



extension
IMPACTS

The High Plains Ranch Practicum is an applied learning experience that teaches participants to use a holistic perspective that integrates livestock, natural resources, range, and economics into their decision making.

High Plains Ranch Practicum School provides in-depth education to ranchers

Situation:

Sustainable ranch businesses require a systems approach to decision making for successful working relationships and effective management of business finances, livestock, forage, and natural resources. The High Plains Ranch Practicum is an applied learning experience. It teaches participants to use a holistic perspective that integrates livestock, natural resources, range, and economics into their decision making. The 2007 High Plains Ranch Practicum consisted of eight full days of hands-on learning experiences in the field in combination with classroom learning.

The 20 students in the 2007 High Plains Ranch Practicum School reported they had influence over 82 people, the management and decision making for 6,300 cows, and 110,000 acres of native range, planted pasture, and hay land. Survey respondents indicated that, on average, workshop knowledge would provide a potential benefit of \$31 per cow. The average reported dollar benefit was weighted based on number of cows owned by producers. The total estimated economic impact to the producers attending the High Plains Ranch Practicum School would be \$81,300.

Impacts:

When asked how they benefited from the High Plains Ranch Practicum School:

- 92 percent reported profitability of their operations would increase.
- 91 percent indicated sustainability of their businesses would improve.
- 92 percent stated they would be better stewards of natural resources.
- 92 percent indicated their decision-making skills had improved and would help them be more effective in making decisions.
- 93 percent reported their ability to critically evaluate management alternatives had improved.

When asked to evaluate the knowledge they gained from participating in the practicum in 27 designated topic areas, 93 percent stated the information presented either reinforced what they already knew or provided them with new information.

Understanding increased the most in the following areas: grazing objectives and systems, unit cost of production, plant identification, enterprise analysis, relationship between costs, forage quality and physiological stage of production of the cow, grazing and precipitation records, range condition assessment, plant growth and development, drought management, and using complementary forages.

When participants were asked what changes they had made or were planning to make to their ranch business or in how they worked with clients as a result of attending the High Plains Ranch Practicum, they responded:

- "I will have better cow nutrition monitoring for economic efficiency."
- "I will lower labor inputs."
- "I will adapt irrigated annual crops for grazing."
- "I plan to use (ranch) profit centers in accounting."
- "I plan to do more range monitoring and financial analysis."
- "I will continue using the unit cost of production analysis records (taught in the class)."
- "I will try to utilize low-input heifer development."
- "I will try windrow grazing."
- "I will implement a planned grazing system."

As a result of attending the High Plains Ranch Practicum, a participant responded: "I will have better cow nutrition monitoring for economic efficiency."