

Leopold Center Completed Grant Reports

Title

Iowa Cow-calf Production –Exploring Different Management Systems

Sustainably Growing Iowa’s Beef Herds: Evaluating Systems That Provide Economic Opportunities While Protecting Soil and Water Resources

Lead Investigators (name and affiliation)

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Project ID

N/A

Abstract

This project was designed to identify costs, environmental impacts, and best practices from Iowa cow-calf operations based on three production systems. Twenty-eight producers from across the state partnered with the Iowa Beef Center at Iowa State University to assess emerging beef cow management technologies, detail benchmarks, and summarize production and environmental data. Ultimately, the goal of the project was to develop decision aids and educational tools to assist Iowa cow-calf producers across all production systems and improve sustainability of the cow-calf segment in Iowa.

Key Question

Which cattle management systems provide economic opportunities while protecting soil and water resources?

Findings

This project worked with 28 cooperating producers to assess emerging beef cow management technologies, summarize production and environmental data, develop decision aids and educational tools to assist Iowa cow-calf operators, and improve sustainability within all major cow-calf production systems in Iowa. Cooperating producers were categorized into one of the three management systems. Data collected included production cost records, forage quality, soil samples, and soil loss based on land use and

conservation practices. Cooperator case studies were developed to demonstrate successful practices in each production system. Example budgets and decision tools to assist new or expanding operations evaluated which system best fit their individual resources.

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