

A Ranching Report Card

9 a.m. session, Thursday, Dec. 8, 2005

Presenter: Barry Dunn, King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

RAPID CITY, S.D. (Dec. 8, 2005) — How can a ranch determine if it is successful? Barry Dunn, former South Dakota Extension livestock specialist now at the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management in Texas, challenged Range Beef Cow Symposium attendees to evaluate their ranch success by looking at it from different perspectives.



Barry Dunn challenged attendees to evaluate their ranch from different perspectives. [PHOTO BY LYNN GORDON]

Six areas are important to a balanced approach toward ranch success, Dunn said. They are:

- 1) learning;
- 2) cattle;
- 3) financial;
- 4) natural resources;
- 5) customers; and
- 6) people.

Dunn proposed that ranchers put together a report card for themselves on each of these areas to assess how they are doing. As an example, he suggested ranch operators set goals to attend educational events and seminars, then evaluate if they meet those goals. When it comes to natural resources, determine if you are matching carrying capacity and stocking rate.

From a cattle perspective, Dunn said most important is to measure pounds weaned per cow exposed. “That’s the measure of efficiency. It’s the whole package,” he said.

He added, “You want a balanced scorecard, and it builds from learning on through to people. The better job you do at being a lifelong learner, the better you’ll be able to meet your cattle, natural resource, customer and people goals.”

Dunn told the audience that when evaluating these categories you need to be able to identify leading and lagging indicators. “Lagging indicators are in the past, and you can’t change them – such as a diploma or a photo point. Leading indicators you can change, and [they] may offer tremendous opportunities,” he concluded.

— by Kindra Gordon, field editor, Angus Productions Inc.
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