

Think Outside the Box When It Comes to Raising Cattle

The Range Beef Cow Symposium was held in Scottsbluff, Nebraska during the week of November eighteenth. You may be wondering what this has to do with ranching in Southeast, Kansas, but the answer is more than you would think. Western ranchers face many of the same production problems we have in this area. Cattle prices have been depressed, weather has been uncooperative, and good labor is in short supply. If anything, the environment is even harsher out west. Ranches are measured in 640 acre sections, rather than in acres, because carrying capacities are so low. Water can be in short supply, and mother nature deals out long, cold, and snowy winters. These factors make it imperative that western ranchers think outside the box for strategies that work well for them. With a little brainstorming, we can do the same on your farm or ranch. What labor and natural resources do you have? What are you willing to learn how do do differently? Have you considered multi-species grazing, or crossbreeding your cows? What about leasing cows out to a younger producer to help them get started in business? What consideration have you given to alternative forage crops like teff grass or cover crop mixes? Have you thought about growing stocker calves during the spring and early summer, when there may be excess grass growth on your farm? When was the last time you purchased extra fertilizer, or seeded legumes like clover into your pastures? One of the best things about farming and ranching is that your options are nearly limitless. Once you determine what your long term goals are, I can help you with strategies to achieve them. Call me, Christopher Petty, Southwind District Extension Agent for Livestock Production and Forage Management at 620-223-3720 or e-mail me at cgp@ksu.edu. I'd be happy to visit with you about your options for success.

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