



# Incorporation of Risk Management Strategies into the Master Cattleman Program

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## Project Introduction

### Expended Amount: \$15,608

We hosted two statewide conferences and assisted with two smaller regional conferences in conjunction with the Oklahoma State University (OSU)-led comprehensive producer education program called the Master Cattlemen Program and other OSU educational programs. These conferences addressed timely issues that helped producers mitigate the effects of drought and increased their risk management knowledge. All of these programs were targeted toward ways to better manage their operational risks using techniques related to genetics, water management, financial record keeping, multi-species grazing and other production practices essential to maintaining operational flexibility and responding to changes in the environment and markets.

## Project Participants

These conferences reached over 200 beef producers and allied industry personnel. Most programs targeted new producers, those with small to mid-sized operations, and/or those producers with traditional operations who work off the farm or ranch, because these producers typically have more limited options for risk management due to their size and more limited knowledge of risk management strategies. We assisted with one event (the Beef Industry Conference) that targeted larger producers and outlined different risk management and planning strategies unique to larger operations. Educational programs, particularly for smaller producers, focused on hands-on experience when possible, including case studies, forage assessment, and water management; these topics receive the best feedback and engagement from participants.

## Project Area

This project was delivered in Stillwater, OK (2x); Boise City, OK; and Shawnee, OK, mostly through in-person delivery at conferences and events/workshops. These conferences drew significant attendance from Oklahoma, but also from many of the surrounding southern states.

## Project Outcomes

*5-State Beef Conference (Boise City, OK) –* Participants estimated their economic benefits from \$3-\$120 per head over the next five years and reported vast improvements in knowledge (75% better understand stocking rates, 79.1% better understand how to select animals for their environment, 91.7% better understand how to control weeds and brush, 91.7% better understand how heifer management impacts future performance, 82.6% better understand economic issues related to the cattle industry). Production, management, and marketing practices they plan to adopt or change as a result of this event include restocking more slowly, using skirted hay feeders and marketing websites and using a skirt on hay feeders; several participants reported they planned on using most of the techniques.

*2014 OSU Cow/Calf Boot Camp (Shawnee, OK) –* Pre- and post-test scores indicated a 29.2% increase in knowledge from attending these workshops. Every participant (100%) planned to adopt at least one of the production practices learned in the workshop including changes in the breeding season, nutrition, individual animal identification, utilizing EPDs for selection, testing and evaluating forages, controlling weeds, keeping records, starting a business plan, utilizing implants, developing forage and operational goals to evaluate progress, vaccinating, composting carcasses, pest control, body condition scoring, castrating, pursuing value-added marketing

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strategies, better culling management decisions, pregnancy checking, utilizing backgrounding, improved cattle handling, improved pasture management, changing replacement heifer, cow, and bull selections, changed fencing, developing nutritionally balanced feed rations, utilizing mineral programs, utilizing financial and business planning resources, creating a mission statement, improved marketing and budgeting, changing working facility design, utilizing OSU extension services more frequently when making decisions, becoming Beef Quality Assurance certified, changing stocking rates, and utilizing EPDs to manage genetic potential.

*2014 Master Cattleman Summit (Stillwater, OK)* – Participants listed several management practices they planned to adopt or change including grazing paddocks, calf size, grazing rotations, water distribution, using more genetic information, managing genetic defects, better managing their livestock water systems, evaluating cost/cow/year, and fencing installations. Participants also reported that they learned several key points from attending the conference including the connection between cost of gain and value of forage, how to better utilize pasture and rotational grazing, estimate the amount of water consumed by livestock, strip grazing, cattle marketing and forecasting, and rainfall insurance. A total of 100% of respondents felt they were better equipped to manage their pastures and rangeland resources, 91% had a greater understanding of cash flow when making land investments, 96% had a greater understanding of water systems that could be used on their operations, 92% felt they were better able to manage genetic defects in their herds, and 100% felt they had a better understanding of how adjustments in their enterprise could lead to a more profitable and sustainable operation.

*2014 Beef Industry Conference (Stillwater, OK)* – The 100 responding participants estimated the value of this conference at approximately \$3,303,563 (calculated as the perceived value per head multiplied by the total number of cattle) and estimated that changes they made in their operation would positively impact the value of approximately 297,250 head of cattle.

*2014 Master Cattleman Summit (Stillwater, OK)* – Seventy-five participants in this conference found a lot of value in the information they received on cattle market projections, water and fencing information, rotational grazing, the live demonstrations, the

field trip, genetic management, fencing demonstrations, pasture management, and cattle economics.

*2014 OSU Cow/Calf Boot Camp (Shawnee, OK)* – When asked what the value of the workshop was to their operation, answers from the 53 responding participants ranged from \$5/head to priceless. The overall value of this program determined by using the producer's own estimation of the average value (\$/head) gained from the workshop, the average number of cattle per participant, and the total number of participants was \$97,787.

## Quotes

“It was a great class, great food, great instruction, great location.”

“Very pleased with information and presentation.”

“All sessions were informational and added to my needed knowledge. The handouts will be very beneficial after I go home and start practicing what I've learned.”

“Great overall session. Really appreciated the rancher opening up his ranch for us.”

“I thought this camp was great and full of information.”

“Wonderful program.”

“You guys are doing great! Keep it up!!”

“Keep doing the programs and will be better to have it at least twice a year.”

“Extremely informative and helpful camp. I would definitely recommend to others.”

“Excellent speakers. Connect with students and retain attention very well.”

“The course was excellent. It was jam packed with practical information and the instructors were outstanding.”

“I would not change a thing in this course. I would like to see a follow-on course for graduates of this course or a yearly update course.”

## Project Success Story

Stephanie Wilson participated in the Master Cattleman Summit and really enjoyed the Biopryn blood pregnancy test information she received. She appreciated the fact that it allowed her to manage risk by identifying the open cows earlier rather than waiting several months and paying for feed and hay during those months when no calf would be produced.

\***Sandra Martini, H. L. Goodwin** and **Ronald L. Rainey**, Grant Coordinator and Co-Directors, respectively, of the Southern Risk Management Education Center, serve as editors of this report series. To learn more about risk management education programs and resources, visit the Southern Center website (<http://srmec.uark.edu>) or the Extension Risk Management Education Program link ([www.extensionrme.org](http://www.extensionrme.org)).

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