

**SURVEY OF
BEEF - FORAGE PRACTICES**

**SOUTH CENTRAL FLORIDA
1986 SUMMARY**

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METHOD FOR OBTAINING INFORMATION

County Extension Agents obtained this information from beef producers using mail questionnaires. Agents identified 2458 beef producers in the nine counties (DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, Hillsborough, Manatee, Okeechobee, Pasco, Polk, and Sarasota). A sample size of 344 was selected to provide a degree of accuracy of ± 5 percent with 95 percent confidence². Two hundred sixty eight (268) usable questionnaires were returned. The expected error rate for a sample of this size is ± 5.8 percent with 95 percent confidence.

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INTRODUCTION

Information in this document was gathered in 1986 from beef producers in nine counties (Polk, Hillsborough, Pasco, Manatee, Sarasota, Hardee, Okeechobee, Highlands, and DeSoto) in south central Florida. A similar survey was conducted in only five of these counties in 1982 - Polk, Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, and Sarasota. Comparisons between data for 1982 and 1986 assume that the five counties in the 1982 survey are representative of the nine county area. Throughout this document the asterisk indicates no significant change from the 1982 findings.¹ The information contained in this document was gathered in a specific location and may not reflect the beef cattle situation for other portions of the state of Florida.

ABOUT THE BEEF OPERATIONS

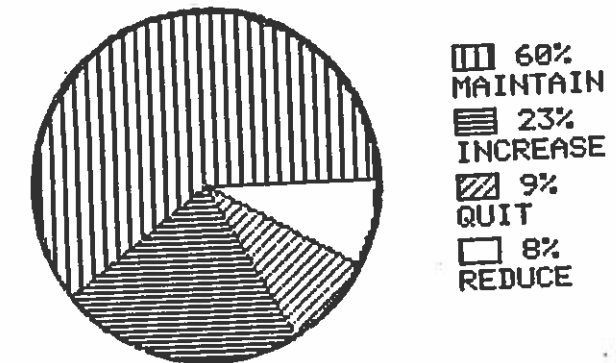
Kinds of Beef Operations

Most (87%)* of the beef operations in the nine counties are commercial. They comprise 87* percent of the cattle in those nine counties.

87% Commercial
6% Purebred
7% Both purebred and commercial

Plans for the Next Five Years

Most (60%)* of the beef operators in the nine counties plan to maintain about the same size operation until 1991. They own 56* percent of the cattle.

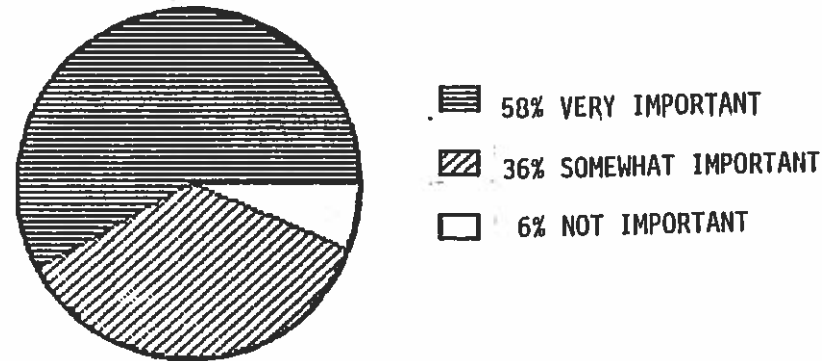


¹ Survey of Beef-Forage Practices Greater Tampa Bay Area, 1982 Summary, Bulletin PE 2, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

² Yamane, T. 1967. Statistics, An Introductory Analysis, 2nd ed. New York: Harper and Row.

