

Reaching New and Beginning Beef Cattle Farmers Through the Delivery of the Alabama Beef Systems Short Course

Marks, M.L., Mullenix, M.K., Jacobs, L., Thompson, G., Vining, P., Elmore, J., Tigue, D.A., Hudson, R., Mason, K., Stanford, M.K., Miller, D.S., McWilliams, D., Kelley, W.K.^{†‡}

[‡]Auburn University, Auburn, AL [†]Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Auburn, AL

Introduction

The Beef Systems Short Course was developed as an introductory program for stakeholders interested in learning more about the basics of beef cattle management systems in Alabama. This program was developed to introduce producers to best management practices/opportunities offered through the Alabama Extension System and targeted new and beginning farmers and ranchers.

Method of Delivery

There were seven Beef Systems Short Courses offered in fall 2019 throughout the state of Alabama in the following counties: Chilton, DeKalb, Blount, Franklin, Henry, Tallapoosa, and Colbert. Participants indicated that they heard about the program largely from online advertisement resources (65% from email from Extension, Alabama Cattlemen’s Association, Alabama Farmers Federation, a website, or Facebook).

Topics

8 topics were taught lecture style over 4 different nights where 2 topics (45 minutes each) were taught each during each meeting.



Topics

Forages
Nutrition

Herd Health
Reproduction

Animal Identification,
Genetics, and Records
Environmental
Stewardship

Economics
Meat Science

Results and Discussion

120 participants enrolled in the program statewide, which represents approximately 16,000 acres and 7,580 cattle reached by this program.

55% of the participants reported that this was their first time attending an Extension program, demonstrating a great level of effectiveness in this program at reaching new clientele.

Overall, producers were highly satisfied with the program with an overall rating of 4.7 out of 5 across program topics, and 81% of participants planned to adopt one or more of the management practices shared at the program in the next 12 months. Specific practices included establishing a calving season, proper identification of livestock, and improved forage management strategies (rotational grazing, soil and forage testing).

Participants reported significant knowledge gain across topics presented ranging from 49 to 76% increase in awareness and understanding. The total economic impact of the program was \$457,150, with an estimated return on investment of 7:1.

