

LOTS OF TECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT OPTIONS – HOW DO YOU CHOOSE WHATS RIGHT FOR YOUR OPERATION?

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The 2019 Range Beef Cow Symposium (RBCS) is the 26th occurrence of this biennial event, and it's the 51st year since the first RBCS was held in Chadron, Nebraska. Because the 2017 RBCS held in Cheyenne was the 25th anniversary, Ivan Rush and Doug Hixon (retired beef cattle specialists at the Universities of Nebraska and Wyoming, respectively, and long-standing members of the RBCS planning committee) provided a presentation on the history of the symposium (Rush and Hixon, 2017). Many, many presentations have been given over the previous 25 sessions. The underlying theme through all of these, though, has been the dissemination of high quality, research-based information. When discussing the topics of the previous 25 symposia, Rush and Hixon (2017) noted "*the idea that the more things change, the more they stay the same*". They indicated many common topic areas throughout the years including cattle management, nutrition, genetics, reproduction, health, range management, and marketing. In fact, in their presentation in Cheyenne, they pointed out how often several topics had been repeatedly discussed through the years, using crossbreeding as an example of an often-presented topic. In fact, through the years, industry use many of the beef cattle management or technology topics presented regularly at RBCS have either waxed and waned as the decades have passed (e.g. crossbreeding), or never achieved wide acceptance and utilization by the industry (e.g. reproductive technologies, particularly artificial insemination), despite regular advocacy of their potential advantages.

This realization that research-based information is sometimes not widely adopted by the industry led the committee to develop a theme for the 26th session of RBCS. Producers of beef cattle manage a complex system of production with many complicated and interacting parts, making management decision making a challenge. It is difficult to contemplate major changes to management in the face of this complexity. We decided the theme of this symposium will be to focus on how to make the management decisions related to many of the common management practices and technologies that have been repeatedly presented in the past. Thus, you will note that most of the presentations this year will focus on the what, when, which, how, and why of things to consider as a producer contemplates a management change, whether that be crossbreeding, AI or any other of the many topics discussed in the past including managing beef cow nutrition, marketing alternatives, or others.

Another change in approach was first tried in 2017 in Cheyenne when the last half day of the symposium was held at Laramie County Community College to allow hands-on demonstrations with cattle rather than only providing the more traditional presentations. Positive feedback from evaluation surveys of the 2017 symposium encouraged us to have more hands-on demonstrations during the afternoons of both days of the 2019 event.

References

Rush, Ivan, and Doug Hixon. 2017. 25 years of the Range Beef Cow Symposium. pp. 4-6. *In: Proc., Range Beef Cow Symposium, XXV, Cheyenne, WY.*