

MARKETING SURPLUS COWS

Frank Bullock

Williston, FL

My operation is run on 2400 acres of land, the majority of which is leased. The land is situated in such a way that it enables me to separate cows into several separate herds. We run approximately 1000 head of brood cows. Records are kept on each cow. Records include brucellosis status, projected calving date, actual calving date, purchase date, weight, and cost, age, as well as date of sale, sale weight, and price.

Our herd is made up primarily of cows culled from other individuals' herds and bought at local markets. Our general management plan is as follows. We do not save any heifers. All cows purchased off the local market meet certain criteria. We prefer small cows weighing 600-800 pounds, any breed with less than 1/4 Brahman or dairy blood, and 4-7 years of age (no heiferettes). We have found that younger cows cannot hold up under our management plans and still perform at a level that meets our standards. The average purchase weight for the past 3 years was 679 to 710 pounds. All incoming cows are pregnancy checked, dehorned, and isolated from the certified brucellosis free main herds until they are bled twice, 45 to 120 days apart. At that time they are assimilated into the herds depending on pregnancy status and other factors.

Cows are exposed to Charolais bulls from April 1 until September 15th. The bull to cow ratio is 1 bull to 80 to 100 head of cows. Exposed cows are pregnancy checked twice, once in mid August and again in early

November and grouped according to projected calving dates. Cows calving in January and February are grazed on rye. All others are wintered on standing bahiagrass that has been fertilized with 150 to 200 lbs/acre of ammonium nitrate. No hay is fed.

Our records show that approximately 30% of incoming cows assumed open are actually bred at purchase. Historically, we incur a 2% death loss within 60 days of purchase. In addition, 7% are culled within 60 days of purchase due to faults including age, and/or physiological problems affecting fertility that are found when the cows are palpated. Approximately 92% of the purchased open cows are checked bred at the end of the breeding season. We achieve an 82 to 87% pregnancy rate on cows with calves. Average calf weights at sale (6 to 7 months of age) are 460 lbs for steers and 440 lbs for heifers.

Cows are culled from my operation on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Raising an unacceptable calf.
2. Serious calving problems.
3. Losing their second calf.
4. Open cows with breeding problems or aged cows.
5. Broken mouths.
6. Fools.

Cull cows are sold on auction markets with pregnancy status number on their side if bred, dehorned and in reasonable flesh. Cows are culled and sold all year but the preferred time is from Christmas through March. Our records show that the average cow sold weighed 830 lbs.