

research in brief

Small Beef Producers

Extension personnel, both county and state staff, should find this study about characteristics and needs of small beef producers useful in organizing programs for similar groups of clientele.

First, Vandell studied the programs Extension and other U.S. agencies had put on for small and low-income livestock producers. This exhaustive review demonstrated that very few educational programs were specifically designed and carried out for small livestock producers.

The second step involved identifying the characteristics of the small herd beef producer population in Yakima County. This county has some low-income and minority livestock producers. Vandell surveyed and interviewed 96 small herd beef producers. Twenty-six in this sample were classified as low income and many represented the Mexican-American and Indian communities.

Three methods were used to get the data for the study. The first was a questionnaire directed at the small herd and low-income beef producers. These people were also interviewed. The second method was a series of interviews with people and organizations having contact with this group of small herd beef producers. The third method was a computer literature search called AIM/ARM to locate livestock management education programs conducted in the United States for small herd and low-income beef producers.

Here are the areas small herd beef producers said they needed help in: (1) general management, (2) nutrition, (3) animal health, and (4) breeding. The small herd beef producers used, in descending order, these contacts to get information: (1) veterinarians, (2) beef producers, (3) books and pamphlets, (4) Cooperative Extension, and (5) feed dealers. The majority of the contacts were on a one-to-one basis or reading the limited information available.

The available educational materials that appeared to best suit the needs of the small herd beef producers were: (1) pamphlets from feed dealers, (2) fact sheets from veterinary supply houses, and (3) 4-H veterinary science project books and pamphlets. The latter were considered appropriate for the needs of the producers, but weren't being distributed or used.

A series of recommendations were made about developing livestock management programs to reach this clientele group.

"Characteristics and Needs of Small Beef Producers in Yakima County." Thomas K. Vandell. Master's thesis, Washington State University, Pullman, 1975.

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