


Choosing the Right Herd Management Software



Why Keep Cattle Records?

How keeping good records can help increase your bottom line.

- **“You can’t manage what you don’t measure”**
 - Having impartial, objective records makes a difference
- **Learn which cattle are truly productive**
 - With good records, it is easy to determine which cows are your top producers and which should be culled
- **Track sales and purchases for financial records**
 - View your sales and purchases to learn where you are more profitable, and which breeders may be better for your herd

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“Investing” in a Management System


Your time is the biggest investment you will make in cattle record keeping

Investment

- Setup Time – tagging cattle, entering records, learning components
- Update Time – updating records with births, sales, treatments, etc
- Money - Software, hardware, tags, reader

Returns

- Save Time
- Quality and Accuracy
- Improved decision making
- Understood by others
- Marketing

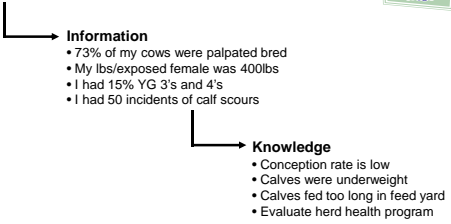


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Data, Information, and Knowledge

Data

- Cow 45 was Bred
- Calf 23 WW 500lbs
- Steer 55 was YG 3
- Calf 29 had scours



Information

- 73% of my cows were palpated bred
- My lbs/exposed female was 400lbs
- I had 15% YG 3's and 4's
- I had 50 incidents of calf scours

Knowledge

- Conception rate is low
- Calves were underweight
- Calves fed too long in feed yard
- Evaluate herd health program

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Cattle Record Keeping Options

Several tools to get the job done

Benefit	Paper	Spreadsheets	Software
Easy to backup		Yes	Yes
Easily read by others		Yes	Yes
Time saving features		Limited	Yes
Data export capabilities		Limited	Yes
Data import capabilities			Yes
Equipment compatibility			Yes
Data validation and error checking			Yes
Flexible reporting			Yes

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What Records Should I Maintain?

It's important to organize your records when beginning to use a cattle software program.

Recommended Records

- Current herd inventory
- Herd Bulls individually and uniquely identified
- Breeding Cows individually and uniquely identified

Nice to Have Records

- Pasture locations for cattle
- Current cow palpation results
- Calves individually identified
- Individual weaning weights for calves

Different Records for Different Operations

- Too little information = useless
- Too much information = cumbersome
- Software can grow as your operation grows



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Capturing Value From your Records

Make your records work for you with improved decision making

Ways to Make Records Cost Effective

- Breeding cattle inventory
- Female culling
- Carcass data for female selection
- Seedstock
- Terminal sire selection
- Branded beef products

Source: 2004, McGrann, Falconer, and Rupp, "Individual Cattle Identity Records for Cow-Calf Producers: Ways to Make Records Cost Effective"



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Evaluating Software Options

Decide what's important to you

- **Room for expansion**
 - Does it meet your current needs? What about future plans you have?
- **Compatibility with equipment/industry processes**
 - Does the software work with equipment you currently have, or plan to implement? Does it work with (or generate information for) industry standard processes such as branded beef programs and BQA?
- **Support options**
 - How can I get help? What are my options, what's the cost and when are they available?
- **Company's experience**
 - Who are the people behind the software? Do they use the software and raise cattle themselves? Are they keeping the software current with new technology, such as new computer operating systems?

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Getting Started with Software

Planning and organization are key

A good start puts you on the path to successful record keeping

- Existing data
 - Breed associations
 - Other electronic sources (Excel, Access, etc)
 - Electronic or Visual Tag lists
- Adding new cattle records
 - Begin with current year's breeding or calving records
 - Then enter contacts and finances
 - Enter historical information and pedigrees last

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Keeping Records Up-to-Date

It's important to keep your records current to maximize benefits

Events in the production cycle

- Breeding
- Palpating
- Medicating
- Calving
- Weaning
- Selling

Additional records that are helpful to track

- Calendar
- Rainfall
- Contacts
- Finances

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Analyzing Performance through Reports

"A record keeping system without reporting and analysis is simply an electronic file cabinet."

- Louis Martin

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Questions?

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