

Ranch Update



Shad Cox, Ranch Manager

Another year has quickly come and gone. I remember as a child living day by day, however now it is season by season and they come and go so fast, and faster as each year goes by. I am finally realizing the value of all the advise I received over the last couple of years about taking the time to watch your kids grow because they grow up so fast. That has been especially true this year as we raised show stock and went to the many fairs throughout the state. My oldest son is growing up and taking more and more responsibility for his projects and the other two boys will be soon to follow. I had to make myself leave the ranch to "watch" my first basketball game and will soon have to start figuring the game out, because I will have two boys playing for the first time this year. Oh, how the time flies! All the old adages seem to be making more sense with time.

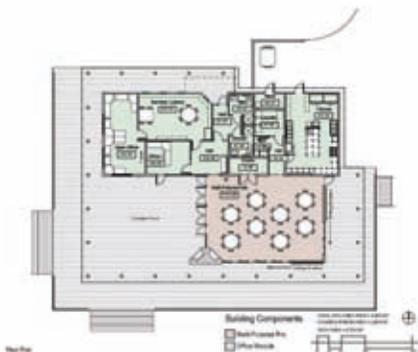
This year has brought some new challenges to face while trying to keep our heads above the water. Escalating fuel, feed and mineral costs have really hit hard. We have received many phone calls from producer's wanting to get more information on our feeding programs and trying to make some changes to help reduce the cost of feed and fuel. The first thing most people want to do is cut their mineral program and then adjust delivered feed costs (myself included). However, I believe that a mineral program is an extremely important part of your herds health and if you do not have a good mineral program you will start seeing reductions in productivity. A lot of the protein supplementation products fed in New Mexico have minerals added and if you reduce the pounds offered, it makes a free choice mineral program that much more important. I think that changes in source of protein and delivery method could decrease feed costs without much change in herd productivity. Along with this, changing your expectations for weaning weight may result in more flexibility for changes that could result in more profitability as well. This really came to light this year as I made changes in our weaning program out of necessity, as well as desire to wean a heavier calf. The ranch has participated in the NM Ranch to Rail Program the past seven years with an intensive study into preconditioning programs. Because of these parameters, we have been weaning in early September to facilitate a 45-day preconditioning program to get calves to the feedlot in early November. Our steer weaning weights have been quite variable between 450 and 600, depending on summer rainfall timing and amounts with remarkable gains on calves weaned on pasture with a pound and a quarter per head per day of a 32% cube fed three time a week. This year we weaned in late October and saw a soggy 548 steer weaning weight, however the calves on pasture lost around 25 lbs. a day on average though the preconditioning phase and weighed no more than heavier calves weaned earlier in previous years. We suspect that the later weaning had us turning out calves on more dormant grass with lower protein than in past years, and I suspect that lowered total consumption of the dryer grass had its toll on our gain as compared to previous years. Weaning a heavier calf just did not fit our management style when it came to our preconditioning program and we will have to make changes again to optimize our weaning program. Most importantly, weaning later for a heavier calf was harder on our cows not having the extra days to recoup before winter, especially when the pasture weaned calves lost weight during preconditioning.

I am not a nutritionist, and I am the last person to give nutritional advice. This next week credible nutritionists will speak at the annual Southwest Beef Symposium in Midland, where a whole section is dedicated to discussing many ways to analyze and adjust your feeding programs to more economically fit your production needs. A link is available on our website for further information. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or comments you may have at (575)849-1015 or shadcox@nmsu.edu.

Shad

SOUTHWEST CENTER FOR RANGELAND SUSTAINABILITY

As mentioned in the June 2008 CRLRC newsletter, our Advisory Committee and NMSU has been very busy. The last two legislative sessions have yielded a total of \$1,525,000 in appropriations to plan and initiate construction of the new Southwest Center for Rangeland Sustainability here at the CRLRC. This is a phased project that will enhance the research and outreach capabilities of the Center. Phase I is under development with the architects and we should break ground this Spring. This phase is fully funded and will include new office space for Center staff, commuting scientists and students, a research and educational library with the CRLRC reference herbarium and most importantly space to facilitate educational programs throughout the year presented by the CRLRC alone or in cooperation with Extension and others. Phase II at this point is not currently funded, however, planning is



underway and it includes laboratory space and accommodations to enhance our research and outreach goals. Our Advisory Committee, NMSU, and the NMSU Foundation are currently developing alternatives to fully fund this next phase.

These are exciting times for the CRLRC; our goal of becoming a leading research and outreach center for the Southwest are slowly coming to fruition.

None of our current growth would be possible without your interest and/or attendance of our current outreach activities. We feel it is important to develop a comfortable setting in which you may participate in activities.

For more information on the Southwest Center for Rangeland Sustainability or to find out how you can contribute please contact Shad Cox at (575)849-1009 or shadcox@nmsu.edu.

PRODUCER AND RANGELAND MANAGER INFORMATION NOW ONLINE

Due to the demand from you for information regarding our research program results, and current practices (supplementation, vaccinations, weaning, etc.) applied directly to our commercial cow/calf operation, we felt it necessary to make everything available that we could in a web based format with the ability to view and print the information.

For those of you who have not browsed our website, I invite you to take a look; it can be found at corona.nmsu.edu. If you have browsed it before, I invite you to view the new information that has been added.

