

Reducing Winter Cattle Feed Costs

Sevier County



What is the most costly practice associated with raising beef cattle? Feeding cattle through the winter months costs more than any other production practice. There are many factors that can affect what it costs to winter cattle. Cattle that are wintered properly nutrient-wise tend to raise bigger calves and have higher conception rates. How can a producer reduce winter feed costs and improve income from a cattle operation?

Producers have many options to use to reduce their winter feeding costs. Two projects are being demonstrated at this time in the county. One producer is utilizing a winter annual pasture (rye grain) in conjunction with a field that was stockpiled in the fall, and the results of the demonstrations are still pending. The purpose of the projects is to reduce the amount of hay being fed and provide the cattle with a higher quality feed other than hay.

Other producers have attended educational meetings with topics such as “How to Produce a Better Hay,” “The Importance of a Hay Analysis,” “Rotational Grazing,” and “The Use of Liquid Fertilizer.” One pasture weed control demonstration was conducted in order to increase hay quality in the area.

Some people have made farm visits with a state specialist; these visits concerned winter feeding programs for dairy animals. Rather than over or under feeding cattle, rations are being formulated based on hay analyses.

Impacts

- There has been a 600% increase in the number of producers utilizing hay testing for nutrient value.
- Based on hay analyses, 11 feed rations were developed.
- Two *reducing winter feed cost* demonstrations were established using stockpiled forages and winter annuals.
- 40 producers attended educational meeting on reducing winter feed costs.
- One *weed control* demonstration was conducted with 80% weed control achieved.