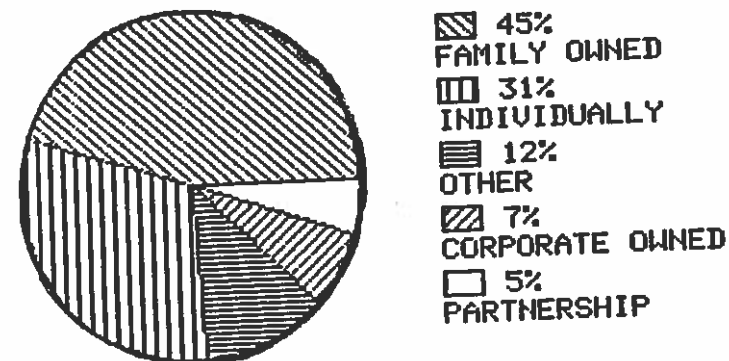
Importance of Profit

Fifty-eight (58%)* percent of the producers feel it is very important for their beef operation to make a profit and they own 86* percent of the cattle.



Business Structure of Farm/Ranch

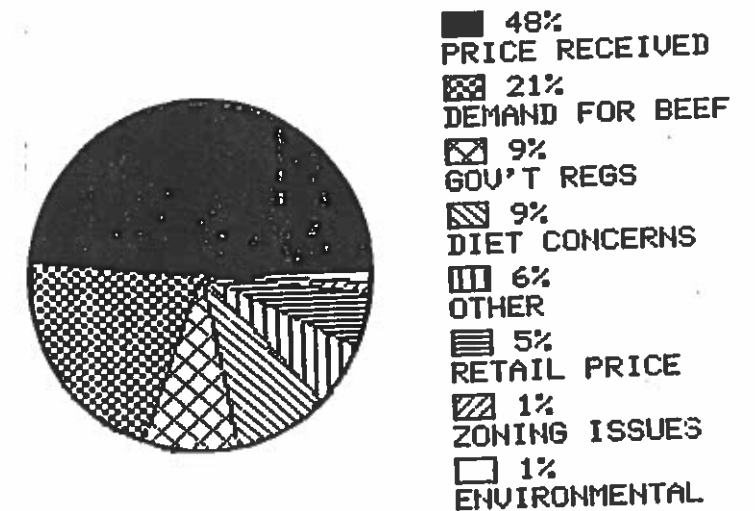
More farms/ranches are family owned (45%) than any other form of business structure.



To Whom Do Beef Producers Look For Information On Beef Production and Management?

- 64% Other Cattlemen
- 52% Extension Agent/Specialist
- 50% Magazines
- 47% Veterinarian
- 31% Fertilizer, Feed, Vaccine Salesman
- 16% Farm Organizations
- 12% Close Relatives (father, brother, etc.)
- 5% Other than above

How Producers Feel About the Single Most Important Problem Facing the Beef Cattle Industry.



CLT:lat

Types of Pasture Grasses Used

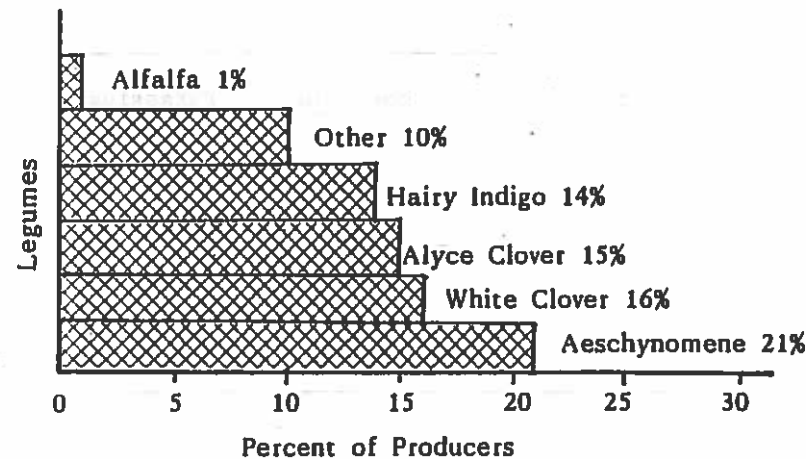
Bahia grass is the leading grass among producers in the nine county area.

87%	Bahia grass
50%	Native
44%	Pangola grass
28%	Bermuda grass
23%	Ryegrass
19%	Stargrass
12%	Hemarthria
5%	Other

The Practice of Rotation Grazing

Sixty-eight (68%) percent of the producers indicate they practice rotation grazing and they own 62 percent of the cattle.*

The Use of Legumes by Producers



Employment Status of Owner

Fifty-seven (57%) percent of the owners have jobs other than the beef business. This question was not asked in 1982.

