

MANAGEMENT NOTES

Better Management Means More Beef from Wiregrass-Pine Ranges

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Cattle in this month's cover photo typify a prevailing trend toward better management and increased beef production on southern forest ranges. These cows on wiregrass range with a balanced feed program produced calves averaging 427 lb at 8 months of age. Calf crops averaged 76% over a 6-year period and annual beef production per cow was 325 lb. Animals grazed the native range from March 15 to October 15 and during the rest of the year grazed meadow aftermath or were fed high quality Coastal Bermuda hay.

The cows were one of several herds at Alapaha, Georgia, in a study conducted by Coastal Plain Experiment Station and USDA researchers. Beef yields from various combinations of native and improved pasture were compared. Other herds had improved pasture during the spring and summer, range in the spring and pasture in the summer, or range plus limited pasture (0.6-acre/cow) in the spring and summer. These management systems also gave good results. Calf production per cow varied from the 325 lb mentioned earlier to 376 lb for cows on improved pasture in the spring and summer.



A key to increased beef production is better year-round management. Major factors considered in the development of Alapaha management systems are outlined in the following paragraphs.

Where controlled winter burning is compatible with good timber management and other land management practices, burned range is a cheap source of much valuable feed in a cow-calf livestock operation. Controlled burning of the native range improves grazing by increasing the quality and quantity of forage on burned areas. Forage becomes available about a month earlier and cattle gains are much greater than on unburned range.

Optimum burned acreage assigned a cow and calf varies from 6 to 10 acres—the exact acreage depending upon overstory of trees, competition from undesirable shrubs such as gallberry and saw-palmetto, and grass production. Feed supplements

for cows on burned range may be limited to the fall-winter period with good results.

When the summer cattle diet combines native forage with a limited amount of improved pasture, range requirement per cow and calf may be reduced by one-third to one-half. The optimum ratio of pasture to range approximates 1:10, or as an example, 0.6 acre of improved pasture and 6 acres of burned range. The improved pasture can be on firebreaks.

Best calf gains on range or pasture, or a combination of the two, are had by July 1, and drop off rather sharply by September 15 or October 1. An obvious solution would be to wean the calves by September 15.

Some Brahman blood is helpful in range cattle production. Cows with 50% Brahman blood produced about 8% more calves and 16.5% heavier weaned weights than grade Herefords.

Ample feed during the fall and winter is essential for a good range cattle production program. Most of the spring-summer range treatments and cattle practices gave satisfactory calving percentages and weaned weights when winter feeding was adequate.

For further details see Georgia Agriculture Experiment Station Bulletin N.S. 129, "Beef Cattle Management Practices for Wiregrass-pine Ranges of Georgia," by Byron L. Southwell and Ralph H. Hughes, March, 1965. 26 p.