

BISON BENCHMARK PROJECT YEAR TWO - Gerard Woynarski Project Consultant

INTRODUCTION

With a continuous improvement goal of increasing investment and encouraging growth in the bison industry, the Saskatchewan Bison Association (SBA) continues to support the need to update bison cost of production and herd performance information. Updated information provides producers an opportunity to compare their bison business performance with the performance of others in the industry and identify areas where they could improve and enhance profitability. Current information is also helpful for financial institutions involved in capitalizing the bison industry.

This report summarizes the results of the second year of the project, provides suggestions as to how the information can be used, how more producers can get involved and outlines next steps.

The SBA acknowledges the continued financial support from Saskatchewan Agriculture. Without their contribution this ongoing project would not be possible.

THE PROCESS

Under the continued guidance of an advisory committee an updated plan was established, the data collection format was enhanced, bison producers to provide data were identified, and data was collected through farm visits from January 1, 2012 to April 30, 2012. The data was analyzed and participants had their information compared to data collected. To preserve the confidentiality of individual producer data, the results of at least three producers were required in each data set.

THE RESULTS & DATA COLLECTED

In 2012, the benchmark project experienced a substantial growth in participation from bison producers who provided data for the 2010/11 production cycle. In 2011, 44 bison enterprise categories contributed to the benchmark study while in 2012, 116 bison enterprise categories contributed to the study.

Data was collected from 35 enterprises involved in bison cow-calf operations, 42 enterprises were backgrounding operations, and 39 enterprises were finishing operations. The data included herd profile, production costs and investment requirements.

COW-CALF ENTERPRISES

Herd profile data for the cow-calf enterprise includes items such as: breeding herd size (cows and bulls), breeding herd death loss, culled animals, replacements, calving and weaning dates, number of calves weaned and weights, average calf sale prices and weights, and, whether or not a producer pregnancy tests.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

Category (No. of Cows)	<100	>100
Number of Farms:	18	17
Av # of Cows	50	228
Calving Rate %	89.2	85.9
Av Wean Weight – Bulls	488	491
Av Wean Weight – Heifers	438	444
Av Days from Birth to Wean	289	278
Mortality % in Cow Herd	2.21	1.26
Av Net Return Per Cow	\$215	\$326
Av Capital costs per head	\$3360	\$1408

BACKGROUNDING ENTERPRISES

Herd profile data for the backgrounding enterprise includes: number of acres pastured, number and average weight of backgrounders purchased or retained from own herd, average backgrounder purchase/retained price, days on grass, number of backgrounders sold and retained, average shipping weight, and, selling price.

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

Category (No. of Backgrounders)	Bulls		Heifers	
	<100	>100	<100	>100
Number of Farms:	15	7	11	8
Av # of Backgrounders	65	204	49	144
Av Wt of Purchased. & Retained	515	441	455	422

Av Shipping Weight (lbs)	786	769	656	701
Mortality Rate %	0	0	0	.24
Days on Grass &/or Feeders	190	227	202	228
Av Daily Gain (lb/day)	1.44	1.48	1.08	1.27
Av Total Cost per lb Gained	\$1.02	\$1.04	\$1.47	\$0.91
Av Feed Cost per lb Gained	\$0.56	\$0.67	\$0.79	\$0.53
Av Net Return Per Head	\$375	\$372	\$234	\$328
Av Capital Costs Per Head	\$781	\$454	\$1049	\$474

FINISHING ENTERPRISES

Herd profile data for the finishing enterprise consists of: number of feeders purchased and placed on feed, average weight of feeders purchased, feeder purchase price, days on feed, number of head sold and retained, average finish/shipping weight at farm, selling price, weight at plant (if available), hot hanging weight, carcass grade, and slaughter age (birth date to slaughter date).

KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

Category (No. of Finishing Animals)	Bulls		Heifers	
	<100	>100	<100	>100
Number of Farms:	12	8	14	5
Av # of Feeders	54	256	46	263
Av Shipping Wt at Farm (lbs)	1092	1088	933	917
Mortality Rate %	0.95	0.46	0	0.05
Shrinkage %	6.31	6.80	9.69	7.05
Dressing % at Plant	60.85	60.12	64.17	61.78
Dressing % Feedlot to Carcass	57.02	55.89	57.22	56.80
Days on Feed	219	174	202	167
Av Daily Gain (lb/day)	2.00	1.86	1.67	1.47
Av Total Cost per lb Gained	\$1.53	\$1.40	\$1.52	\$1.61

Av Feed Cost per lb Gained	\$0.77	\$0.79	\$0.73	\$0.95
Av Net Return Per Head	\$249	\$258	\$253	\$250
Av Capital Costs Per Head	\$1911	\$613	\$1688	\$549

SYNTHESIS

The performance measures above reflect the averages in each class. As a producer you are able to compare your bison business results to the averages in this report. By doing this you will be able to identify areas where you can improve your operations. For instance, if you have a feeder operation, you can compare your daily gains with the averages. This comparison will give you an indication as to how well you are doing. You can compare other variables as well. Be cautious when comparing cost data to ensure that you are comparing feed costs from the same time periods.

With the additional information that was gathered through increased producer participation this year, we have been able to suggest benchmarks by removing the top producers and bottom producers and utilizing the data from two-thirds of the producers in each class.

The average of the middle two-thirds of the selected variables is indicated below. It must be emphasized that these are averages and over the long-term if producers are to thrive and grow their business, they must be much better than average

Benchmarks for Consideration

Cow-calf Enterprise:

Calving Rate	90.8%
Av Weaning Wt – Bulls	516
Av Weaning Wt – Heifers	461
Av Days Birth to Weaning	260

Backgrounding Enterprises:

	<u>Bulls</u>	<u>Heifers</u>
Av Daily Gain	1.57	1.28
Av Shipping Weight	809	728
Days on Grass/Feeders	182	173

Finishing Enterprises:

	<u>Bulls</u>	<u>Heifers</u>
Av Daily Gain	1.9	1.54
Av Shipping Weight at Farm	1098	931
Days on Feed	188	185
Dressing % Feedlot to Carcass	56.9	57.1

Next Steps

The benchmarking program will continue to become stronger as more producers participate. To this end, in 2012, the Saskatchewan Bison Association (SBA) will partner with the Alberta Bison Producers Association to facilitate the use of more resources to enhance the benchmark project. We are encouraged that there will be a focused effort to involve more participants in the province of Alberta. In addition, we will be increasing efforts for more participation in Saskatchewan.. The more producers that contribute to the program, the more reliable the information will become.

Thank you to all those producers who have contributed to the benchmark program over the past two years. We look forward to working with you again in 2013. For those interested in participating in the benchmark program, please contact Gerard Woynarski at 306-536-9841 in Saskatchewan or Pierre Cormier at 780-922-3211 in Alberta where a comparable project has been initiated.