Of those who have other jobs:

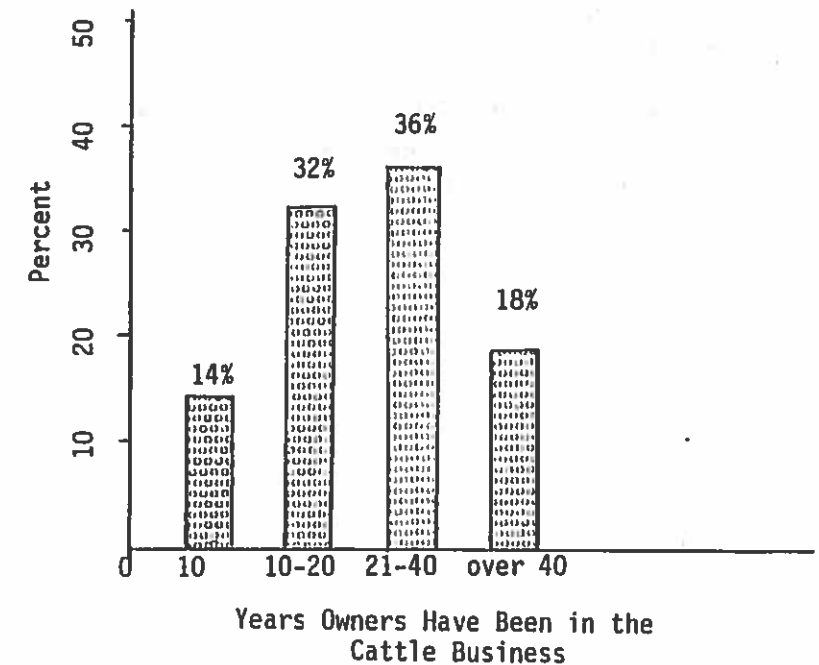
71%	Full Time
29%	Part Time

Is the beef enterprise a major source of income to the owner? This question was not asked in 1982.

35%	Yes
65%	No

Years Owners Have Been in the Cattle Business

The figures below indicate that 14% of the owners have been in the cattle business for ten or less years. Thirty-two (32%) percent have been in business from 11 through 20 years. Thirty-six (36%) percent have been in business from 21 through 40 years. Eighteen (18%) percent have been in business for over 40 years.



FINDINGS ABOUT REPRODUCTION

Percent Calf Crop

The average percent calf crop across all brood cows in the nine county area is 69*.

Number of Cows Bred

One fourth of the producers bred 25 or less cows in 1986
Fifty-two (52%) percent of the producers bred fewer than 100 cows in 1986.

Ten (10%) percent of the producers bred 1000 or more cows in 1984.

Number of Cows Per Bull

Producers indicate they have one bull for every 21* cows.

Number of Breeds of Bulls Used

44% use one breed
30% use two breeds
26% use three or more breeds

The Use of Information When Selecting Replacements

Only 31% of producers use information such as weaning weight, scrotal circumference and sire summaries to select herd bulls. These data were not obtained in 1982.

Breeding Season

Fifty-six (56%) percent of the producers surveyed in 1986 indicate they do not have a breeding season. In 1982 sixty-six percent of the producers indicated they did not practice a controlled breeding season.

These same producers own 67 percent of the cattle.
[Figures for 1982 were 75% fertilizing pasture and owning 92% of the cattle.]

Acres of Pasture Fertilized

Half (50%) of the producers fertilized 120 acres or more of pasture during 1985. However, the number of acres fertilized varied from 0 up to 8325.

Acres of Hay Fertilized

On the average producers fertilized 80 acres of hay, they have on the average 90 acres of hay. This suggests that 89 percent of the land that was harvested for hay was fertilized. These figures suggest most producers are fertilizing all their hay land and a few producers aren't fertilizing any of their hay land.

