

Everything I Need To Know I Learned From the Internet

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The internet is full of valuable information to assist beef cattle producers. Information is available to help producer make all manner of decisions regarding every aspect of cattle production. Producers can find information about all of the core topics of genetics, health, management, nutrition, and, reproduction. These topics show up on state and national association websites, industry trade magazine on-line edits, reputable industry websites, university on-line information, government on-line information, and industry associated non-government organizations. Below is a brief sampling some good resources.

Source	Website
National Cattlemen's Beef Association	http://www.beefusa.org/
Beef Quality Assurance	http://www.bqa.org/
Florida Cattlemen's Association	http://www.floridacattlemen.org/
CattleFax	https://www.cattlefax.com/
Beef Magazine	http://www.beefmagazine.com/
Drovers Journal	http://www.cattlenetwork.com/
University of Florida	http://animal.ifas.ufl.edu/beef_extension/index.shtml

However, for every good source of information there seems to be an equal number of sources that supply marginal information to out-right fabrications. More dangerous are the sites that provide information with just enough truth or validity underlying their claims or information to make them appear legitimate.

A number of sites allow and incorporate participants to share information. Now do not get me wrong experienced cattle producer have a wealth of knowledge that can be share with other cattle owners. However, exercise caution when the advice is based on anecdotal evidence. Likewise, examine offered advice and information with the intent to advance an agenda with a skeptical or critical eye. Some prime examples include the use of alternative products to cure or treat routine animal health care issues. These products are often promoted as alternatives, natural alternatives, or hidden cures that the "big pharma" or "big ag" don't want you to know about. If they worked well, don't you think they would be fully commercialized already?

When you run across questionable, alternative, mis-information, or out-right lies apply these evaluations.

- If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- If it sounds too catastrophic, it probably isn't.
- Is the science behind the claim valid.
- What does the person stand to gain.
- Does everything I know about animal production tell me this is not likely.
- Call someone with the credentials to discern the validity if you can't.

Unfortunate, many of these sites are not even targeted for beef cattle producers, but rather for the perceived “socially conscious”. These sites portend to fully understand animal and plant agriculture in general. They provide the user with half-truths, logical fallacies, and one-time occurrences presented as routine. Many of these sites are linked to each other, linked to social media (Facebook, Reddit, Instagram, etc.), and have dedicated staff to advance an agenda. Often we may not even be aware of the existence of these sites. These alternative information sites and social media outlets often do not appear in our sphere of influence, or we do not become aware of them until a peripheral member of our social groups comments, links, or posts about it.

There are more information resources available to the beef cattle producer than ever before. The fact that you are attending the Beef Cattle Short Course already indicates that you are actively pursuing more knowledge to incorporate into your beef cattle enterprise. However, the challenge is sorting through the mountains of information. Use the expert resources you have available to you through UF-IFAS Extension at the county and state level, trusted allied industry, and other cattlemen.