

Developing a long term management plan may be one of the most productive things a producer can do for his cow-calf operation. For the next few weeks we will discuss various management tips that will help the producer be more efficient and maximize profitability in his herd.

The best way to gauge effectiveness of herd management is to calculate production cost per pound of calf weaned. To do this, you must first know the cow cost per year- How much does it cost you to keep and care for a cow during a one year time period? The next piece of information required is the number of pounds of calf produced per number of cows that were exposed to bulls in the previous breeding season.

Take, for instance, the following example:

A producer owns a herd that consists of 100 cows. Due to low calf crop, and other unanticipated events such as death loss due to predators or illness, only 85 calves were weaned. These 85 calves weighed an average of 500lb each at weaning. Because 100 cows were exposed, but only 85- 500lb calves were weaned, we must take into account the 15 calves that died. Doing so, we find that the new calculated average weaning weight is 425lb/calf. The cow cost per year for one cow is \$600/cow. Using the formula, the producer can find that the production cost per pound of calf weaned is \$1.41. This number is the producer's breakeven cost. The producer can use this calculation in conjunction with market prices to determine how much of a profit, if any, will be made when he sells the calves.

In the coming weeks we will discuss various methods of increasing pounds of calf produced, and how to decrease cow cost per year. For assistance in calculating yearly cow cost, or production cost per pound of calf weaned for your herd, please contact us.