

Reducing Costs Of Maintaining The Beef Herd

DR. CLYDE LANE JR.



KNOXVILLE, TENN.

The cost of doing business is a major concern of beef producers. Is there anything that producers can do to reduce costs? The answer is yes.

The biggest cost saver is reducing hay wastage. Research shows that more than a third of the hay may be wasted if not fed in rings. The new cone type hay feeders have been shown to save the most hay. Also, make animals consume all of the acceptable quality hay in the feeder before moving it to further reduce wastage and the number of times the tractor must be started to feed.

Another way to save is by feeding cattle closer to your residence; a greater distance to transport hay increases fuel costs. If cattle are on two farms, move animals from the farm the greatest distance from the homestead to the home place. This method requires fewer trips

and less fuel used during feeding. Place cows near calving closer to the house so that a vehicle or tractor does not have to be started to check cows. It is also easier to observe the cows at calving, resulting in more calves being saved.

Do not forget efficiency when controlling costs. One of the most costly things a beef producer can do is feed an open cow. Pregnancy check cows before winter feeding starts and cull cows with marginal production. Also, cull replacement heifers that are questionable.

In short, take a close look at your beef herd management. Just because something has always been done a certain way does not mean it is the most efficient or economical. Be open to changes, but be sure that the changes can be justified. Stopping vaccinations to save money is not the thing to do. However, re-evaluating the vaccination program to ensure that unnecessary vaccines are not being given is wise. △

Dr. Clyde Lane, Jr. is Professor/Department of Animal Science with the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.