BARNYARDS & BACKYARDS

November 2008

University of Wyoming

UW Cooperative Extension Service | Profitable & Sustainable Agricultural Systems | RMA Risk Management Agency

Enterprising Rural Families course improves family, agribusinesses

By James Sedman and John Hewlett

Managing a successful agribusiness is challenging. Add the fact that most agribusinesses are family affairs and the challenges become even greater.

Further, there are few educational resources designed to assist agricultural and rural family businesses. The online course *Enterprising Rural Families: Making it Work (ERF)* was developed by a team of professionals from Wyoming and Canada combining visual, audio, and written materials, along with shared experiences of students. ERF was designed as a resource for rural families involved in business and offers the chance to learn from the experiences of other families and professionals. ERF is a fast-paced, online course available at eRuralFamilies.org or on two CD disks.

Benefits of Utilizing ERF

The ERF courses are organized around two main themes: developing a resource inventory and goal-setting/strategic planning. These two courses form the basis for taking the basic idea for a family business and putting it into action from start to finish. Too often, family businesses are formed without the proper groundwork in planning and goal setting. Remember, family businesses are statistically more likely to fail than succeed when starting a new small business.

The courses lay out how to plan for success and take full advantage of the assets at the family's disposal. Families learn in the resource inventory course how to inventory their business enterprise based on three segments of the family enterprise – the individual, the family, and the business.

This approach helps families see how each segment plays a part in the enterprise, what works, and what needs improvement. The ERF courses can help discover new ways of approaching challenges and problems in a family business. Families learn how to view each challenge and problem more strategically and, hopefully, can plan for contingencies and success.

Flexible Learning Tool

The ERF courses were designed to be a flexible learning tool for families who most often do not have time for conventional classes and learning. A fresh perspective is sometimes invaluable when it comes to dealing with issues in a family business. Families can learn about interpersonal skills for interacting with individual family members and how they might approach issues differently in the future.

The course can also help families gain confidence in their business and deal with each other more constructively by viewing each family member in terms of where he or she fits within the individual, family, and business. This can reduce risks to the family business and focus the family enterprise on solving problems quickly and effectively.

To get started using ERF, log on to the Web site at eRuralFamilies.org. Click on one of the photos, click on "Courses" at the top of the page, and then click one of the two links under "CD-based courses." For a CD copy of the courses, follow the contact link and a copy will be mailed to you. Course one focuses on strategic planning and goal setting, and course two involves resource planning.

For more information on this and other risk management topics on the Web, visit the Western Risk Management Library online at agecon.uwyo.edu/riskmgt or RightRisk.org.

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Combat increased supplement costs with hay testing

By Lindsay Taylor

Livestock feed supplement costs have increased dramatically in the past few years. Cattle supplements that were around $200 per ton in 2005 are now more than $300 per ton in many cases.

Range cakes, pressed blocks, and liquid feeds are all great ways to supplement nutritional needs of livestock on winter range or other low-quality forages; however, with their ever-rising costs, it is increasingly important to carefully balance winter rations for highest efficiency and lowest costs. One simple way to do this is by having hay tested for nutritional content.

Feeding hay to livestock in the winter is essentially substituting part or all of a forage diet. Stage of growth and environmental conditions when hay is harvested will drastically change the quality of forage it replaces. Receiving a nutritional analysis of hay provides information needed to determine where the gaps are between what this substitute forage provides and what livestock need. Producers can then provide a supplement that fills those gaps, generally in the form of protein or energy.

The most important information for most livestock producers to get from a feed analysis of hay are the dry matter (DM) percent, crude protein (CP), and total digestible nutrients (TDN).

DM percent indicates what amount of the feed is actual feed, not water. CP is the percentage of protein in the feed. TDN is a percentage that is an indicator of energy available in the feed. Crude protein and TDN are the two largest factors in a livestock diet; therefore, meeting those two requirements is the primary goal of livestock feeding.

A small change in the quality of hay can result in a significant difference in supplement needs for livestock. As shown in the table, just a 5-percent difference in TDN and a 2-percent difference in protein of hay can double the amount of supplement needed to balance the ration of a cow herd.

Without an understanding of the base level of nutrition provided by a forage substitute, it is easy to over or under supplement. Having hay tested provides a livestock manager with the potential to accurately create a feeding plan that is both cost effective and meets the needs of animals.

Winter feeding 300 head of 1,200-lb cows in late gestation (60 days)

	Cow requirements	Range	Hay 1	% Nutrients Provided	% Supplement Needed	Supplement	Totals
Dry Matter Intake (lbs)	22.3	11	10	21	1.3	2	23
Protein	7.8%	4.7%	12.0%	8.2%	0.0%	14.0%	8.6%
TDN	52.9%	48.0%	55.0%	51.3%	1.6%	72.0%	53.3%
Supplement Cost @ $320/ton							**$ 5,760.00**
	Cow requirements	**Range**	**Hay 2**	**% Nutrients Provided**	**% Supplement Needed**	**Supplement**	**Totals**
Dry Matter Intake (lbs)	22.3	10	10	20	2.3	4	24
Protein	7.8%	4.7%	10.0%	7.4%	0.4%	14.0%	8.5%
TDN	52.9%	48.0%	50.0%	49.0%	3.9%	72.0%	52.8%
Supplement Cost @ $320/ton							**$ 11,520.00**

**Cow Nutrient Requirements from 1996 National Resource Council data*

For more information on hay testing, visit your local University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) agriculture educator. Contact information for your local office can be found at http://ces.uwyo.edu/Counties.asp.

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