Cattle Chat: Value of record keeping

K-State beef cattle experts outline the herd data that producers should be documenting

By Lisa Moser, K-State Research and Extension news service

MANHATTAN, Kan. — With the new year, many people work to lose holiday pounds by following a weight loss program that typically involves keeping a daily record of food consumption as a way to help them learn how to develop healthy food habits. In other words, data-driven decision-making.

That is also the concept that the K-State experts at the Beef Cattle Institute encourage producers to follow to guide their herd management system. This was the topic of a recent Cattle Chat podcast.

“It is important for producers to follow a record-keeping system that is appropriate for the complexity of their operation,” said K-State veterinarian Bob Larson.

An electronic system that Larson recommends is one that was developed at K-State called CalfDex.

“This system is an easy way to collect records and then if a producer wants to share some of the information, the app can facilitate the electronic transfer of the records to the buyer of the feeder calves,” Larson said.

Records that Larson places a high value on are tracking dates of cavling and weaning as well as the weaning weights and cull cow weights.

K-State beef cattle nutritionist Phillip Lancaster, meanwhile, said there are two levels of data he advises producers to document.
“One is herd-level data that allows producers to track production over time, and the other is recording individual data that can help give information about the calf's genetic performance,” Lancaster said. “If I am keeping replacement heifers, knowing which cow lines are most productive is good information to help me make that decision.”

K-State veterinarian Brad White agreed, adding: “Having data on subgroups within the herd such as breeds or sire lines helps producers better sort the cattle into management groups.”

Along with cattle performance records, K-State agricultural economist Dustin Pendell said producers also need to closely monitor feed expenses.

“The largest expense for any operation is feed cost, so producers need to know how much they are feeding and the associated costs,” Pendell said. “If you are in a drought situation and need to reduce feed costs, having this data will be helpful in your decision-making.”

To hear the full discussion, listen to the Cattle Chat podcast online or through your preferred streaming platform.

-30-

FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story

K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county extension offices, experiment fields, area extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus in Manhattan. For more information, visit www.ksre.ksu.edu. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Story by:
Lisa Moser
785-532-2010
lmoser@ksu.edu

More information:
Phillip Lancaster
785-532-6323
palancaster@vet.k-state.edu

Bob Larson
785-532-4257
rlarson@vet.k-state.edu

Dustin Pendell
785-532-3525
dpendell@ksu.edu

Brad White
785-532-4243
bwhite@vet.k-state.edu