The following shows the average number of pounds of the most commonly applied nutrients to pasture and hay during 1985:

	<u>Nitrogen</u>	<u>Phosphorus</u>	<u>Potassium</u>
	(N)	(P ₂ O ₅)	(K ₂ O)
Pasture	54	24	31
Hay	64	28	39

cattle. The 1982 survey revealed that 63 percent of the producers used soil tests.

How Often Do They Test Soil

40% annually
25% every two years
23% every three years
12% less than once a year
Extension Agents did not obtain this information in 1982.

Who Tests Their Soil

71% Fertilizer or Lime Company
18% University of Florida
11% Private Laboratory
This information was not obtained in 1982.

The Practice of Liming Pasture Land

Fifty-one (51%) percent of the producers have limed pasture land within the past three years. They own 65* percent of the cattle.

How Much Lime Did They Use on Pasture Land

73% used 1 ton per acre
26% used 2 tons per acre
1% used 3 tons per acre

The Practice of Liming Hay Land

Forty-six (46%) percent of the producers who responded to the question indicated they have limed hay land within the past three years. This represents 65 percent of the cattle. [For 1982, the figure was 57% limed hay and that represented 92% of the cattle.]

How Much Lime Did They Use on Hay Land

56% one ton per acre
42% two tons per acre
2% unreliable data

The Practice of Fertilizing Pasture Land

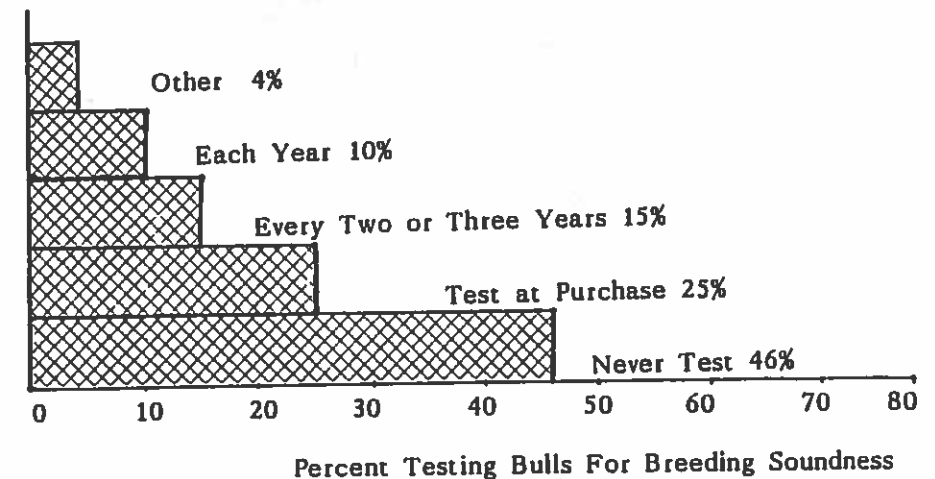
Seventy-six (76%) percent of the producers indicated they fertilized pastures within the past year (1985-1986).

The following shows the breeding season by months and percent of producers

Months	% of Producers	Months	% of Producers
January	21%	July	19%
February	28%	August	12%
March	32%	September	6%
April	33%	October	3%
May	31%	November	2%
June	28%	December	7%

Breeding Soundness Evaluation

Forty-six (46%) percent of the producers never test bulls for breeding soundness. These same producers own 18 percent of the cattle. In 1982, fifty (50) percent of the producers never tested for breeding soundness. However, they owned 26 percent of the cattle.



Practice of Pregnancy Checking by Palpation

16%* of the producers palpate all the cows, they own 22% of the cattle
28%* of the producers palpate dry cows only, they own 21% of the cattle

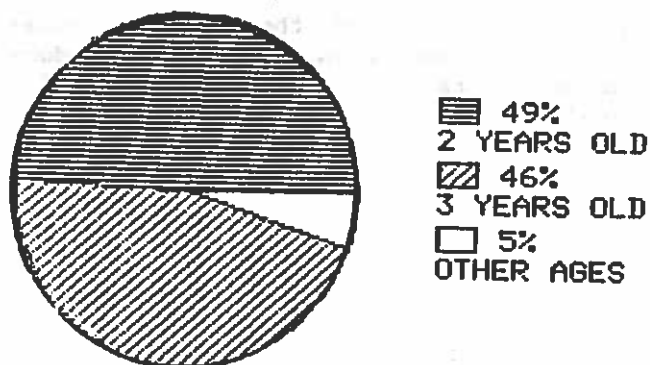
Who Pregnancy Checks

42% Farm/Ranch employee
51% Veterinarian
7% Other

The above information was not obtained in 1982.

