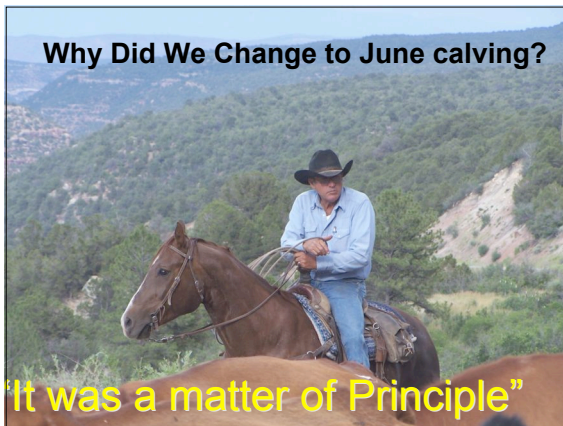




- Background:
 - 1200 cow outfit straddling the Colorado/Utah border
 - 600 Registered cows calving March 20th- May 20th
 - 600 Commercial cows calving June July
 - 250,000 acres of desert and mountain land with elevations from 4,800 to 10,000 feet.
 - Private, State leases, Nat'l Forest & BLM
 - All cows winter on the desert and summer in the mountains
 - Annual Bull Sale April, (1918 to 2008)
 - Feeding calves to Choice, since 1965



- ### For 50 years we preached...
- We believe it makes good cow sense to:
 - Use Yearling bulls
 - Sell the old bull
 - Buy only top end performance bulls
 - Buy the best bulls you can find
 - Take advantage of hybrid vigor
 - Don't buy fat bulls
 - **Make Mother Nature your partner. Build a cow herd adapted to work efficiently on your ranch**
 - Select Four good feet and legs
 - Using too few bulls is false economy
 - Keep "Mama Cow" maternal first
 - Produce what the Beef Customer wants: Tender, Tasty, Lean Beef

- ### There was the Principle but, we were working against Nature!
- We were **ignoring** the high costs by forcing an arbitrary calving date.
 - "We wanted March April calves"
 - We were **fighting** Mother Nature by calving when there was not enough feed on the range to support a cow with a new calf.
 - We were out of sync with the grass!

- ### How did we handle the problem?
- **Substitute feeding** was our answer with a variety of products:
 - CSM & Salt
 - Protein Blocks
 - Salt controlled grain and protein loose mixes
 - Molasses based protein mixes
 - etc.

How well did it work?

- Some years we won the nutrition battle ... but at what cost?
 - Higher feed cost: \$60 - \$150 / head for 7 months on the desert range.

Body Condition Scores?

Dr Wiltbank and The Extension were great help
Benefits:

- Identifies cows who need more feed to reproduce in our calving season
- Applied and *Mis-applied* management
 - Feed more feed to your cows to keep them in BCS 5 or better at calving and breeding
 - Feed poor doers more feed
 - Bury Mother Nature with added feed

How did we apply the Body Condition Scores?

- Ignored the recommendations for added feed for poor condition cows
- Selected for early bred cows with best weaning calves
- We didn't want to spend more money to maintain these marginal cows, we sold the cows that couldn't survive and produce on the range.

So...Why Did We Change to June Calving?

No Way!

- Lower costs
- Less Stress on the cows & cowboys
- More Market Opportunities

So...Why Did We Change to June Calving?

■ Lower Costs

- Less supplemental or substitute feed
 - By taking away the UN-natural pressure on the cow to reproduce when the range did not have adequate feed to support a high level of reproductive performance.
 - Calving when the cow is in good condition based on the range not supplemental feed.

So...Why Did We Change to June Calving?

■ Lower Costs

■ Reducing labor costs

- Fewer Man days
- Fewer Horse miles
- Fewer Pickup & trailer miles

How did we lower feed costs?

- With June calving cows winter feeding is much less critical
 - A cow can afford to lose some weight December thru February
 - Cows gain weight as warm weather and green grass returns, March thru May
 - Cows are in good condition as they calve in warm green pastures in June

How did we lower feed costs?

