

# Alabama Beef Cattle Strategic Plan

## I. Identify measurable goals for beef cattle that will contribute to Alabama's economy and employment.

### **Increase productivity and profitability of the beef cattle industry by 10 percent by 2024**

#### **Increase cattle numbers by 150,000 head by 2024.**

- Increase cattle inventory by increasing calf crop by reducing reproductive losses and raising/buying more replacement heifers.
- Increase number of cattle operations by increasing the number of millennials involved in the cattle business:
  - Develop farm transition and farm management programs.
  - Offer leadership training, mentoring opportunities with established cattlemen, and educational demonstrations
- Increase pastureland acreage by creating 100,000 more acres of pastureland by reclaiming underutilized land, developing access to land coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program, and utilizing silvopasture.
- Increase pastureland productivity by better management with weed control, improved forage varieties, and better utilization.

#### **Increase the number of grazing days, reducing winter feeding costs.**

- Establish a good high-quality summer perennial.
- Implement forage systems to reduce hay feeding days.
- Implement better grazing practices with a goal of better forage utilization.
- Focus on forage quality rather than on forage quantity.
  - Utilize forage testing.
  - Establish newly released improved forage varieties.
  - Implement better grazing management.
- Stockpile forages

- Conduct fall grazing trials and summer perennial research studies.
- Teach the importance of soil and forage testing/management
- Utilize ACES staff to help cattlemen evaluate pasture changes over time for soil and forage availability.

**Improve profitability for cattle producers.**

- Capture more value of calves already in Alabama and lightweight calves in Florida by increasing the number of stocker programs.
  - Illustrate the profitability of carrying calves to heavier weight via stocker programs, especially to row crop farmers.
- Work with auction markets to establish at least two value-added feeder calf sales that would encourage farmers with small herds to castrate, dehorn, vaccinate, precondition, and certify for source and age and other third party verified claims.
- Develop programs to encourage producers to add weight to cull cows prior to selling and explore opportunities to buy and graze cull cows.
- Reduce winter feed costs by developing regionally specific forage management systems for cow-calf and stocker operations, and formulate least cost supplementation program based on forage testing analyses.
- Increase reproductive efficiency.
- Have a viable and responsive State Diagnostic Lab. Results on disease samples must be received within 10 days of submission.
- Ensure that diseases are not spread to cattle from wildlife, including penned deer and game.
- Take advantage of huge demand for lean beef by developing a system to carry cattle to heavier weights on grass. This system must include the availability for at least one new harvesting and processing facility.

<p><b>II. Develop and implement a strategy to remove barriers to success and foster success.</b></p>
--

### **Improve Management Skills of Producers.**

- Focus on cattlemen with fewer than 50 head.
- Better utilize Regional Extension Agent.
  - Develop a common statewide theme for producer meeting annually.
  - Hold more regional producer meetings,
  - Publicize well in advance working with the Alabama Cattlemen's Association and Alabama Farmers Federation.
- Topics to consider:
  - Use good management to produce a more uniform calf crop.
  - Educate cattlemen on the relationship between nutrition and animal health to improve performance of cattle.
  - Teach how to focus on forage quality not quantity.
  - Give management tips on how to reduce winter feed costs.
  - Provide other management practices to ensure that calves sell for top dollar.
  - Provide programs on risk management including use of futures contracts and United States Department of Agriculture's Livestock Risk Protection program.
- Educate cattle producers on new technologies available that can improve cattle performance and efficiency.
- Develop manual on how to get started in the cattle business.

### **III. Identify public policy or regulatory changes needed to achieve goals.**

- Work to keep governmental agencies from passing and enforcing overreaching laws and regulations that impede cattle production.
- Ensure that the Alabama Department of Environmental Management be adequately funded and remain user friendly to agriculture.
- Support 2010 Family Farm Preservation Act, Senate Bill 61.
- Develop an animal welfare policy in Alabama before animal activist groups do it for us.
- Work to increase federal and state level research dollars in animal agriculture to be used for beef cattle production research.

- Reduce concern for diseases being spread by wildlife by evaluating laws related to wildlife transportation and agency authority, especially penned deer, elk, and exotic animals.
- Work with Ag Coalition to strengthen laws protecting private property rights.

#### **IV. Identify research and Extension issues needing to be addressed to achieve goals.**

- Continue support for Ag and Rural Farm Crime Unit.
- Adequately fund state and regional diagnostic labs so results can be returned to producers in a timely manner (within 10 days).
- Continue to staff meat inspectors for harvesting and processing plants
- Ensure that producers are protected by monitoring stockyards and order buyers/dealers seeing that they have adequate bond and escrow accounts. Work with Alabama Extension and the College of Agriculture staff to develop a coordinated statewide Extension beef cattle program based on a central theme.
- Reestablish active beef cattle research on at least five experiment stations.
- Better utilize the Regional Livestock Extension Agents (REAs). Auburn University Animal Science Department should take an active lead role in better using facilities at Experiment Stations as well as evaluating infrastructure to better serve research needs.
- Promote research on fungus-infected fescue.
- Continue programs for early detection of army worms and recognizing and controlling invasive plants.

#### **V. Identify the communications needed to achieve goals.**

- Form a research committee from the Alabama Cattlemen's Association, the Alabama Farmers Federation, and Auburn University so producer research needs can be presented annually to cattle researchers at Auburn.
- Increase the number of hands-on Extension demonstrations at Experiment Stations.
- Compile and publish a brochure and a list on website of beef cattle research projects.
- Ensure that research always include an economic benefit component.

- Create a model for farm families to use when making decisions regarding operations that will affect overall profitability of the farm.
- Improve the efficiency of Alabama Extension staff through better communication from the state level to REAs to county offices in order to implement specific producer programs that will meet the needs of cattlemen in all counties of the state.
- Emphasize farm-level accounting and financial practices that include risk management and tax strategy.