Age Heifers Calve

Forty-six percent of the producers indicate their heifers calve at the age of three years. This includes 34 percent of the heifers. [In 1982, 49% indicated 3 years, and owned 66% of the heifers.]



Replacement Heifers

Fifty-nine (59%) percent of the producers indicated replacement heifers are kept separate from the rest of the herd. These same producers own approximately 77 percent of the cattle. This information was not obtained in 1982.

Percent Cow Herd Culled

On the average producers cull approximately 10 percent per year. However, there is a wide variation in the percent of the herd culled. [In 1982, 84% culled 10% or less.]

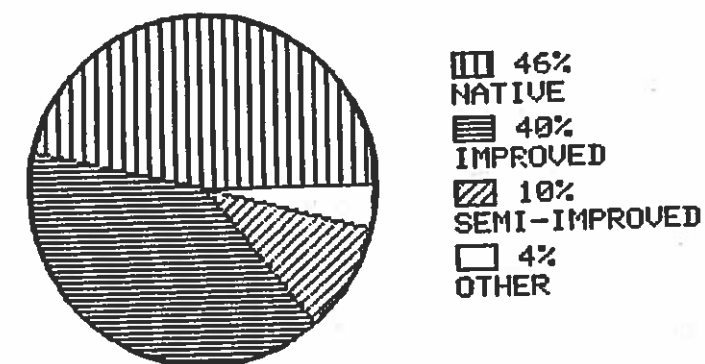
41% cull 10% or less
59% cull more than 10%

FORAGE PRODUCTION

Acres Used for Pasture

Half (50%) of the producers indicate they have 300 acres or more of pasture land. However, acreage varies from eight (8) acres up to 68,300. Twenty-eight (28%) percent of the producers use less than 100 acres for pasture. Twenty-six (26%) percent of the producers use 1000 or more acres for pasture.

Kind of Pasture



In 1982, 59 percent of the producers indicated they used native range and only 31 percent reported improved pasture.

Acres Used for Hay

On the average producers say they use 90 acres for hay. The number of acres used for hay varies from 0 to 675.

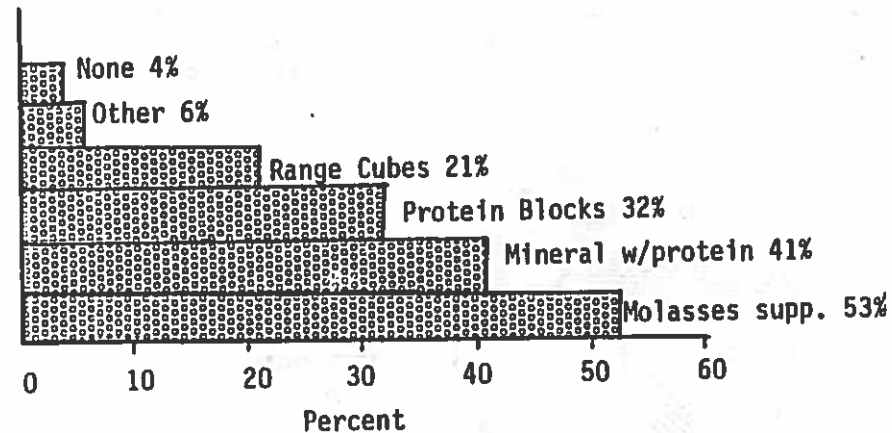
Tons of Hay Harvested

For those who produced hay in 1985 the average was 240 tons. Four years earlier the average was 132 tons.

The Practice of Soil Testing

Seventy (70%) percent of the producers indicate they use soil tests to guide their fertilizer and liming decisions. These same producers own 91 percent of the

Protein Supplements During Winter Months



In 1982, 37 percent of the producers were feeding molasses supplement. There appears to be no change in other protein supplements being fed.

