

# Record Management Database for Wyoming Cow-Calf Producers

*Dallas Mount (Wyoming – Research & Education Grant)*

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Wyoming Cow-Calf Record Management System

**Title:** Record Management Database for Wyoming Cow-Calf Producers

**Ag. Professional:**

Dallas Mount  
Extension Educator  
University of Wyoming  
57 Antelope Gap Rd  
Wheatland, WY 82201  
(307) 322-3667  
[dmount@uwyo.edu](mailto:dmount@uwyo.edu)



The webpage of the Wyoming Cow-Calf Record Management System.

**Participants:**

Jack Baker, Rancher  
Steve Paisley, UW Beef Specialist

**Western SARE Grant:** \$18,563

**Situation:**

Wyoming's rural economy depends heavily on the sustainability of cow-calf livestock producers, many of whom operate on an ever-narrowing profit margin.

Concurrently, many producers are becoming more comfortable using computers for a variety of purposes, including keeping ranch records and making ranch decisions.

Producers need a record management system that stays current with computer technology and meets their evolving needs. Several computer programs that provide record management for livestock producers are currently available, but none address the distinctive needs of the Western cow-calf livestock producer.

Having an inexpensive, easy-to-understand and highly flexible database, available to all producers through the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service, would:

- Encourage record keeping and information use
- Integrate educational material of the land-grant system directly with a tool livestock producers can use to make day-to-day management decisions
- Foster closer working relations between producers and University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension personnel
- Demonstrate how adopting research-based management principles, endorsed by the university, can be both profitable and environmentally sustainable



**Objectives:**

1. Develop a record management computer database for Wyoming cow-calf producers
2. Encourage record keeping as a way to analyze production and economic information
3. Integrate the record keeping and land-grant information to make economically sound and environmentally sustainable management decisions

Benchmark Production Measures		
Management	Definition	Goal
Pregnancy rate	Number of females bred/number of females exposed	>98%
Culling rate	Number of females culled/total number of breeding females	12-14%
Calving rate	Number of calves born/number of females exposed	>95%
Weaning rate	Number of calves weaned/number of females exposed	>91%
Calf death loss	Number of calves died/total number of calves born	<7%
Average weaning weight		>\$50
Pounds weaned per exposed female	Total pounds of weaned calf/number of exposed females	>500
Total feed cost per cow	Total feed costs/exposed female	<\$200
Total direct and overhead costs per cow	Total costs/exposed female	<\$310
Unit Cost of production	Total costs/total pounds sold	<\$0.70
Cow/Calf weight ratio	Calf weight/cow weight	45%?
• Ideas Taken from Hughes, 2001		



**Actions:**

An advisory team of a livestock producer, two University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension faculty and two extension educators designed a web-based interactive database to meet the specific needs of Wyoming cow-calf producers.

Called the Wyoming Cow-Calf Record Management System (WCCRMS), the database was constructed to:

- Provide a framework that allowed producers with even minimal experience to interact with the program
- Offer production and basic economic data to help a producer make herd-management decisions and to evaluate how those decisions affect the bottom line

WCCRMS was field tested on two Wyoming ranches in a trial-run and debugging exercise that ran through a typical production year. The producers evaluated which data fields, evaluation criteria and capabilities should be included in the final package. It was then piloted with several producers for further troubleshooting and fine-tuning.

The database was launched with a series of workshops statewide to familiarize producers with the basics and potential benefits. At the same time, a series of train-the-trainer workshops familiarized extension educators with the database, preparing them to serve as local contacts and troubleshooters.

(To enhance the train-the-trainer aspects of this program, the project team applied for and received a Professional Development Program grant from Western SARE, EW07-016, Educator Training for the Wyoming Cow-Calf Record Management System.)

**Results:**

The producer and professional committee met several times to formulate the nature of the database, which then unfolded as follows:

- Database development during Year 1 with substantial input from Crile Carvey Consulting, a database development firm
- Troubleshooting and debugging during Year 2 and Year 3
- Database rollout during Year 3
- Construction of a website, <http://wccrms.com>, to serve as a download and troubleshooting site

Principal Investigator Dallas Mount was invited to present one-hour sessions on the system at:

- Laramie Peak Stockgrowers Summer Meeting (2006)
- Wyoming Stockgrowers Profitability Conference (2006)
- Fremont County Farm and Ranch Days (2006)
- WESTI Ag Days (2006)
- Southwest Wyoming Beef Production Convention (2006)
- High Plains Ranch Practicum School (2007)
- Fremont County Farm and Ranch Days (2007)

**Potential Benefits:**

The database proved popular among Wyoming cow-calf operators. More than 300 copies have been distributed to producers. Of those, it is estimated that 15%, or 45 ranches, are using the database to keep and manage herd-performance records.

Producers using the livestock production records are able to make better informed management decisions and determine areas that need management attention by comparing their operations' performance with known benchmark averages.

A similar effort conducted by Texas A&M Cooperative Extension, in which producers are encouraged to keep records and make decisions based on those records, showed an average savings of \$16,931 for each user (McGrann and Richardson, 2003). Assuming 45 Wyoming producers adopted the Wyoming Cow-Calf Record Management System, an increase in net income of \$765,000 can be assumed.

