

One of the most impactful decisions you can make when you get into the cattle business is to determine what type of operation you will have. When deciding on the size and production goals of your operation it is wise to take into account the time and resources that are required of each type of operation. This week we will discuss some aspects of each size and type of operation, and the importance of selecting an operation that fits your time schedule.

Cattle operations can be categorized into many groups. The most popular types of cattle operations in our area are cow/calf and yearling operations. Some examples of a cow-calf operation include a registered, commercial, or show calf herd. Each of these types of operations vary from the others in the resources and time commitment required to make it a success. For example, registered operations require a much more detailed record-keeping system compared to a commercial operation- one reason a registered operation requires a greater time commitment than a commercial operation. Even the type of bull used can vary greatly in each type of operation. Though a registered operation requires a registered bull, this is not necessary in a commercial or show calf operation. The type of operation you choose will directly impact the marketability of your cattle. Choose the operation that will help you be as profitable as possible, while fitting your time schedule. For more on this topic, refer to last week's "Marketing" article.

Size of operation similarly affects the time requirement of a producer. As you may infer, a <50 head operation does not require near the same amount of time or labor compared to a >200 head operation. It is especially important to know what resources are available before deciding on the size of your operation. Key resources to inventory include finances, acreage, hired labor, and equipment available to assist in daily management of the operation. The larger your operation, the more important each of these resources will become. While a <50 head commercial cattleman may get by with a ranch truck and no hired labor, this is likely not feasible for the >200 head registered cattle producer. Make sure you have the necessary resources available before deciding on the size of your operation, or you may be setting yourself up for failure from Day 1.

As you can see, type and size of operation have a huge role in the amount of time that will be demanded of the producer. Choosing a larger scale operation may seem ideal, but remember that it will likely require more of your time and input of resources. However, a smaller scale operation may be the best route for you because it provides more of an opportunity for a part-time job. It is best to closely examine the costs and benefits of each type and size of operation before deciding what your own operation will look like. Choose the operation that best fits your desires and goals, yet best aligns with your time schedule.