

Cull Cow Considerations

4:30 p.m. session, Wednesday, Dec. 7, 2005

Presenter: Cody Wright, South Dakota State University

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA (Dec. 7, 2005) — South Dakota State University (SDSU) Extension beef specialist Cody Wright encouraged beef producers to think of cull cows as a profit-making opportunity rather than a “headache.” Wright concluded Wednesday’s management session at the 2005 Range Beef Cow Symposium in Rapid City.

“Cull cows account for 20% of the income in most cow-calf enterprises,” Wright said, “so you don’t want to ignore them.”

Wright suggested that producers rethink selling cows in October and November as is traditionally done because that is when prices are lowest. “Seasonal price trends indicate there are advantages to selling cull cows at different times of the year, such as spring and early summer,” he pointed out.

Ways to avoid the lows and get in on seasonal price highs may include selling cows that lose a calf early, selling cows that have early weaned calves right away and ahead of most of the market, and/or feeding cows to add weight and improve their grade, Wright said.

When feeding cows, he encouraged producers to think of nontraditional means, such as wintering them on range, if available, and/or crop residues. With current cheap corn prices and the abundance of alternative feedstuffs, Wright said drylot situations to boost cull cow weights and grades may also be economical.

However, he cautioned producers that when marketing cull cows to be certain they are open. “It’s not uncommon for pregnant cows to be sold as open. So make sure you’re not leaving money on the table. If they are bred, sell them as bred and you’ll get more money,” he said.

Bottomline, Wright said, producers need to push the pencil and do some analysis to see what cull cow management and marketing strategy best fits their operation.

“There is no profit guaranteed; this isn’t a magic bullet, but there are opportunities,” he



SDSU’s Cody Wright encouraged producers to rethink selling cows in October and November, suggesting spring or early summer instead. [PHOTO BY LYNN GORDON]

said.

— by Kindra Gordon, field editor, Angus Productions Inc.
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