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Cost of Cattle At JPC

Why Does it matter?

The amount of capital needed to sustain a large cow herd is substantial. Land and Herd Management (LHM) is striving to reduce animal expense without negatively affecting productivity. Cattle must remain healthy even as the supplemental hay and grain is reduced. The more high quality forage that is available, the healthier the cattle will be; and maintenance cost (fixed and variable) will be reduced.

What was done?

LHM evaluated management of animals, land, and equipment making the following chanages:

- Reduced brood cow herd size from 350 to 200 head over three years
- Researched Grass Fed Beef and Pasture Finished, and began allowing particular herds to maintain themselves on grass where possible
- Pastures were grazed depending on forage availability
  - Bermuda grass begin grazing 4-8" end grazing 1-2"
  - Fescue Grass begin grazing 4-8" end grazing 2-3"
  - Bermuda/Fescue combination 4-8" end grazing 2"
  - Small grains begin grazing 8-12" end grazing 4"
- Pastures were rested
  - Bermuda grass rested 21 days
  - Fescue Grass rested 40 days
  - Bermuda/Fescue combination rested 21 days
  - Small grains rested 10 days
- Pastures were rotational grazed
  - Bermuda grass grazed for 21 days
  - Fescue Grass grazed for 40 days
  - Bermuda/Fescue combination grazed for 21 days
  - Small grains grazed for 10 days
- Implemented heavy use areas at feed, hay and water troughs
- Retrofited hay storage barn into aninmal winter feeder for first calf heifers

What was found?

Best management practices (BMP's) maximize nutritional forage values per acre

- Grain consumption decreased from $20,000 to $10,000 annually
- Hay consumption decreased 300 rolls saving $15,000
- Equipment repairs decreased with less use by reducing feed requirements.
- Planting/harvesting/spraying was carried out in a less labor intensive manner
- Implementing precision agriculture practices in hay fields allowed fertilizer application in a more precise manner based on nutrient requirements and production areas.

What is the impact?

Using BMP's, maintained herd health while reducing the cost of labor and resources

- Pasture acreage remained the same, but animals grazed more efficiently by cross fencing large pastures into smaller areas allowing rotational grazing and stock piling
- Funding availability increased for fertilizer, chemicals, seed and soil sampling improving forage production
- Decreased hay consumption provides extra money for research supplies
- Decreased wear and tear on tractors and vehicles reduced maintenance cost

Research Team and Contact information

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