The new content includes categorized educational and informational pages for livestock producers; including individual pages for mineral, supplementation, weaning, herd health, toxic plants, sheep production, and the New Mexico Ranch

to Rail program. Rangeland managers will find pages dedicated to brush control, economics, and noxious weeds.

As in the past, you can still view climate and precipitation from the four automated weather stations and seven rain gauges on the ranch, as well as, pictures of all the plants found and cataloged on the ranch. We also maintain a publication list for viewing all the scientific and popular press publications dealing with current and past research associated with the CRLRC. And, we continue to maintain a photo gallery with photos taken over the years highlighting scenery, cows, sheep, wildlife and research.

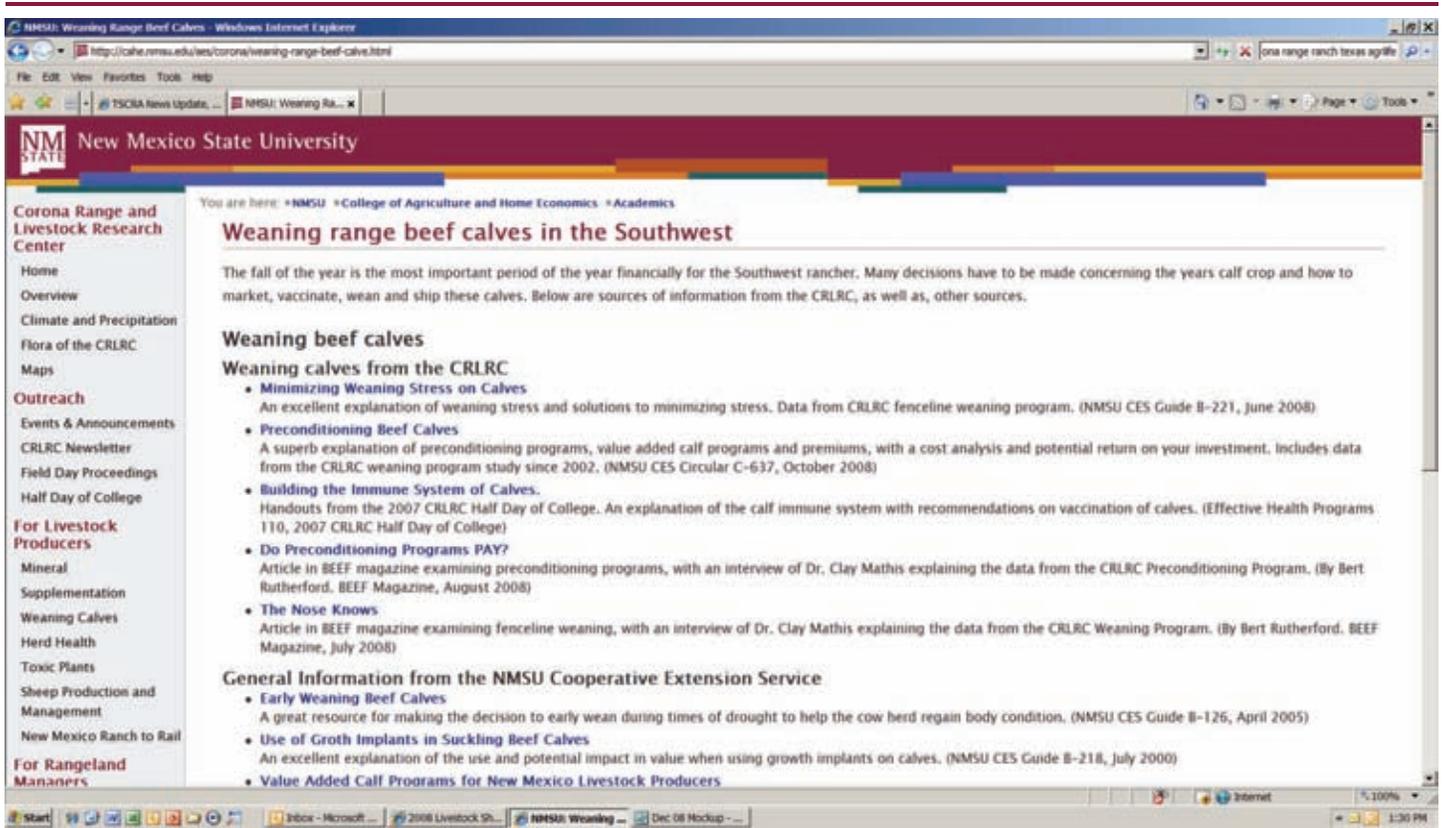
The CRLRC maintains this website for you and it is no good to us if you are not viewing it from time to time. We encourage and invite all suggestions on how to improve the site. If the material is

scientifically sound and fits our mission I will post appropriately on our site. Please take the time to send your comments on improving its' content and ease of use.

More importantly, you can find information about upcoming field days and outreach opportunities on the website as well. If you miss one of our programs the material presented is available online for review shortly after the event is held. The entire printed proceeding are available for all Triennial Field Days held, as well as, the educational handouts from each Half Day of College.

Last, all previous newsletters are available online as well. If you were recently added to our mailing list you can catch up on earlier information on our site.

Contact Shad Cox at (575)849-1015 or shad-cox@nmsu.edu concerning our website.



Our website address is: <http://corona.nmsu.edu>

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