

# IMPACT

 University of Idaho  
Cooperative  
Extension System

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## Educational Course Curriculum Changes to Meet The Needs of Producers

### *The Situation*

While teaching Farm and Ranch Financial Management on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, we were surprised to find that these students were only having a 50% calf crop. It was impossible to have these students show a profit when two cows were fed each year to wean only one calf. An investigation was made to determine the cause of this low percentage of weaned calves. The course of instruction was altered to address the management and reproduction problems that were discovered.

### *The Conditions Found*

It was discovered that there were many factors contributing to this problem:

- Running yearlings in the same pasture with the cow herd during the breeding season.
- Body condition scores of cows fell below the recommended range of 4 to 6, indicating that nutritional requirements of the cows were not being met. Body condition scores in beef cattle range from 1 (emaciated and physically weak) to 9 (obese). Optimum body condition scores at breeding and calving range from 5 to 6.
- The possibility of diseases contributing to abortions and the death of calves in the first month of life.
- Rustling – on the reservation there is a feeling of what belongs to one, belongs to all members of the tribe.

### *Our Response*

Each one of these factors was addressed in the class and suggestions were made to improve the number of weaned calves. A basic reproduction class was taught, in which each student learned the parts and functions of the reproductive system. Reproductive tracts from slaughterhouses were brought into the classroom to aid in visual identification of the reproductive organs. Then each student was given the opportunity to palpate a cow and learn to artificially inseminate and pregnancy check a cow. Doctor Gary Lewis, a licensed veterinarian, aided with this instruction.

### *Achievements*

Once the students understood the basic principles of reproduction, they suggested the following solutions:

1. Make sure the cows are bred when turned out with the mixed herd consisting of cows and yearlings.
2. Alter nutrition program of the herd to allow cows to attain proper body condition at various stages of production.
3. Commit to a vaccination program to prevent most of the problem diseases.
4. Make sure all calves are branded before turning out to pasture to prevent unmarked calves that anyone could claim.

## ***The Future***

The year two course will follow up on the reproduction unit taught this year. When students have their weaning numbers up, the course will focus on increasing weaning weights and establishing a marketing plan. Ranchers in the area will be encouraged to investigate every possible avenue to make their operations more profitable and sustainable through the wise use of available resources.

## ***For More Information***

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