

Livestock Record Keeping

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Riding the range, feeding hungry animals, and calving are all iconic parts of the western cowboy way of life. Today, winning the west requires more than just turning the cows out to pasture and hoping for rain. At the end of the day, the sustainability of the operation may very well be dependent on a pencil and a piece of paper.

When record keeping and the dreaded B word – Budget – are brought up, it is common place for eyes to glaze over and drowsiness to set in. The reality of being a manager is that you need to “manage” your operation. Record keeping is one of the most important decision making tools available to you and if utilized properly can increase the efficiency of your operation. Just as any household budget, record keeping may fall into categories of worthless, valuable, and overwhelming, depending on what type and how much information you are keeping. A detailed record book may be of little value if it is too overwhelming of a task to tackle.

There are also three methods to establish a record keeping program. Pencil and paper, Excel spreadsheets, or computer programs. Whichever method you prefer, the following are important measures that you can begin to collect to build your record keeping program. Although the information is tailored for a cattle operation, it will apply to other species as well.

- Herd Inventory (Individual/Unique Identification)
 - Cows
 - Bulls
 - Calves
- Reproduction Records for each Breeding Female
 - Breeding date
 - Palpation records
 - Calving dates
 - Calving difficulty
- Animal Condition
 - Periodic Body Condition Scores on all breeding females
 - Birth Weight and Weaning Weight for all calves
- Health Records for each Animal
 - Vaccination protocol
 - Treatment date and drug used
- Expense Report (Receipts)
 - Feed
 - Equipment
 - Labor
 - Lease Rental
 - Medical Treatment
 - Fuel
- Income Report (Income/Sales Receipts)
- Pasture Conditions

Colorado State University Extension provides many useful resources about record keeping. For more information visit CSU's website for Ag. Business Management <http://www.coopext.colostate.edu/ABM/decision.htm> or contact your local Extension Office.