Raising Cattle and a Family with a Cow – Calf Operation

Keystone Ranch, Carmen, ID

Kevin Keller Family
In It For The Long Haul

• Ranching is not a job, it is a way of life
• Commitment to the land, cattle, family and Jesus Christ
• Our decisions of soil treatments, hay land planting, irrigation, and cattle genetics will determine the success of the ranch in the future. Success is required.
Ranching by the Season

• Early Spring - Calving & Irrigation Preparation
• Spring Let-out & Irrigating
• Midsummer - Haying & Irrigating
• Fall - Weaning & Irrigating
• Out Wintering & Irrigation repairs/modifications
Early Spring

• Provide adequate vitamins and minerals to cows (This starts in fall)

• Calf handling - iodine navel, tag heifers

• Consider snow melt for irrigation
Vitamin & Mineral Supplements
Prevent Illness
Mineral Supplement Based On Forage Test
Low Calving Losses
Snow Melt Determines Amount of Irrigation Water
Spring Let-Out

- Irrigation
- Branding/Vaccinating
- Which cows go where and why
- Bulls go out June 15
Fix What Broke Over Winter
Start Moving Pipe Daily
Branding & Vaccinations
Spring Vaccinating

- Calves: 8-Way, Bova Shield Gold 5, Steers Implanted
- Cows: 8-Way & Preg Guard
- Bulls: 8-Way & Bova Shield Gold 5
Branding Identifies Ownership On Range
Sort and Move to spring pasture
Walking cattle is less stressful for the cattle and the rancher.
Midsummer

- Irrigation
- Pasture management
- Haying
- Deal with heat stress
Irrigation Makes Us Green
Hand-lines and Wheel-lines are Labor Intensive
Irrigation Construction
Working Towards a Center Pivot
Increase forage utilization with rotational grazing
Harvesting Winter Feed
Heat Stress

• We have cool evening temperatures

• Water is always available – develop springs

• Move cattle long distances in the morning or evening

• Move rancher to the shade with lemonade
Fall

- Vaccinate
- Minerals
- Wean
- Select replacement heifers and bulls
- Select for calving ease
- Sell the rest
- Irrigate
Fall Vaccinations

- Calves vaccinated on cow using the Vac 45 program (8-Way, Bova Shield Gold 5, and Pasteurella) and wormed with pour on.

- Cows: Lepto, 8-Way, and wormed with pour on.

- Bulls: 8-Way, wormed with pour on, and trich tested
Low Stress Working Chute
Minerals

• All animals, cows & calves get minerals

• Bulls sometimes get neglected

• Salt only on range

• Cattle have access to natural mineral deposits on range
Mineral Supplement Based On Forage Test
Fence Line Wean Through a Pole Fence to Reduce Stress

- Cows and calves brought to pasture near permanent pole fence (pen near the ranch)
- Calves are left on pasture and cows placed into the pen
- Calves can come back to cows along the pole fence until weaned
Select Thick, Easy Fleshing Replacements
Cull Open Cows
Select for Out-wintering
Move to winter range
Layout paddocks for strip grazing when under-stocked
Polywire gives flexibility
Range cattle adjust to two or three day moves
Leave 3 inches of residual for spring regrowth
Graze Winter Range Stockpile – Snow for Water
Challenges

- Irrigation
- Pasture Yields/Losses to Wildlife
- Breeding
- Soil Fertility
- Fencing & Topography, Elk Wrecking Fence
- Family Life
- Succession
Elk and Deer Eat Stockpiled Pasture
Wolves Eat Cows
Wolves Drive Deer and Elk down onto Pastures (or next to house)
Breeding Success <5% open – Maintain Body Condition
Maintain Body Score 5
Soil Fertility – Soil Test, Out-winter where nutrients are needed
Topography can limit rotation time
Topography and fencing challenges
Family Time
Family Time is Ranch Time Also
Succession
Reducing Wildlife Pressure on Stockpiled Pasture