

Long-term goals are helpful in many areas, but are especially beneficial in a cattle operation. This is because setting a goal can help the producer track the progress of his operation over a period of time. One of the major points we communicate week after week is the importance of managing your operation so that it will be economically sustainable. This week we will discuss what this may look like, and provide some tips of ways that you can create a more economically sustainable operation.

Economic sustainability is defined as the “ability of an operation to be profitable over time by taking advantage of the available resources”. In a cattle operation this could be achieved when the producer is able to make a profit with the resources (land, cattle, equipment, or finances) that are available. A different definition maintains that in order for economic sustainability to exist, available resources should not simply be “used”, but should be used to their best advantage, and in a skillful and responsible manner that will provide potential for long-term benefits. Economic sustainability in a cattle operation is achieved when the producer assesses his resources, and develops a plan that will utilize each asset to the best of its ability. But, what exactly does this look like?

Many operations that are economically sustainable have discovered an efficient way to work with four key areas of his/her cattle and the operation as a whole- environment, health, productivity, and economics. A good manager is one that uses his environment to his advantage. This means that he produces cattle that are made for the environment he will put them in. This producer also understands the benefit of utilizing standing forages, extending the grazing season, and improving soil quality so that his cattle are getting the most use from the land as possible. Herd health is equally important. A proper herd health program (including treatment and prevention plans) should be strongly enforced. This should include an effective form of internal and external parasite control. If done correctly, the health program of your operation can greatly impact the productivity of your cattle.

Managers of economically sustainable cattle operations aim to optimize productivity while keeping costs low. They work to improve the reproductive efficiency of their cattle, which creates an increased calf crop percentage. Unproductive cows are culled from the herd, and special care is taken when selecting replacement females. Profitable producers are very aware of the correlation between size and productivity of their cattle, and work to not simply improve weaning weights, but rather strive to improve the percent dam weight weaned. All of these management steps are taken while the producer lowers his winter feeding, fixed, and operating costs. If done efficiently, implementing these strategies can simultaneously create lower costs for the operation.

Each of the steps mentioned above are within reach for every cattle producer. Goal making and regular benchmarking can be a great first step in creating an operation that will be economically sustainable. To learn more about any of the suggested management strategies, please contact us or visit the Herd Health tab at hcvethospital.com.

Thanks,

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