- The cows are not totally on their own
 - Minerals with urea is fed free choice December through May
 - The cost is approximately \$10/cow/year
 - Savings per cow is \$50 to \$100/cow/year

The Mineral Mix

- The mineral mix is determined by nutritional analysis of the available forage.
- Basis of the current mix is the analysis of two years of monthly forage samples.
- In the rougher range, the cows do not have access to the mineral on a consistent basis.
- Recommended per head per day 0.21 to 0.43 lbs

We are Straddling the Fence?

- Our Commercial Cows are June July calving
- Our Registered cows are March 20th thru May 20th calving
- Both groups winter on the desert
- When the herds are run together (to save labor costs), the registered cows don't do as well as the commercial cows.

The Extension Help

- The economics of proper nutrition for reproduction efficiency
 - **Gold Standard of Beef economics is the Percent of calves weaned per cow bred**
 - Feed to keep cows in good shape, it will pay off as more calves at weaning
 - Excellent tools were provided to know how to better feed our cows.
- Registered vs. Commercial herds

So... Why did we change to June calving?

- Less Stress (better quality of life) for both cows and cowboys
 - Better Balance of jobs that need to be done and the man power to do the jobs.
 - There is less to do in the Spring with June July calving
 - No "pairing up", No branding, just ease the wide bodied heavy laden cows past the corral and on to summer pasture to begin calving.

So...Why did we change to June calving?

■ Less Stress:

- Life is simpler
- There is less frustration in the Spring
- Cows forage, walk to water, move from winter range to summer range without a calf at their side they do it **easier, better.**

So...Why Did We Change to June Calving?

- Marketing:
 - Avoid selling when everyone else is selling
- More Options, more markets
 - Sell Direct off the cow in Nov-Dec @ 400-450 lbs.
 - Go to a finish feedlot where it is warm sell as 1000# choice in June July
 - Go to pasture or growing feedlot
 - Sell as 600 wts in Spring
 - Pasture thru Summer
 - sell in September as 800 wts
 - Sell in December as Choice beef

So...Why Did We Change to June Calving?

Marketing: More Options, more market

Leave calves on the cows until April
1st

(Cows are giving only a cup of milk & valuable range tutoring)

- Sell the calves off the cow in the Spring as green 500+ wts
- Pasture through the summer
 - Sell September as 800 wts
 - Sell in December as Choice Beef

So...Why Did We Change to June Calving?

Marketing: More Options, more markets

- Leave calves on the cows until April 1st
 - A GREAT way to develop replacements
 - Heifer calves learn the winter range from Mom
 - what to eat and what is poison
 - where the water is located
 - how to survive bad weather
 - Spend a 2nd winter on the range
 - Calve at 23 months on range unassisted, mid May



So...Why Did We Change to June Calving?

- Marketing: More Options, more markets
 - More flexibility with younger, lighter cattle
 - Older, Heavier calves in October have fewer options

What are the real benefits?

- 1- Lower operating costs
- 2- Cows in better condition at calving
- 3- Better milking cows, better weaning weights than predicted
- 4- Better calf survival, 3% more calves weaned per cow bred
- 5- Better prices, more per head than 550 wts for the first 3 years



Branding in August... Great timing!

What are the real benefits?



6- Branding is more fun in August!



Branding was never this fun in May...this is a party!



What are the real benefits?

- 6- Branding is more fun in August
- 7- Life is Better, less stressful
 - Gathering off the winter range is easier
 - No branding before going on the summer range, just walk past the corral

What has not worked well

- 1- We can not brag about our weaning wts
- 2- Neighbor is still making fun of us
- 3- Cowboys and their horses have put on weight
- 4- The **knats** in "Greasewood" have lost weight. They have less time to chew on cowboy's ears

What has not worked well

- 5- The serious concern: pregnancy rates are 2% to 4% lower, calf survival is higher by about 3%, calves weaned per cow bred is about the same...they offset.
 - Challenge is to breed on mature pasture that is declining in feed value
 - We need to change our pasture management to make better quality feed available
 - We would like to avoid the feed dealer solution

Are we glad we made the change?

- Oh Yes!
- Lower expenses
- No Worries ...cows are in good shape to calve and milk
- Mother Nature is our feed dealer
- We have better balance of jobs and man power...Spring is Great!

