



Cattle Producer's Handbook

Introduction Section

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Integrated Resource Management: A Concept to Provide Profitable Resource Management for Cattle Producers

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What Is Integrated Resource Management?

As applied to cattle producers, Integrated Resource Management (IRM) is a beef management concept in which the key performance indicators of an operation are analyzed, decisions are made, and action is taken to ensure maximum profitability and competitiveness through the optimum use of all available resources.

What Is the National Integrated Resource Management Coordinating Committee?

The National Integrated Resource Management Coordinating Committee (NIRMCC) is a team of volunteer specialists working together to help coordinate IRM efforts nationally. They provide producers and organizations with information on establishing IRM teams and concepts to improve the profitability of beef operations.

NIRMCC volunteers are producers, veterinarians, researchers, Extension system experts, agricultural lenders, and other agribusiness professionals dedicated to improving the economic efficiency of cattle operations through effective resource management.

What Is an IRM Program?

An IRM program, developed by an IRM team, is a sequence of actions that are both educational and responsive to the needs of cattle producers wanting to improve their management practices. The steps in an

IRM program are designed to isolate and solve production problems using existing technology, resources, and expertise. If technology to solve the problem does not exist, then the need for new research may be indicated and encouraged.

What Is an IRM Team or Committee?

Application of the IRM concept begins with the establishment of advisory teams or committees at the farm/ranch, county, or state level. These teams allow a pooling of expertise and technology directed at solving producer problems on the farm/ranch or in the community.

The IRM farm/ranch team of specialists includes, but is not limited to, a practicing veterinarian, agricultural lender, and Extension agricultural agent or livestock consultant.

County IRM committees are comprised of farmers, ranchers, veterinarians, agricultural lenders, Extension system personnel, and others allied to the industry.

A state IRM committee may also include producers, veterinarians, and research and Extension specialists, as well as allied industry representatives.

The team approach is beneficial as it provides problem-solving expertise from multiple disciplines, as well as an acceleration in the rate of technology transfer to, and adoption by, cattle producers for the improvement of their resources.

Why Will My Lender, Veterinarian, My Extension Agent, and My Animal Health Supplier Want to Help Me Do IRM?

It is in the best interest of each of these people that you not only survive in the cattle business, but that you are as profitable as possible. These people can do their jobs better if you are successful.

How Will I Benefit As a Producer?

Benefits from an IRM Beef Program are:

1. Continued flow of technology that is applicable and useful to the industry.
2. Continued identification and prioritizing of research needs of the industry.
3. Demonstration of the application of proven and profitable practices.
4. Improved profitability and competitiveness in the meat industry.

What Factors Make the IRM Concept Work?

Cooperation—The IRM concept is effective because it is a cooperative effort by many disciplines interested in optimizing all resources for improved profitability. All disciplines of the land-grant College of Agriculture are involved in lending their expertise to the program, wherever and whenever appropriate. Extension and research services join with beef producers in identifying needs and opportunities, and in solving problems.

Thrust—The IRM concept works because activities are aggressive and meaningful to the industry. Thrust also implies power behind the program, power that comes from the initial efforts of the producers, the College of Agriculture, and agribusiness.

Responsiveness—The IRM concept also works because it is responsive to the needs of the industry. Responsiveness between producers, Extension agents, and various disciplines of the College of Agriculture permit programs, or lines of action, to be developed quickly. Responsiveness also means that all participants are aware of their joint responsibilities to one another, and are willing to support the total program.

Informational—The IRM concept works because its main objective is to provide the producers with information to improve their beef operations. These educational objectives are:

1. To explore with producers their problems and opportunities, demonstrate profitable new or improved methods of operation, and add to their base knowledge of profitable management practices.
2. To demonstrate results of research and identify areas where further research is needed.
3. To continue to develop a data base and a profile of the beef industry in the state.
4. To integrate the IRM concept and successful applications into College of Agriculture teaching programs.

When Does IRM Application Begin?

Once a team or committee has been established, the application of the IRM concept begins with the identification of a problem or opportunity. When a problem exists, its effects can usually be measured in terms of production units. Opportunities to improve efficiency are not always as clear cut but usually are revealed through record analysis. Therefore, the availability of a detailed data base is important to IRM success. If one is not available, it must be developed.

Why Is a Detailed Data Base So Important?

The most important measurement to commercial cattle producers is profit from beef sold. In the IRM Beef Program, data on four other indicators are essential to good program development—four measurable indicators that have been recognized by the Beef Improvement Federation. These four key indicators on herd performance are open cows, growth, length of calving season, and death loss.

How Is an IRM Program Activated?

The first goal must be to collect enough data on the foregoing key indicators to assess accurately where IRM programs or lines of action should focus. Without such base data, programs become lines of reaction often termed “firefighting.”

Once data are available on the key indicators, the line of action becomes obvious. If data on any of the key indicators suggest an unsatisfactory condition, the next step should be to analyze that key indicator for the cause of the problem.

Therefore, the next line of action involves further analysis to determine the key cause of the unsatisfactory performance. For example: having an unsatisfactory number of open cows has only four key causes (disease, bulls, nutrition, and management).

To follow through on the key indicator of open cows you use only two approaches to determine if disease is the cause—physical examination of the open cows or a clinical examination. The same approach would be used to determine if bulls were the key cause. Other key causes would surface if nutrition or management were the problem areas.

Once the key problem(s) have been isolated, the line of action becomes one of implementing management changes to solve the problem. After the management changes have been implemented, data should be collected to determine the key results.

Is There an Aid to Gathering Data?

Yes, the “Red Pocket Field Book” has been developed to record the key performance indicators of herd production as established by BIF. The field book is a tool for establishing a beef industry data base at the ranch, county, state, or national level, and the data format is compatible to computer software analysis.

Production of the Red Pocket Field Book was coordinated by the NIRMCC and sponsored by local and national groups and corporations. It is available on request from state cattle associations and distributed by the Cooperative Extension System in participating states.

What Completes a Program?

The program is not complete until its results and impact have been shared with others through meetings, tours, demonstrations, publications, or other activities that report on the lines of action taken and encourage adoption by other beef producers to improve the profitability of their own operation.

How Can I Find Out More About the IRM Concept?

Contact the Cooperative Extension System office in your county. If the Extension personnel at the county level haven't received training in IRM, state Extension staff should be able to help you set up the IRM team and begin to set goals for your operation.

National IRM activities are being coordinated by:
The National IRM Coordinating Committee
5420 S. Quebec Street
P.O. Box 3469
Englewood, CO 80155

Details of the Integrated Resource Management concept are also available on videotape at a cost of \$15.



Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, by the Cooperative Extension Systems at the University of Arizona, University of California, Colorado State University, University of Hawaii, University of Idaho, Montana State University, University of Nevada/Reno, New Mexico State University, Oregon State University, Utah State University, Washington State University and University of Wyoming, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. The Cooperative Extension System provides equal opportunity in education and employment on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, age, disability, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran, as required by state and federal laws.

Fourth edition; December 2016 Reprint