

Wyoming Master Cattleman program drives livestock producers to improve decision making

With uncertain market conditions cattle producers are forced to change the way they plan for the future of their business. "Producers must understand the importance of maintaining flexibility while continuing to look into strategies each year to optimize their operations", says Bridger Feuz, University of Wyoming Extension Educator. Bridger is part of the state Profitable and Sustainable Agricultural Systems (PSAS) initiative team with UW.

The Wyoming Master Cattleman program achieves its goal by providing producers with tools they can use to evaluate risks and rewards based on their own operation. The program provides instruction and one-on-one support for producers to learn how to apply new risk management strategies to their ranches and to ultimately help them to achieve the desired results in their business.

In the first two sessions the Master Cattleman program teaches participants the tools to use in evaluating strategies which are introduced in the following six sessions. The material is applied through the use of group work, where participants are given practice scenarios applying different production strategies and then using the tools to evaluate the positives and negatives of each strategy in the different scenarios. This allows them to use the tools and practice immediately in a hypothetical situation and then follow up by using the same tools to repeat the steps with their own operations. Participants are asked to evaluate the results and the program through the audience response system. "This use of technology worked very well. It served as a great evaluation tool and the producers really enjoyed using it as well. It gave them the ability to vote anonymously and not feel pressure to vote any certain way", reports Bridger.

Combining these two steps guarantees that the material is being reinforced and is successful. It also helps the producers start thinking about different strategies they could use in their business. "The evaluation results were interesting in that the vote was never 100% in either direction", states Bridger. "What worked well on one ranch didn't always work so well on another."

Bridger incorporates verification into his program design from the beginning. He combines the administration of group work assignments with a quiz at the end of each session and then follows up the entire course with a final evaluation.

By incorporating verification from the beginning of the project to show results for the producers, Bridger's program is changing the way some producers run their business.



Ag in Uncertain Times - Save the Dates! September 9, 16, 17, 23

"Operating in the Face of Uncertain Markets" will be the theme of the Ag in Uncertain Times September webinar series, dealing with the current market situation facing many of the nation's farmers and ranchers. The team that brought you "Operating in the Face of Uncertain Credit" will tackle challenges to marketing, with an overview of the dynamics in agricultural markets provided by commodity and livestock marketing specialists. Farm marketing specialists will then provide strategies to help producers meet their business goals. The webinar series will conclude with financial marketing tools such as AgPlan - developing a plan for any market, AgProfit - a profitability tool to assist producers making long run decisions, and other budgetary tools that can help ag professionals and producers tailor action plans to a specific producer's need.

A workshop participant had this to say about the summer series; "The Webinars have been great. I'm making a notebook of the power points and really appreciate that they are available and that you can go back and review them and see ones you missed. Thanks, great job!"