

It's PEARS Week!

I wish I meant the fruit kind, but it's that time of year when Extension agents across the state are doing year end reporting. PEARS actually stands for Program Evaluation and Reporting System, it's a bunch of year end data crunching. The only thing that resembles fruit, is my mushy brain after I'm done with it.

Last year, one of the more interesting programs we did was looking at the Kansas Farm Management data on beef herds. This paper studied the differences in those herds with the highest costs versus the lowest cost herds. That study showed it's all about feed costs.

With all the lower quality hay put up this summer, everyone will be looking for some extra supplementation for their cowherd. So how do you control feed costs and what are the differences among the high and low cost producers. I ran across something interesting from Iowa state.

Feed inventory- Do you take an inventory of your winter feed supplies? The high cost producers wait until late winter, the average cost producers check it right before feeding season starts, the low cost producer monitors feed supply throughout the growing season.

When do you cull cows? The high cost cull when they don't raise a calf, average cost producers cull the open, old or problem cows at weaning time. Low cost producers identify cull cows throughout the year, anything below average in production, bad eyes, teats or feet are culled in late summer.

What winter grazing options are available? High cost producers have none, average cost producers own stalk fields or hay stubble. Low cost producers will use owned or leased stalk fields, stock piled hay fields and winter annuals.

How do they use these resources to get the most winter grazing? High cost does nothing, average cost limits cows to one field or area at a time, while the high cost producer will strip graze and supplement to extend the grazing time if it is cost-effective.

When are winter feeding programs finalized? High cost producers always feed the same year after year. Average producers finalize in the fall and adjust based on forage supply. The low cost producers are working throughout the year to determine costs and select least cost feeding programs.

How do you determine how much feed? High costs producers feed as much as

they will eat, average cost producers estimate their needs and feed that amount, high cost producers use ration balancing programs to determine their nutritional needs are met.

Ration balancing programs, huh? Like the BRANDS program? Another computer program I actually enjoy doing!! If you'd like to take a look at your proposed winter ration, I'd be happy to assist, give me a call!