Rumensin or Bovatec

Eleven (11%) percent of the producers feed rumensin or bovatec to their herds. This information was not obtained in 1982.

4% feed stockers
7% feed heifers

Analyzing Hay and Silage

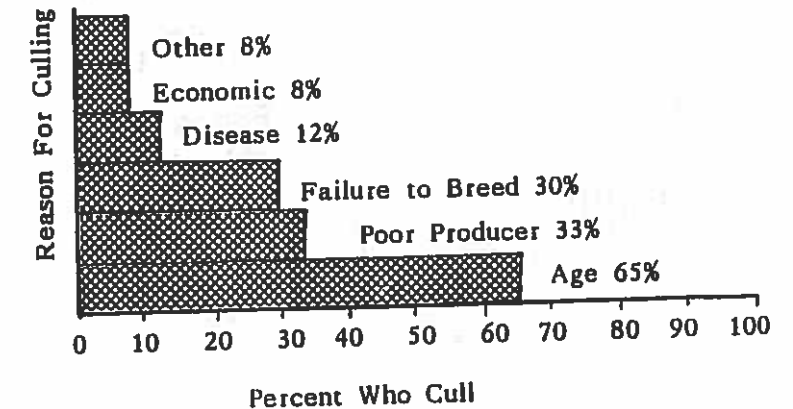
Ten (10%) of the producers say they analyze hay and silage for feed value. These same producers own 9 percent of the cattle. [From 1982, 13% of the producers had hay and silage analyzed and they owned 26% of the cattle.]

The Practice of Feeding Salt and Minerals

90% feed salt [Ninety-three percent fed salt in 1982.]
96% feed minerals
40% feed selenium

Reason for Culling

The primary reason for culling is age as indicated by 65% of the producers who own 74 percent of the cattle. [In 1982, 84% culled because of age and these same producers owned 62% of the cattle.]



Leading Diseases

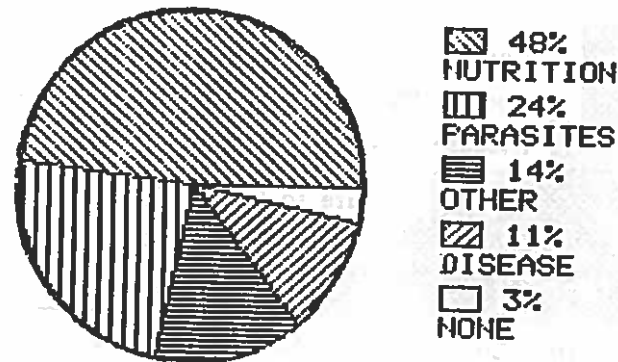
Vaccination for diseases within the past year

More producers (74%) vaccinate for brucellosis than any other disease; these same producers own 89 percent of the cattle. [In 1982, (38%) indicated they vaccinated for brucellosis than any other disease and they owned 70% of the cattle.]

74% Brucellosis
28% Lepto
25% Vibrio
13% IBR
13% Red Water
12% BVD
5% Other
1% Hamophilus Somnus

Nutrition is Big Problem With Reproduction

More producers (48%) say nutrition is the most serious problem limiting reproduction than any other concern. These same producers own 58 percent of the cattle.*



MARKETING/PRODUCTION

Weights at Weaning and Selling

The average weight at weaning across all calves is 451 pounds. Weight varied from 140 pounds to 800 pounds. The average weaning weight in 1982, across all calves was 415 pounds.

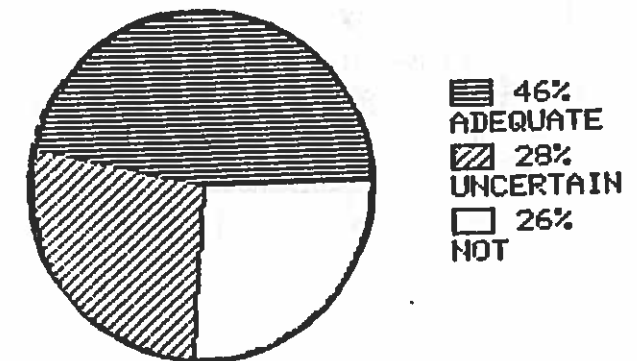
The average weight at selling across all calves is 470 pounds. Weight varied from 200 pounds to 1200 pounds. The average weight at selling in 1982 was 432 pounds.

