goals? Also, what is best adapted to the situation? If production of feeder calves that are sold at weaning is the goal, the most popular type calf will possess Brahman, English, and Continental breed influence with only about 1/8 to 1/4 Brahman blood.

The general consensus among both animal scientists and many producers in this region is that the best adapted beef female for this area should contain some Brahman breed influence. This may vary from approximately 25% to no more than 50%. As you go further South along the Coast and into South Texas, this becomes even more important. Cattle with Brahman influence are more adapted to the hot, humid climate and can survive under less than optimum conditions. Generally speaking, the remaining percentage of this beef female should be from one of the English breeds, usually Hereford, Angus. If two different pure breeds of cattle are bred to each other, the resulting offspring is called a "F-1", meaning it is the "first cross" between two pure breeds. In the industry, you will hear of the Angus X Brahman cross referred to as a Brahman X Angus F-1 or sometimes a Brangus F-1 (Brangus are actually 5/8 Angus X 3/8 Brahman). A Hereford X Brahman F-1 is often referred to as a "tiger stripe" due to the brown and black stripes often associated with the offspring's color pattern.

If the Brahman X Hereford or Angus cross or one of the established American breeds such as Brangus, Beefmaster, Santa Gertrudis, Red Brangus, etc. is used for feeder calf production as the female, then the sire could be selected from one of the Continental breeds such as Charolais, Limousin, Simmental, Braunvieh, etc. At this time, the Charolais cross is the most popular at the sale barn and in the area.

Of course, other options include producing any of the purebred breeds or even developing a replacement female business of one of the types of females mentioned above.

Research the many publications available through the Texas Cooperative Extension and the TAMU Animal Science Dept. as well as other states such as the resources at Oklahoma State

University and the Noble Foundation in Ardmore, Ok. provide a tremendous amount of information on these topics. Additional websites are also listed.

The following publications may be found on the web at http://tcebookstore.org/ .

Texas Adapted Genetic Strategies for Beef Cattle--V: Cattle Types and Breeds (E190) -- A fundamental challenge in commercial beef production is matching genetic capability with climatic, nutritional, management and market conditions. This publication discusses functional levels of types and breeds of cattle to help producers optimize performance and profit. (4 pp., 3 tables)

Avoiding Calving Problems (L2150) -- Calving difficulty, or dystocia, is influenced largely by genetics and the age of the dam. The main cause of calving problems is heavy birthweight. Solutions include selecting the right bull and mating it to properly developed heifers. (2 pp.,)

Factors and Feeds for Supplementing Beef Cows (L5354) -- A beef cow requires energy, protein, minerals and vitamins in its diet. Many factors, including forage quantity and quality and animal body condition, affect the amounts of required nutrients. (4 pp.)

Stocking Rate: The Key Grazing Management Decision (L5400) -- Stocking rate is the most important grazing management decision a rancher makes. This publication covers all the factors involved in determining an appropriate stocking rate, including rainfall and forage production, range condition, and the forage needs and preferences of different kinds of livestock. There are how-to's for defining an "animal unit," and tips for managing flexible stocking rates. (6 pp., 3 tables, 6 graphs)

Texas Adapted Genetic Strategies for Beef Cattle--V: Cattle Types and Breeds (E-190) -- A fundamental challenge in commercial beef production is matching genetic capability with climatic, nutritional, management and market conditions. This publication discusses functional levels of types and breeds of cattle to help producers optimize performance and profit. (4 pp., 3 tables)

The following publications may be found at the Texas A&M Department of Animal Science website: http://animalscience.tamu.edu/ansc/index.htm. Click on Publications, then choose a subject matter link, the publications are grouped by subtopics. Here are just a few.

Beef Performance Glossary –

Maintaining Herd Performance During Drought –

Dehorning, Castrating and Branding –