

Establishing Priorities and Sticking to Them

Douglas Olsen
Nebraska

Douglas Olsen farms and ranches in Banner County, located in the Nebraska Panhandle. Douglas and his father, Arthur, operate Olsen Ranches, Inc., a fourth generation family business with a Hereford/Red Angus commercial beef cattle operation that retains ownership of the cattle through harvest and a predominantly no-till farming operation raising wheat, corn, millet, peas, alfalfa, barley, and oats. Olsen Ranches, Inc. is the primary reference herd for the American Hereford Association National Reference Sire Program, participating in this program since 1999, and also served as one of the test herds for the National Cattlemen's Tenderness Project. Douglas also serves on the Panhandle Cooperative Board and is President of the Kimball-Banner-Cheyenne County Extension Board. Douglas is a 1994 graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with an Ag Honors degree. Douglas and his wife, Pamela, have a two-year-old son, Isaac.

The Olsens' cows calve from May through July on grass, with calves weaned in early to mid-November. All cows and heifers have one opportunity for artificial insemination. Cows winter on corn stalks before heading back to pasture in the early spring. The calves are wintered on crop residue with some supplemental feed before going to grass in the spring. The steers are fed at the Ranch through the summer and harvested in November. Non-replacement heifers are also fed at the Ranch to harvest. Harvested cattle now regularly capture source and age premiums and, when marketed through Certified Hereford Beef, have captured branded beef premiums as well.

The Olsen family also custom feeds cattle and provides custom artificial insemination services for customers' cattle. The Ranch regularly purchases additional feeder cattle to finish at the Ranch facilities in the winter.

All production data, including birth weights, weaning weights, yearling weights, ultrasound measurements on the heifers, and carcass data on harvested cattle are recorded on individually sire-identified progeny. Along with production data, financial records are used to manage the various Ranch enterprises.

On any given ranch there are several components to manage. Livestock, feed, marketing, and saleable end product all influence the goals of any operation whether it is how to prioritize the day, week, month, year or decade. Decisions and priorities for our operation's activities are based on our financial records and goals, natural resources that are available or could be acquired, production records, and especially people involved in the operation and associated with the operation. Along with most ranchers, we take a lot of pride in our operation and enjoy the work we do. Along with this, we must use all of our resources wisely to serve our customers today and tomorrow, whether those customers are owners of cattle or the people purchasing meat or flour in the store.