Age at Weaning and Selling

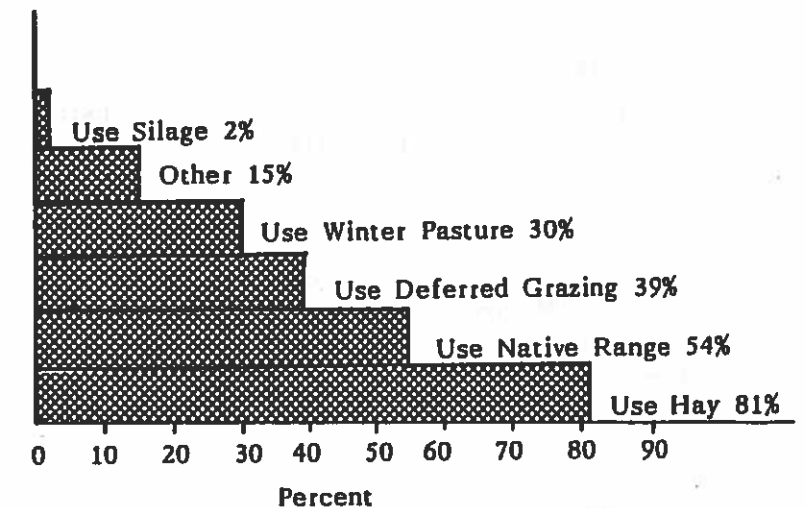
The average weaning age is 7.4 months. The average selling age is 10.3 months. Twenty-four (24%) percent of the producers are selling calves one year old or older. In 1982 the average weaning age was 6.86 months and the average selling age was 6.9 months.

NUTRITION

How do producers feel about their winter feeding program? Only 46% of the producers feel their winter program is adequate for greatest net returns; these producers own 45 percent of the cattle. [In 1982, 46% felt they had adequate winter feed and they owned 58% of the cattle.]



Forages That Are Used During Winter Months



The major changes since 1982 are in native range and deferred grazing. In 1982, 63 percent of the producers used native range and 22 percent used deferred grazing.

Use of Herd Records by Producers

20% use records to make decisions about selling cows.
13% use records to select replacement heifers.
8% use records in making herd sire selections.
This information was not obtained in 1982.

PARASITE CONTROL

Control for External

Ninety-four (94%)* percent of the producers indicate they control for external parasites. This represents 94 percent of the cattle.*

Methods Used to Control External Parasites

58% spray and they own 88% of the cattle.
[In 1982, spray was used by 69% of the
30% pour on producers who owned 73% of the
cattle. Seventeen percent used ear
29% dust bag tags, representing 42% of the cattle.]
19% ear tags and they own 37% of the cattle.
11% back rubber
9% medicated feed
9% other

Deworming the Herd, 1986 Deworming the Herd, 1982

85% deworm cows.....76%
77% deworm calves.....67%
88% deworm bulls.....80%

Methods Used to Deworm the Herd

48% use paste or gel
39% use injectable
25% use drench
7% use mineral feed
4% use bolus
2% other

These data were not obtained in 1982.

Liver Flukes

Forty-one (41%) percent of the producers indicate they treat for liver flukes. This represents 67 percent of the cattle. [In 1982, 21% of the producers treated for liver flukes, representing 34% of the cattle.]

How Are Calves Sold

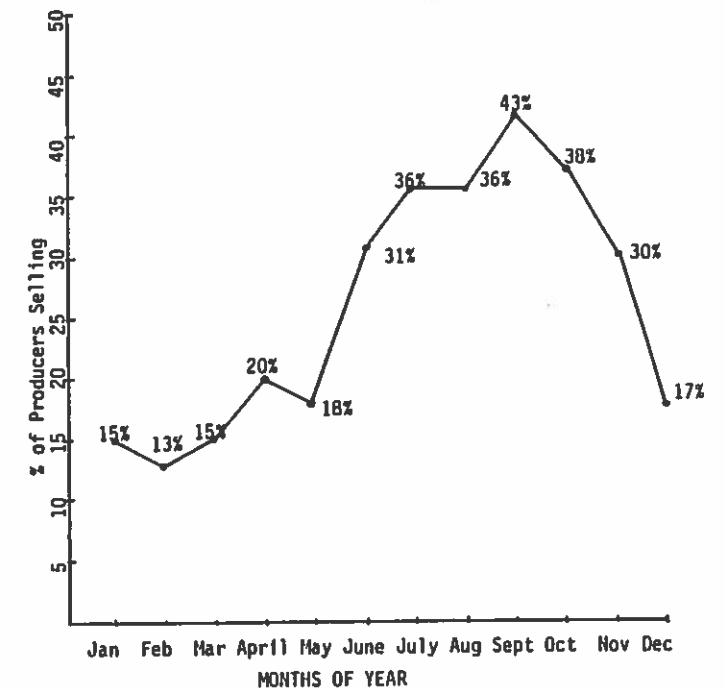
Most producers use the livestock auction market

85% Livestock Auction Market
25% Private Treaty
16% Order Buyer
2% Board Sale

Information on how calves are sold was not obtained in 1982.

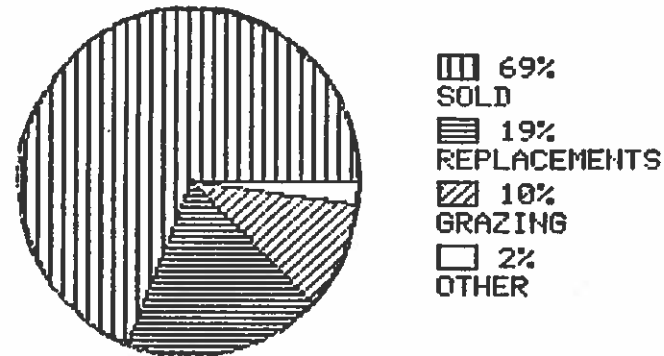
Months Calves are Sold

Producers sell calves throughout the year. However, more producers sell in September than in any other month. This information was not obtained in 1982.



Uses of the 1985 Calf Crop

Sixty-nine (69%)* percent of the calves that were born between October 1984 and September 1985 were sold during 1985.



Implanting With Growth Stimulants

Thirty-five (35%) percent of the producers say they use growth stimulants and these same producers own 58 percent of the cattle. Fifteen percent of the producers implanted calves in 1982.

Number of Times Before Weaning

Twenty-five percent of the producers surveyed indicated they implant growth stimulants one time before weaning. Ten percent use growth stimulants two times before weaning. This information was not obtained in 1982.

What Product Do They Use

26% of the producers use Ralgro
5% use Synovex
3% use Compudose
1% use Steer-oid

This information was not obtained in 1982.

Implant Heifers

Sixteen (16%) percent of the producers indicated they implant heifers. This information was not obtained in 1982.

Creep Feeding

Nineteen (19%) percent of the producers indicate they creep feed calves. Extension Agents did not obtain this information in 1982.

Which Calves Are Creep Fed

18% of the producers who creep, feed all the calves
2% calves on first calf heifers
1% Heifer calves
1% Steer calves
1% Bull calves

This information was not obtained in 1982.

Kind of Feed Used

13% of all the producers creep feed with grain
5% creep graze
4% liquid feed
3% other

Extension Agents did not obtain these data in 1982.

Identification of Cows and Calves

57% Identify each cow
40% Identify her calf

[In 1982, 53% identified each cow and 35% identified the calves.]

What Method is Used to Identify

35% of all the producers use ear tags
26% use hot iron
9% use tattoo
7% use other
2% use freeze brand

This information was not obtained in 1982.

Herd Records

Only twenty-five (25%) percent of the producers indicate they keep records such as calf birth date, identity of calf, selling weight and other information. These producers own 17 percent of the cattle. [In 1982, 22% kept records and they owned 31% of the cattle.]